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Black Voices, German Rebels: Acts of Masculinity in Postwar Popular Culture

By

Priscilla Dionne Layne

A dissertation submitted in partial
satisfaction of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

German

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Film Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Deniz Göktürk, Chair

Professor Anton Kaes

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Spring 2011

Abstract

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This dissertation examines practices of embodying Black popular culture in Germany. My analysis is based on close readings of texts from a variety of media including novels, films and musical theater from West and East Germany of the 1950s to the reunified Germany of the 1990s. Black popular culture, particularly popular music, has appealed to Germans since the 19th century, when the Fisk Jubilee singers toured Europe. In most of my analyses, music plays a prominent role as a gateway to Black popular culture. Stuart Hall defines Black popular culture as a product of the African Diaspora, therefore it is produced in a space populated by people who are linked to many different geographic locales. Nevertheless, in the texts I examine, the African American contribution to this culture is given precedent. This preference for African American culture is based on an articulation of factors, including the large presence of African American GIs in occupied postwar Germany and German stereotypes that designate African Americans as both primitive and modern, oppressed victims yet also producers of incredibly different, liberating styles.

My study begins in the postwar era, because as opposed to the monologue about Black popular culture typical of high modernism, the generations of Germans coming of age or born after the war were more interested in a dialogue *with* African Americans. Particularly, after the war, Black men were favored as the bearers of Black popular culture. In each of the texts I examine, German males who have been made subordinate to hegemonic German masculinity find not only comfort in, but a means of resistance to their subordination through mimicking Black popular culture and Black masculinity. These rebellious German men often position themselves in opposition to their grandfathers and fathers who are viewed as representing a masculinity that depends on domination over minorities. Thus, mimicking Black popular culture is often an attempt to resolve postwar guilt over the Holocaust.

In each chapter, I carefully consider the unique historical context of the text, keeping in mind how the hegemonic culture against which the actors rebel changes over time. I use Gramscian hegemony as a theoretical framework informed by R.W. Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity. The first four chapters focus on fictional German rebels from Günter Grass's novel *Die Blechtrommel* (1959) and Rainer Werner Fassbinder's film *Whity* (1970) to Michael Schorr's film *Schultze Gets the Blues* (2003). The fifth chapter reverses the gaze in an examination of how German expectations of an essential Black subject come into conflict with the experience of African Americans in Germany in Paul Beatty's novel *Slumberland* (2008) and Stew's musical *Passing Strange* (2009). The final chapter engages the works of Turkish German author Feridun Zaimoğlu to examine how in the 1990s, migrant youth sought a more powerful position in the German mainstream through the "cool" social capital they could gain from adopting Black cultural aesthetics.

My dissertation demonstrates that while white Germans have long engaged in assuming the voice of the Black Other to express their feelings of alterity, those who are Othered by their skin color or their parents' foreign citizenship are rarely allowed the right to have multiple identities or allowed the luxury of removing the mask of difference. My approach to German studies purposefully looks beyond the nation's borders to consider foreign influence in Germany. Within German studies, my dissertation contributes to a better understanding of the construction of Black popular culture in German history, the construction of German identity, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and the study of German counterculture. Furthermore, my project resonates with scholars interested in trauma studies, gender studies, queer studies, diaspora studies and postmodernism.

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Introduction

In November 2010, the akademische Faschingsverein¹ Ba Hu Elferrat of the HTWK University in Leipzig distributed a flyer advertising a carnival party that featured a white man in blackface, complete with an afro wig and black colored hands. This flyer evoked outrage among German anti-racist activists. AfricAvenir, a non-governmental, non-profit organization that disseminates political education in Europe and Africa, released a statement criticizing the flyer and stressing the racist implications of contemporary blackface. AfricAvenir argued that by using blackface, the flyer claimed “it would be a grand party, just as funky, wild and shameless as Blacks allegedly celebrate: to be Black just once in your life, fun, uninhibited, even as a white person – how cool!”² This exotification of Blacks³ and desire to masquerade as Black fits perfectly with Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque.⁴ In the context of the carnival, white Germans can don blackface and party without inhibition, but this is a temporary act and not necessarily an act of solidarity. For instead of experiencing the hardships that often come with being Black in Germany, these carnival goers merely seek a good time and when they wipe off their makeup they will be none the wiser about the lived experience of Black people.

This dissertation will look at a selective history of the German practice of embodying Black popular culture in order to step out of one’s (white) shell and behave in a manner which hegemonic society considers oppositional to German cultural practices. I use the term “Black popular culture” to refer to a sphere of acts, performances and identifications. I emphasize not only the diversity, but also the constructed nature of this culture. Although I primarily focus on African American practices and sensibilities, occasionally I discuss other politically Black subjects such as Africans and Afro-Germans who are also a part of the African Diaspora and contribute to the construction of Black popular culture. Furthermore, German stereotypes about African Americans sometimes contain notions about Africans. And in turn, German stereotypes about Africans and African Americans are often projected onto Afro-Germans. With the term “Black popular culture,” I can situate African Americans in conversation with other groups who

¹ Loosely translated this means “academic carnival club” which likely refers to the fact that this is a carnival club consisting of university students. *Fasching* (carnival) is the equivalent to Mardi Gras in the United States. *Fasching* is celebrated feverishly by many Catholic Germans and others who simply enjoy the partying and dressing up. While it is most often associated with cities in the West, Leipzig is in the East. Another well-known carnival in Germany is the *Karneval der Kulturen* (Carnival of Cultures) which has taken place yearly since 1996 in Berlin. As opposed to *Fasching* which does not have any particular social agenda, the *Karneval der Kulturen* was founded in order to celebrate Berlin’s growing internationalism. Commonly, the carnival features ethnic minorities in the traditional garb of their home countries performing dances. It is not uncommon for Germans to take part in the performances as well.

² “es würde eine grandiose Party, nämlich genauso flippig, ausgelassen und schamlos gefeiert wie vermeintlich bei Schwarzen: Einmal im Leben Schwarz sein, lustig und ungehemmt, auch als Weißer – wie abgefahren!”

http://engagiertewissenschaft.de/de/inhalt/Rassismus_ist_kein_Karnevalsspass_Stellungnahme_zum_Blackface_Werbplakat_des_Ba_Hu_Elferrats. Accessed 11 February 2011. All translations in this dissertation from German to English are my own, unless otherwise noted.

³ I subscribe to the social constructionist view that “there is no biological or genetic basis for dividing the world’s population into distinct racial groups.” My reference to Blacks and whites relates to the fact that although these terms are derived from culture, “the socially constructed nature of race *doesn’t* mean that our understanding of race and racial categories isn’t somehow real or that it doesn’t have real effects.” Beth E. Kolko and Lisa Nakamura and Gilbert B. Rodman, *Race in Cyberspace* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 2. I have chosen to capitalize the terms “Black(s)” in reference to political realities and identities.

⁴ For a more detailed consideration of Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque see chapter three of Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

describe themselves as Black or are described as Black. This allows me to establish pertinent interconnections, even as I examine specific subjects who are informed by these connections.

Antonio Gramsci defines hegemony as the power “the dominate group exercises throughout society.”⁵ Hegemony implies naturalized and seemingly invisible structures of domination exercised by the dominant social group. I will consider German actors⁶ who do not indulge difference merely during carnival, rather they feel like they fundamentally do not fit or do not wish to fit into hegemonic German society. These are rebels for whom African American culture functions as a means of expressing their feelings of alterity. I consider a German rebel someone who resists hegemonic German culture. My examples range from a boy who refuses to physically grow in order to reject the path to adulthood his father has laid out for him to a slave who shoots his master’s family in order to reject a lifetime of servitude. Although Africans and African Americans have long held a special meaning in German history in regards to social change,⁷ particularly throughout the 20th century, German rebels have consistently viewed *African American* culture as something modern and liberating which can free them from the constraints of conventions.⁸

In the context of postwar Germany, both the generation of Germans coming of age after the Second World War and those born after the war were dedicated to the project of disassociating themselves from their parents’ Nazi crimes. African American culture certainly had a popular appeal prior to 1945, e.g. among the Expressionists, the Cubists and other avant-garde groups. Nevertheless, these modernist movements were still anchored in a culture which preferred the white (German) male’s way of seeing the world. Thus, at the time, even dedicated jazz fans saw nothing wrong with racist beliefs that African Americans were primitive and more corporeal than whites. During the jazz age, African Americans had little control over the representations of themselves that circulated the world. Rather, African American performers were subordinate to the images that whites had constructed; hence Josephine Baker’s performances in a banana skirt⁹ or adult Black males having to perform under degrading titles like “The Chocolate Kiddies.”¹⁰

In contrast, the postwar era was a time of self-empowerment for African Americans and other oppressed minorities who countered false representations of themselves and stressed that

⁵ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 2010), 12.

⁶ I use the term “actors” here because I will be discussing both fictional characters and real artists.

⁷ “...the Sub-Saharan African always gains special meaning at precisely those moments, when a profound social change is taking place. In these times of restless upheaval – in the time of the Crusades, during the Reformation or in the pre-Revolutionary phase of the 18th century – some turn the African into a symbol of their new wishes and intentions; others sense the revolutionary – the negation of the stable order of past times – which the appearance of the Black heralds and they react with resistance and fear.” “...der schwarze Afrikaner [gewinnt] seine besondere Bedeutung offenbar immer gerade dann, wenn sich ein tiefgreifender gesellschaftlicher Wandel vollzieht. In solchen unruhigen Zeiten des Umbruchs, in der Zeit der Kreuzzüge, in der Reformation oder in der prärevolutionären Phase des 18. Jahrhunderts, machen ihn die einen zu einem Symbol ihrer neuen Wünsche und Absichten; die anderen verstehen dies sehr wohl, sie spüren das Revolutionäre, das die festgefügte Ordnung vergangener Zeiten Negierende, welches die Erscheinung dieses Schwarzen verkündet – und sie reagieren mit Abwehr und Angst.” Peter Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, Edle Mohren* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2000), 11.

⁸ During the age of colonialism and industrialization, Blacks lost some of their revolutionary symbolism. They were seen “weniger als Demonstrations- und immer mehr als Ausbeutungsobjekte” (as less of an object of demonstration and more of an objection of exploitation). *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹ See Samir Dayal, “Blackness as Sypptom: Josephine Baker and European Identity,” in *Blackening Europe : The African American Presence* ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (New York: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁰ This name will be explained further in Chapter One.

attention be given to non-Western, non-white and feminine perspectives. In a sense, the German postwar generation's path from a high modern monologue *about* African Americans to a postmodern dialogue *with* them could only be achieved via an engagement with African Americans that did not position Germans as superior. Postmodernity is often described as a "politics of difference" that challenges master narratives and recognizes the voices of the marginalized. Nevertheless, postmodern theory has overwhelmingly been practiced by white males. And even when it has been useful for gender theory and feminism, e.g. Judith Butler's use of discourse analysis and performativity to stress the construction of gender and the disparity between gender and sex, such theoretical approaches can often "undermine or neglect the more material, in the sense of economic and physical, foundations of identity and identity politics and indeed power itself."¹¹ As a result, according to bell hooks, "Very few African-American intellectuals have talked or written about postmodernism...[due to how] Black popular culture is associated solely with concrete gut level experience conceived as either opposing or having no connection to abstract thinking and the production of critical theory."¹² Skeptical towards postmodernism's decentering of the subject, she imagines Blacks thinking to themselves "Yeah, it's easy to give up identity, when you got one."¹³ Nevertheless, hooks seeks a way in which postmodern theory could possibly relate to the Black experience. "The overall impact of the postmodern condition is that many other groups now share with black folks a sense of deep alienation, despair, uncertainty, loss of sense of grounding, even if it is not informed by shared circumstance."¹⁴ She ultimately suggests one can overcome the alleged incompatibility between postmodernism and the experiences of Blacks by practicing "radical postmodernism." "Radical postmodernism calls attention to those sensibilities which are shared across the boundaries of class, gender, and race, and which could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy – ties that would promote recognition of common commitments and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition."¹⁵

The postwar generation of Germans often positioned itself in solidarity with or even as sharing the experience of the Other via empathy and performance. For Germans who felt silenced by master narratives or felt de-centered in postwar German society, engaging with or empathizing with the experience of African Americans might have helped them process these changes and find a voice. hooks hopes that by practicing radical postmodernism and critiquing essentialism:

such a critique allows us to affirm multiple black identities, varied black experience. It also challenges colonial imperialist paradigms of black identity which represent Black popular culture one-dimensionally in ways that reinforce and sustain white supremacy. This discourse created the idea of the "primitive" and promoted the notion of an

¹¹Tim Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 103.

¹²bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 23.

¹³Ibid., 28.

¹⁴Ibid., 27. Robert Reid-Pharr describes Blacks as feeling alienated post WWII due to their migration "from south to north, country to city, farm to factory." Robert Reid-Pharr, *Once You Go Black: Choice, Desire, and the Black American Intellectual* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 154.

¹⁵Ibid.

“authentic” experience, seeing as “natural” those expressions of black life which conformed to a pre-existing pattern or stereotype.¹⁶

Just like postmodern males’ valorization of femininity, worshiping a uniform Black experience fails to recognize the specificities in different locations and among individuals. Yet, perhaps *empathy* alone is not enough. In her essay “Rethinking Collaboration: Working the Indigene-Colonizer Hyphen,” Alison Jones argues that “Empathy’s impulse... is to *overcome* difference, to breakdown the hyphen between Self and Other”¹⁷ and that is why one must go beyond empathy. Jones argues for a “learning *from* rather than learning *about* the Other... The hyphen [between indigene and colonizer] ideally demands a posture of alert vulnerability to or recognition of difference, rather than a pose of emphatic understanding that tends to reduce difference to the same.”¹⁸ In this study, I ask if a mutual understanding between Germans and African Americans can still be reached, when Germans’ understanding of Black popular culture is limited to essentialist notions? Do Germans run the risk of remaining on the level of empathy and trying to erase difference? When Germans mimic narrow aspects of Black popular culture in order to critique an essentialist notion of being German, have they enslaved one group of people in fixed identities in order to free themselves?

What is Black Popular Culture?

My definition of Black popular culture is based on Stuart Hall’s arguments in his essay “What is this ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?”. Hall stresses that Black popular culture is a product of the specific experience of the African Diaspora and that it is a culture characterized by an underlying over-determination. This over-determination corresponds to the fact that during transatlantic slavery “since we [the descendents of Africans] were excluded from the cultural mainstream”¹⁹ there were only few performative spaces left. Thus, the culture produced in the African Diaspora was affected by the social and economic circumstances and limitations under which Blacks suffered. Furthermore, Black popular culture is a hybrid; it exists at the intersection of what slaves inherited from Africa and the intermingling cultures found in the New World. Working off of Cornell West, Hall defines Black popular culture as: “Selective appropriation, incorporation, and rearticulation of European ideologies, cultures, and institutions, alongside an African heritage” which “led to linguistic innovations in rhetorical stylization of the body, forms of occupying an alien social space, heightened expressions, hairstyles, ways of walking, standing and talking, and a means of constituting and sustaining camaraderie.”²⁰

¹⁶ hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*, 28.

¹⁷ Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins, “Rethinking Collaboration: Working the Indigene-Colonizer Hyphen,” in *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, ed. Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008), 480.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 471.

¹⁹ Stuart Hall, “What is this ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kaun-Hsing Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 471.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

As Stuart Hall has argued throughout his work on identity politics, “‘Black’ is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category”²¹ and who or what is Black is a constantly shifting idea that depends on historical context. Suggesting that Black popular culture comes from some essential “Black community” or that there is an “authentic” Black popular culture “naturalizes and dehistoricizes difference, mistaking what is historical and cultural for what is natural, biological, and genetic.”²² Nevertheless, there have been attempts throughout history to essentialize Black popular culture and ignore its many nuances. The term “Black popular culture” has come to signify the Black community in general, in which Black experience is lived.

A further clarification is necessary regarding this term. Jacqueline Brown asks that we acknowledge the imbalance of power within the African Diaspora which most often preferences African American culture. I am aware of this power imbalance and therefore I would like to explicitly state that in each of the texts I analyze, the Black popular culture mimicked is most often based on a narrow notion of African American culture. Throughout history, Germans have admired many different foreign cultures, from Goethe who had an affinity for Indian culture, demonstrated in his collection of poems *West-östlicher Diwan* (West-Eastern Divan 1819), to today’s *Hobbyindianer* (hobby Indians) – Germans who dress up like Native Americans and spend weekends role playing and mimicking a Native American lifestyle.

Yet, there are several reasons why Germans often choose African Americans when looking for an Other with which to align themselves. First of all, since the nineteenth century, American culture has been attractive because it was perceived as distant, foreign and modern. Furthermore, compared to the very small presence of Africans, African Americans, and Afro-Germans in Germany in the 19th and 20th centuries, America had a much larger population of Blacks and this helped to intensify the overall appeal of American culture as something different. However, African American culture was not merely valued because it was *American*. As the descendants of Africans who had been ripped from their homelands and resultantly came into contact with European styles, American Blacks were seen as primitive yet modern, oppressed yet also producers of incredibly different, liberating styles. In contrast to Africa, which has historically been thought of as backwards, dark and uncanny in a way that is more frightening,²³ African American culture was seen as cutting edge and innovative.

Despite the engagement with European styles that Hall believes defines the hybridity of Afro-diasporic culture, throughout this dissertation, you will see examples of characters who essentialize Black culture as something authentic, pure and untouched by modern or white society. This is clearly misleading. First of all, popular culture is contradictory. On the one hand, popular culture boasts the authenticity of popular forms, supposedly speaking for the importance of marginal cultures that resist being marginalized. As Valerie Smith points out, there is a tendency to read working class culture as if it was “an autonomous space, free of negotiations with hegemony that contains the pure source of musical and spiritual culture and inspiration.”²⁴

²¹ Stuart Hall, “New Ethnicities,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kaun-Hsing Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 443.

²² Hall, “What is this ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?,” 472.

²³ See Sander Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany*. (Boston G.K. Hall, 1982). And Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001).

²⁴ Valerie Smith, *Not Just Race, Not Just Gender: Black Feminist Readings* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 67.

However, as Theodor Adorno argued throughout his work on the culture industry, popular culture has become the “dominant form of global culture,”²⁵ sold and marketed by big companies. Popular culture is a symbol of commodification representing the intersection of culture, power and capital. Thus, for example, in Chapter Four, the protagonist of Ulrich Plenzdorf’s *Die neuen Leiden des Jungen W.* (The New Sufferings of Young W., 1972) might view Black popular music as something raw and free in contrast to confining East German culture; however, his choice of artist, Louis Armstrong, is someone who by the 1970s was a well-established name in jazz and had become a part of mainstream culture.

Secondly, it is misleading to think of Black popular culture as inherently opposed to and different from white mainstream culture, because as both Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy have pointed out, due to its emergence in the African Diaspora, Black popular culture has always been a back and forth and intermingling of cultures. The cake walk is considered a part of Black popular culture, but it is a dance based on Black slaves’ imitation of their white masters. Elvis Presley’s greased-back hair was an imitation of Black R&B performers who in turn straightened their hair to copy Caucasian styles. Debates regarding the origins of hair straightening in the African Diaspora exemplify how Black popular culture is not only constructed and disputed from without, but also from within. For example, Kobena Mercer disagrees with the argument that Blacks historically straightened their hair to mimic white hairstyles. However, one might read his disagreement as coming from a position of “strategic essentialism.”²⁶ By denying the possible influence of white beauty norms on hair straightening in the African Diaspora, Mercer might be attempting to naturalize this practice and present a unified and simplified Black group identity in order to achieve certain political goals.²⁷

According to Stuart Hall, the reason why the syncretic nature of Black popular culture is often ignored is because dehistoricizing and essentializing Black popular culture, making it something naturalistic, helps define a clear line between white and Black, us and them. Nevertheless, the essentialization of Black popular culture has also allowed for some advantages. In the texts I will analyze, the reason German rebels seek out Black popular culture is precisely because it is seen as different from German culture; it is Other and therefore rebellious. As Hall says, “historically, nothing could have been done to intervene in the dominated field of mainstream popular culture, to try to win some space there, without the strategies through which those dimensions were condensed onto the signified ‘black’”²⁸, because “black” is Other, exotic and in.

Nonetheless, there are also dangers in this essentialization of Black popular culture. As Gilroy pointed out, if we continue to think of Black as different from British then we are forever faced with the binary of Black *or* British. With this argument, Gilroy speaks from the context of postcolonial Great Britain. Following WWII, during the decades when former British colonies around the world fought for independence, white British citizens were confronted with “Black”

²⁵ Hall, “What is this ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?,” 469.

²⁶ For Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s discussion of the term “strategic essentialism” and her disagreement with how it has been used, see Sara Danius, Stefan Jonsson, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,” *boundary 2* 20, no. 2 (1993).

²⁷ See “Black Hair/Style Politics” in Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 97-130.

²⁸ Hall, “What is this ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?,” 471-2.

immigrants who were members of the Commonwealth and sought employment and education opportunities in the UK. Members of the Commonwealth from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean had often been socialized and educated according to British norms and yet they were confronted with racism and exclusion in the UK. As Gilroy explains, the point is to recognize that Black is not necessarily Other. It is not necessarily in opposition to mainstream British culture. You can be Black *and* British.

Germany certainly did not have the same postcolonial experience as Great Britain. Germany had lost its colonies following WWI and as soon as this happened, those Africans who were considered members of German *Schutzgebiete* (protectorates) lost this status.²⁹ In the British case, the realization that British culture was not exclusively white was initiated by postwar migration. For Germans, however, their confrontation with this notion was largely the result of a generation of Afro-German children, degradingly referred to as “occupation children,” born after WWII to African American GIs and their white German girlfriends and wives. Although there had been small populations of Afro-Germans or Black Germans³⁰ in Germany since the 19th century, statistically, in public and in the media, their presence was largely invisible. During the postwar era, when Germans witnessed a generation of Afro-Germans who were born and socialized in Germany, the white majority was confronted with the notion that one can be Black *and* German. Yet, even today, the idea that a person can be Black and German is still not necessarily widely accepted.³¹ The question is, whether or not postwar German rebels eventually recognized that German does not exclusively mean white and if so, does Black popular culture lose its effectiveness as a tool of rebellion precisely at the moment when one recognizes this?

In addition to the essentializing stereotypes which non-Blacks designate to Blacks, E. Patrick Johnson points out that, as I mentioned briefly above, the limitations on Black popular culture have not only been constructed from without, but also from within the African Diaspora. For example, in Richard Dyer’s discussion of Paul Robeson’s career, he demonstrates how not just white Americans, but African Americans also attributed natural emotion and vitality to Blacks. However, these African Americans viewed this as something positive that could infuse and revitalize white American culture. “The white positive valuation of Black popular culture does not have these tendencies toward racial synthesis, but on the contrary often seems to want to ensure that blacks keep their blackness unsullied.”³²

Whether Black popular culture is associated with poverty, ghetto life, hip hop, jazz, African dashikis or afros, “...the notion of an ‘authentic’ blackness has always been contested...”³³ Johnson suggests that in order to move beyond a constricting notion of Black popular culture, “we [must] dismantle the hierarchies that privilege particular black

²⁹ Katharina Oguntoye, *Eine afro-deutsche Geschichte: Zur Lebenssituation von Afrikanern und Afro-Deutschen in Deutschland von 1884 bis 1950* (Berlin: Hoho Verlag Christine Hoffmann, 1997), 13-29.

³⁰ In Germany, both terms, *Afro-deutsch* (Afro-German) and *schwarze Deutsche/schwarzer Deutscher* (Black German) are used, depending on whichever term the individual chooses.

³¹ Michelle M. Wright addresses how Afro-Germans are viewed as Others-from-Without in the following essay, Michelle M. Wright, “Others-from-within from Without: Afro-German Subject Formation and the Challenge of a Counter-Discourse,” *Callaloo* 26, no. 2 (2003).

³² Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 77.

³³ E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 3.

positionalities at the expense of others.”³⁴ It is with this goal in mind that the last two chapters of my dissertation turn the white monologue about Black popular culture into a dialogue with African Americans and with another minority group, Turkish Germans. While the Black protagonists discussed in Chapter Five confront limitations on Black popular culture created by Germans and Blacks themselves, Chapter Six focuses on Turkish German author Feridun Zaimoğlu and his arguments about identity politics in Germany.

Popular Music

African American popular music is of particular importance for my analyses, because in all but one chapter, music plays a prominent role as a gateway to Black popular culture or a way of expressing solidarity with African Americans. In *Small Acts*, Paul Gilroy offers the following explanation for why Black popular music³⁵ is so appealing:

It is so often argued that the spontaneity of black musical forms, their performance aesthetic and commitment to improvisation have made them into something of a magnet for other social groups. Certainly the centrality that issues of sexuality, eroticism and gender conflict enjoy within black folk cultures has given them a wide constituency. Their Rabelaisian power to carnivalize and disperse the dominant order through an intimate yet public discourse on sexuality and the body has drawn many outsiders into a dense complex network of black cultural symbols.³⁶

Gilroy and German ethnomusicologist Peter Wicke also acknowledge the unique appeal that Black popular music has due to its dialectic of uniting the subjective and the objective, the performer with the audience. One of the reasons why music has played such an important role in “Black cultural traffic” to Germany is that many of the first African Americans who traveled to Germany were musicians.³⁷ For Germans who had never been to the U.S., Black popular culture came packaged as Negro spirituals and jazz tunes.

A further reason why I stress music as a medium that facilitates contact with Black popular culture is because, as an aesthetic form, music has found particular importance both inside and outside the Afro-diasporic community. Black popular music is often “burdened with the task of conjuring up a utopia of racial authenticity that is everywhere denied but still sought

³⁴ Ibid., 40.

³⁵ By using the term “Black music,” I do not intend to generalize the various genres of African Diasporic music. Rather, I wish to point out that African American musical genres are most often influenced by other locations in the African Diaspora i.e. the Caribbean or the UK. Furthermore, “Black music” is a term used in Germany to designate genres that have been pioneered by African Americans. It can include genres ranging from R&B and soul to funk and hip hop. The label “Black music” is used by concert venues, clubs and music stores. Partly because of the intense circulation of musical ideas within the African Diaspora, a German fan of hip hop or reggae is more likely to refer to her taste as “Black music” rather than specifically “African American” or “Jamaican” music respectively.

³⁶ Paul Gilroy, *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Culture* (Essex: Serpent’s Tail, 1993), 35.

³⁷ I take the term “Black cultural traffic” from Elam & Jackson 2008. In the book’s introduction, Jackson defines black cultural traffic as “actual movements of black cultural material from place to place, rather than in a conceptual sense...Between black performances and the viewers looking in on those performances, there occurs trade in ideas, styles, impressions, body language, and gestures.” Kennell Jackson, “Introduction: Travelling While Black,” in *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture*, ed. Harry J. Elam (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 8.

nonetheless.”³⁸ Because slaves were denied access to literacy, music was important not only as a means of communication and expression, but also resistance.³⁹

An excellent example of how Black popular music is tied both to authenticity and rebellion in the white imaginary is in a scene in Austro-Hungarian director Géza von Radványi’s *Onkel Toms Hütte* (1965), a film adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Onkel Tom’s Cabin* (1852), which will both be mentioned again in Chapter Three. Along with the panning shots of happily smiling slaves, the film offers several performances of slave spirituals. One of the film’s first scenes is of two wealthy whites (George Shelby and his fiancée Victoria) who have snuck into the slaves’ quarters to hear them sing. For George Shelby, son of the plantation master, this is a safe space to consume Black popular culture. In George’s idealized world, the spirituals are the authentic expression of the slaves’ humanity in the face of brutality. From the slave master’s perspective, however, song keeps the slaves happy, encouraging them to work more.

“Authentic” slave spirituals first made their way to Europe when the Fisk Jubilee Singers, in an attempt to raise money for their school, traveled there in the early 1870s. At this time, blackface minstrelsy already had a strong presence in Europe and was very popular. Gilroy argues: “Black people singing slave songs as mass entertainment set new public standards of authenticity for black cultural expression. The legitimacy of these new cultural forms was established precisely through their distance from the racial codes of minstrelsy.”⁴⁰ The Fisk Jubilee Singers’ performances were received as more authentic than minstrelsy and audiences felt they were encountering genuine memories of slavery.

From the days of slavery, through the popularity of minstrelsy and beyond, contact with Black popular culture in the Western world has been marked by a search for authenticity. George Shelby’s rebellious act in the antebellum South precedes the white hipsters of the jazz age who sought out Black jazz clubs and the German youth who watched hip hop films like *Wild Style* (1983) and *Beat Street* (1984) in theaters. Gilroy approaches this burden of authenticity placed on Black popular music by rejecting the polar sides of nationalist essentialism and skeptical pluralism. Gilroy believes that a nationalist essentialist approach to Black popular music ignores the diversity of Black popular culture, while those who see Black identity as purely constructed ignore the fact that Black identity “remains the outcome of practical activity: language, gesture, bodily significations, desires.”⁴¹ Gilroy’s solution is to use a Foucauldian approach and see “racialised subjectivity as the product of the social practices that supposedly derive from it.”⁴² Thus, one could argue that Jimi Hendrix’s hypersexualized performance helped constitute his Black identity, but his performance is simultaneously derived from a mythological Black identity imposed upon him.

³⁸ Gilroy, *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Culture*, 5.

³⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso 1993), 74. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam also remark that “Under New World slave regimes, African musical instruments (especially drums, which were associated with rebellions) were explicitly forbidden...” Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 45.

⁴⁰ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 90.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, a German rebel may be influenced by other factors besides Black popular music; I merely suggest that music is a very prominent factor. Besides their disinterest in German *music*, these actors might also have issues with other cultural traditions like Christianity, Humanist education, authoritarianism or militarism. Several of the younger characters are resistant to adulthood and responsibility. Others might be resistant to the idea of a single identity determined by class, race, gender and nation, or they might wish to fight racial, class and sexual oppression.

What is German culture?

Since the performances of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, the reception of Black popular culture has had a long and ambivalent history in Germany. Yet, in order to better understand Germans' attempts to embrace and/or reject Black popular culture, we must first think about how German culture is constructed and why Black popular culture, specifically Black popular music, might be considered threatening. If the debates of the past decade about German *Leitkultur* (guiding culture)⁴³ have demonstrated anything, they have revealed the difficulty of defining precisely what German culture *is*. During these debates, suggestions were made, ranging from the Occidental (Christian and democratic) to the satirical (wearing a bikini, eating pork sausage). Founded in 1949, modern-day Germany, the Federal Republic, is an incredibly young country. The German Empire unified under Bismarck was not founded until 1871. Prior to that, Germany's identity was incredibly diverse and constantly shifting due to its many principalities and the many wars that led to the constant redrawing of borders. Ever since the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire by Napoleon in 1806, Germans struggled to achieve a territorial nation that would match the imaginary German nation represented in their minds and culture.

It is precisely because of the German nation's diversity and young history that it is so difficult to determine what German culture is. Thus, part of how the dominant group defines and polices German culture is, in Saussurean linguistic terms, by determining what German culture is *not*. Since the emerging classifications of race during the Enlightenment and the scientific approach to race and racism in the 19th century, the majority of Germans have viewed themselves as white in contrast to Black. In historic interactions between Germans and those perceived as Black (whether Africans, African Americans, Jews, "gypsies," or Turks among others), the German national discourse was concerned with defending dominant white German culture from subordinate Black cultures.

One of the important battlegrounds for the war waged over German culture has been music. Germans are known as "people of music" – an assumption Christina Applegate and Pamela Potter investigate in their essay "Germans as the 'People of Music': Genealogy of an Identity."⁴⁴ Applegate and Potter argue that in the 18th century German composers cared little about defining a German national music. Instead, the emerging national consciousness began in

⁴³ In 2000, the party chief of the Christliche Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union), Friederich Merz, suggested that immigrants must adopt a German *Leitkultur* (leading culture). The idea of *Leitkultur* suggests that in order to belong to the German "community," an immigrant must share familiar traditions and let go of some of the past traditions that may not conform to the new national identity.

⁴⁴ Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, "Germans as the 'People of Music': Genealogy of an Identity," in *Music & German National Identity*, ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

literary circles. By the end of the 18th century, music critics increasingly argued for a German musical culture that could withstand foreign, primarily Italian, influence. Critics such as J.N. Forkel, Friedrich Rochlitz and Johann Karl Friedrich Triest sought to form a canon of German music.⁴⁵ The Prussian state occasionally intervened in musical matters, sponsoring more musical projects and getting involved in training musicians. Even then, Germans disputed which musical tradition should represent the nation – high art such as classical music or popular art like the folk songs Herder so praised. Prior to the founding of the second German Empire, the growing nationalism of the 19th century supported arguments for the importance of a German musical tradition. For the bourgeois nationalists who criticized the aristocrats’ foreign ways (such as speaking French at court), German music was viewed as being able to symbolically unite the people across classes.

Ironically, when the second German Empire was founded in 1871 it only complicated the issue of a national music. Suddenly, composers who had been held in high esteem like Mozart and Beethoven could no longer be considered “German” in relation to the nation’s new borders. This German Empire also excluded many ethnic Germans outside of its borders who still felt “ownership of a German musical heritage.”⁴⁶ Music became especially important following WWI, because the government hoped music’s penchant for community building would help citizens get over the loss of the war. Despite the country’s economic hardships “Germany had managed to maintain state-run institutions”⁴⁷ to promote music which is what helped earn Germans the title “people of music.”

During the interwar years, foreign music, especially American popular music, gained increasing influence in Germany. Those nationalists who promoted music as a tool for community building viewed the avante-garde “art for art’s sake” and the foreign trends as a threat.⁴⁸ When the Nazis came to power, they established the *Reichsmusikkammer* (Reich Chamber of Music) which might have made the lives of musicians easier through its organization and promotion, but at the same time it banned non-Aryan musicians from performing, which I will discuss in Chapter One and in Chapter Two regarding the group the Comedian Harmonists. From the initial years of the postwar era until the present, the battle over German music continues to be fought; whether in the campaigns for and against jazz and rock ‘n’ roll in the 1950s or the arguments for and against more German-language music on the radio today.

Conceptual Framework: Images of “the Black” in German History

This dissertation is informed by the wealth of research on the representations of and the interaction with Blacks throughout German history – research which has been gaining momentum particularly in the past ten years. Here, when I refer to Germans’ representation and interaction with Blacks, I refer to Black as a political category that includes people of the African Diaspora and those who refer to themselves as Black. Representations of Blacks in what is now

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁸ In 1926, musicologist Peter Raabe even announced the death of German music. Ibid., 22-3.

the Federal Republic of Germany date back to the medieval period. Sander Gilman's seminal work *On Blackness without Blacks* and Peter Martin's *Schwarze Teufel, Edle Mohren* document these earlier portrayals.⁴⁹ Gilman's title especially expresses how due to the small presence of individual Blacks, early depictions of Blacks had more to do with the Black as a mythical, unknown figure. Medieval depictions of Blacks in medieval romances originally adopted from the French, like Parzival and Iwein, are fictional and focus on either the Black character as Moor, which Germans were familiar with from the Crusades as representing dark skin and heathenism, or the association between Blacks, madness and the monstrous. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, European travelogues described all foreign Others as Black and associated them with darkness and nature. However, it was not until the 17th century, with the development of scientific racism, that black and white became anthropological categories used to describe Africans and Europeans specifically.⁵⁰

Martin stresses that Germans' portrayals of "schwarzen Afrikaner"⁵¹ (Sub-Saharan Africans) have been quite different depending on the historical period. For example, with the beginning of mercantile conquest and colonization, the Black transformed from the "Oriental cultivated 'Ethiopian'" of medieval tales into the "primitive *Neger*."⁵² According to Gilman, during the Enlightenment, the image of the Black was conterminous with the slave. Hegel considered the Black "race" to be a *Kindernation* (infantile nation) who could not think abstractly and lacked any individuality. Thus, Blacks were considered incapable of progress and as a result existed outside of history.⁵³

Gilman also finds evidence of the figure of the Black functioning as a symbol of Otherness in the aesthetic theory of the 18th century.⁵⁴ The Enlightenment has often been criticized for its hypocritical position on slavery; its philosophers having pursued freedom in theory but only partially in practice. As Susan Buck-Morss argued in "Hegel and Haiti," while Hegel was developing his arguments about freedom and the master/slave relationship first published in his *Philosophie des Geistes* (Philosophy of the Mind) in 1805-6, knowledge of the fates of Black slaves throughout the Diaspora, including the slave revolt in Haiti, was readily available to him. Buck-Morss suggests that "Hegel knew about the slave revolt but was unable or unwilling to acknowledge it;" whereas Andreas Gailus argues that Hegel's master/slave dialectic

⁴⁹ Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany*. Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, Edle Mohren*. See also Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁵⁰ Jana Husmann-Kastein, "Schwarz-Weiß. Farb- und Geschlechtssymbolik in den Anfängen der Rassenkonstruktionen," in *Weiß - Weißsein - Whiteness: Kritische Studien zu Gender und Rassismus*, ed. Martina Tißberger; Gabriele Dietze; Daniela Hrzán; Jana Husmann-Kastein (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford and Wien: Peter Lang, 2009), 50.

⁵¹ Noah Sow critiques Germans' uncritical use of the term "*schwarzer Afrikaner*" in *Deutschland Schwarz Weiss*. According to Sow's astute assessment of this term's use, "*Schwarzafrikaner* is not a term that is free of discrimination, because it says nothing, except for the fact that the person is Black. Interestingly, the word is even used for people who are not even Africans... In reality, the word means a 'really black Black,' which maintains the category 'race' and also implies that a person is especially 'dark' and therefore encourages various associations."

"'Schwarzafrikaner' ist kein diskriminierungsfreier Begriff, weil er nichts aussagt, außer dass die Person Schwarz ist. Interessanterweise wird das Wort sogar oft für Menschen gebraucht, die gar keine Afrikaner sind... Das Wort bedeutet in Wirklichkeit also 'wirklich schwarzer Schwarzer', enthält demnach eine Kategorisierung der 'Rasse', impliziert auch, dass die Person besonders 'dunkel' sei, und lädt zu vielfältigen Assoziationen ein." Noah Sow, *Deutschland Schwarz Weiss: Der Alltägliche Rassismus* (München: Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, 2008), 56.

⁵² Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, Edle Mohren*, 12. The word *Neger* came into use in the 18th century and stems from the French word *negre*, which comes from the Latin word *niger* and specifically refers to sub-Saharan Africans (Gilman 1982: xii).

⁵³ Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany*, 94-5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

does not concern “rebellion and revolution but its avoidance.”⁵⁵ Perhaps Hegel did not support the revolt because he thought slavery helped tame Blacks; for in *Philosophie des Geistes* he believed that “When they are peaceful ‘they are completely good natured and harmless’ but they can be quickly moved to ‘the most horrible, frightening horrors.’”⁵⁶ Hegel also believed because Africans were unable to think abstractly, they placed man at the center of the universe and did not see any greater consequences of their actions and therefore they were capable of the most inhumane treatment of their fellow men. This rhetoric of the inhumane African who is the real conspirator of transatlantic slavery, or is at least as guilty as white men, is a common argument also found in America which will resurface in my discussion of the plantation melodrama in Chapter Three.

Several German philosophers after Hegel, however, did not completely agree with his understanding of Blacks. Gilman demonstrates how, in his works *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation, 1819) and *Parerga und Paralipomena* (1851) Arthur Schopenhauer deeply condemned the institution of slavery as well as Christianity’s implications therein. Furthermore, while Hegel saw Blacks as being outside of history, Schopenhauer placed Blacks within the world of “myth-making”; something Nietzsche also believed when he compared Africans’ idol worship to Greek mythology. Nevertheless, Schopenhauer still saw Blacks as intellectually inferior, evidence of which he believed could be found in their physiognomy. Schopenhauer read the experience of Blacks as naturalistic, interpreting the life of Black slaves as a reflection of an inherent behavior rather than an effect of their conditions.⁵⁷ One can also sense the envy of Black masculinity in his comparison between Blacks’ physical strength and the physique of animals. What is remarkable about Schopenhauer’s understanding of Blacks in comparison to Hegel’s is his recognition that the first man likely stemmed from Africa and that rather than a universal understanding of Blacks as ugly and scary, he suggests that to the Black man, the white man probably appears sickly. Thus, Schopenhauer reinstates Blacks in human history and suggests that the white man is not necessarily the norm.

In the late 19th century, Germany acquired African colonies well after its European neighbors had a significant amount of territory overseas. Due to travel to and from the colonies, as well as cultural artifacts depicting stereotypical images of Black colonial subjects, Germans’ idea of Blacks became less mythical than in the medieval period. In the African colonies, Germans ruled with *Prügelpolitik* (a policy of beating), arguing that brute force was the only way to civilize Blacks. For example, the Germans’ genocide of the Herero of German Southwest Africa resulted in 40,000 to 60,000 deaths.⁵⁸ During this time, Nietzsche’s idea of Blacks in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (The Genealogy of Morals, 1887) was linked to his argument that civilized man had become too alienated from nature. For Nietzsche, the Black man was a noble savage who stood “at an earlier stage of development” because he could withstand more

⁵⁵ Andreas Gailus, "Language Unmoored: On Kleist's 'the Betrothal in St. Domingue'," in *Rebellion and Revolution: Defiance in German Language, History and Art*, ed. Melissa Etzler and Priscilla Layne (New Castle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 90 fn. 8.

⁵⁶ Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany*, 94.

⁵⁷ For example, he suggests that Blacks live in close living quarters for the narcissistic reason of seeing other Black faces.

⁵⁸ Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany*, 123.

suffering than the European.⁵⁹ “Unlike contemporary man, the Black bears suffering as suffering, without resorting to intellectual subterfuge such as transferring suffering to the realm of the aesthetic (‘tragischer Mitleid’) or the religious (‘les nostalgias de la croix’) [...] what the Black has is a heightened sense of the role which pain plays as an intrinsic element in the world.”⁶⁰ Thus, as opposed to Hegel who viewed Blacks as pre-human, a viewpoint that would justify their inhumane treatment, for Nietzsche Blacks’ relationship to suffering made them all the more human. This notion of the particular relationship between Blacks and suffering is important, because for several of the German rebels I will discuss, associating oneself with such a suffering people is a way to express a victim status which is not often attributed to Germans.

In Germany’s African colonies, men outnumbered women four to one.⁶¹ As a result, many German men took African wives. Much of Germans’ anxieties over race during the early 20th century resulted from the Afro-German children born from these unions. Granting these children German citizenship would have disrupted the belief that German subjects are inherently white and therefore superior to Blacks. Thus, these interracial marriages were eventually outlawed and the children stripped of their citizenship, in order to maintain white (men’s) domination over the Black population. Despite these laws in the colonies, there were Africans who traveled to Germany to study or work, and some of them were naturalized there.⁶²

During the colonial period, both Africans and Afro-Germans, some born in the colonies and some born in Germany, began performing in *Völkerschauen* – traveling ethnographic exhibits that intended to present the “natives”’ lives in their natural setting. Aside from the *Völkerschauen*, for most Germans physical encounters with Blacks were associated with the Rhineland occupation post WWI, when French African troops were stationed in the area. Following WWI, Germany’s colonies became mandates,⁶³ but that did not erase their presence from the German imagination. The national consensus was that the loss of its colonies was an affront to German honor and that Germany needed to continue its project of civilization in Africa and bring culture to the natives.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 114.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 115-6.

⁶¹ Kathleen J. Reich, “Racially Mixed Marriages in Colonial Namibia,” in *Crosscurrents: African Americans, Africa, and Germany in the Modern World*, ed. Leroy Hopkins and C. Aisha Blackshire-Belay David McBride (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1998), 159.

⁶² See Oguntoye, *Eine afro-deutsche Geschichte: Zur Lebenssituation von Afrikanern und Afro-Deutschen in Deutschland von 1884 bis 1950*.

⁶³ After WWI, German colonies were ruled as mandates of other countries. “Already since 1915, the Allies – France, Great Britain and Japan – had occupied all German colonies, except for German East Africa. In 1916 the first agreements were made between Great Britain and France about continuing the occupation of the German colonies Togo and Cameroon. Until the end of the war, further secret agreements were made between various interested parties about Germany’s ‘properties’ overseas. These agreements were then confirmed by the 119th clause of the Versailles treaty and therewith legally secured. In the treaty, ‘Germany gave up all of its rights and titles from the properties overseas, to the benefit of the Allies and the other allied countries.’” “Schon seit 1915 hatten die Alliierten – Frankreich, Großbritannien und Japan – alle deutschen Kolonien, bis auf Deutsch Ostafrika, besetzt. 1916 gab es die ersten Absprachen zwischen Großbritannien und Frankreich über den Fortbestand der Besetzung der deutschen Kolonien Togo und Kamerun. Bis Kriegsende wurden weitere Geheimverträge zwischen den verschiedenen Interessenten an den überseeischen ‘Besitzungen’ Deutschlands geschlossen, die dann durch Klausel 119 des Versailler Vertrages bestätigt und rechtlich abgesichert wurden. Darin ‘verzichtete Deutschland zugunsten der Alliierten und der übrigen Verbündeten auf alle Rechte und Titel aus seinen überseeischen Besitzungen.’” Ibid., 21.

Theoretical Framework

What's in a Name: Appropriation, Ethnic Drag or Mimicry?

Now that I have established working definitions for Black popular culture and German culture and offered some historical background on Germans' encounter with Blacks, the next question at hand is how one can best describe the phenomenon of Germans and Turkish Germans who align themselves with Blacks and Black popular culture. I prefer not to use the word appropriation because, in my opinion, although the term implies a clear taking from another culture, the power dynamics are not necessarily clear. Typically, the person who appropriates is the one in power. If I were to say that Turkish Germans appropriated hip hop culture, it might sound like Turkish Germans occupy a position of power and they have "stolen" something from "powerless" African Americans. But the fact is, taken into context, neither African Americans nor Turkish Germans form the dominant group in their respective countries. Thus, instead of one powerful (white) group appropriating culture from a less powerful (Black) group, this is a case of one minority group (Turkish Germans) mimicking the culture of another minority group (African Americans). Another problem that I have with the word appropriation is the notion of authenticity that is inevitably tied to it. My concern is not whether or not German jazz or hip hop is authentic, but why Germans are drawn to these genres. What can Germans express through Black popular culture that they otherwise cannot? How does Black popular culture help them communicate their feelings?

There are certainly similarities or overlaps between my project and Katrin Sieg's investigation of West German "performances of 'race' as masquerade" which she described as "ethnic drag."⁶⁴ In several of Sieg's case studies, Germans literally impersonate or dress-up as ethnic Others. A few of the examples Sieg gives are R.W. Fassbinder's performance of a Greek guest worker in *Katzelmacher* (1968) or *Hobbyindianer* whom I mentioned above. However, in several other of Sieg's example, Germans merely use the experience of ethnic Others as subject matter to address political arguments.

In my analyses, the rebels' motivations for aligning themselves with Blacks are similar to some of the motivations Sieg describes. For example, Sieg discusses "leftist and feminist artists [who seek] to grapple with the precarious incorporation of 'race' into anti-fascist critiques."⁶⁵ These leftist artists often stress the disjunction between the (white) actor and the (Black) role, which is an instance I will discuss in Fassbinder's film *Whity* in Chapter Three. And as I mentioned above, Sieg dedicates an entire chapter to *Hobbyindianer*, many of whose reasons for masquerading as Native Americans resonate with the rebels on which my study is based. As Sieg states, "Hobbyism allowed Germans to explore alternative notions of ethnicity that supplanted prior concepts of Aryan supremacy. Postwar Germans' identification with the victims of Aryan foreign invasion reflected (and displaced) the historical experience of Allied occupation, but also

⁶⁴ Katrin Sieg, *Ethnic Drag: Performing Race, Nation, Sexuality in West Germany* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press), 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

constituted a form of historical denial.”⁶⁶ Likewise, throughout the next chapters I will question whether Germans’ identification with Blacks in the postwar period always had to do with allowing them to disassociate from the perpetrators of the Holocaust and instead identify with victims of oppression. Among the hobbyists, Sieg found that some of them “impersonate Indians in order to symbolically oppose and master their sense of alienation in late capitalism and its social hierarchies and wish to recapture and organize community in harmony with nature. Some resent the very egalitarianism and pacifism engineered by the modern welfare state and dream of a tribal warrior.”⁶⁷ Similarly, for some of the rebels I will discuss, their identification with Black popular culture relates to a special connection to nature and/or a sense of alienation in late capitalism.

Despite the similarities between my own project and Sieg’s, Chapter Three’s discussion of *Whity* is the only clear example of “ethnic drag” in this dissertation. There is a particular physicality involved with Sieg’s examples. Whether it is a German impersonating a foreigner, a German speaking as a foreigner or fictional foreign characters used to address German concerns; it seems these are all examples of using the body or the physical presence of the Other. Aside from *Whity*, in the other German texts I discuss, Black bodies (real or artificial) are not used. The protagonists do not masquerade as Blacks, nor do they engage with or imagine Black bodies. The rebels I am concerned with are interested in what Black popular culture stands for. Thus, I would like to describe this phenomenon as mimicking Black popular culture. I define mimicking Black popular culture as actors who interpret their lives in Germany as being similar to that of African Americans in the U.S. These subjects’ experience of subordination to German hegemony is what makes up the core of their association with Blacks. By mimicking Black popular culture, they interpret their own suffering as “outsiders” of German culture through the experience of African American suffering.

Not to say that invoking the Black popular culture does not in any way relate to Black physicality. Although the subjects on which I focus do not use Black bodies or masquerade as Blacks, in their minds Black bodies are tied to certain histories of victimhood, from slavery to ghettoization. According to Sabine Broeck, when Germans condemn American racism, their relationship to African Americans is often defined by abolitionist “pornotroping”, a term Broeck borrows from Hortense Spiller:

The notion of pornotroping entails, also, human negotiations on various mundane levels; said troping obscenely overwrites the black person with his or her assumed bodily ‘gestalt’: an overwhelming yet powerless presence and its assumed visceral, charismatic energies. In the same move, however paradoxical it may sound, the trope invariably glues black personhood to its mythical history as a movable body-thing that white people have been able to transgress against without reprimand; a work of voyeuristic troping, and re-troping which casts the African American human being always already in the representational shape of a body at disposal, for a variety of services depending on the given historical situation and its agents. This pornotroping as the key element of white

⁶⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 25.

abolitionist responses to and assumptions of blackness then works as a protean palimpsest – an ever-changing configuration.⁶⁸

Thus, those Germans who view Black popular culture solely in relation to suffering, particularly those Germans who do not recognize their own transgressions against Blacks, are guilty of essentializing Black popular culture and gluing Black personhood to a mythical history of oppression located outside of German history, an object that can be instrumentalized for other purposes.

However, in the context of my work, the rebels' identification with Black popular culture is not *only* about a shared experience of suffering. Rather, it is the African American's mythical ability to *survive* suffering that makes Black popular culture so attractive for these outsiders. Reflecting on British youth's attraction to Black popular culture in the postwar period, Dick Hebdige stated that the "Black Man" fascinated others with the fact that he could "bend the rules to suit his own purposes, he could elaborate his own private codes and skills and a language which was at once brilliant and opaque... He could inhabit a structure, even alter its shape without ever once owning it..."⁶⁹ Thus, aligning themselves with Blacks not only gives these rebels a model of suffering but a subversive way to deal with this suffering by "dropping out" of mainstream society.

I have chosen the term mimic in particular, because of how it relates to Homi Bhabha's notion of "mimicry" in *The Location of Culture*. In contrast to appropriation, the power relation is a lot more visible in Bhabha's definition of the term mimicry as: "[. . .] the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power."⁷⁰ When the figure in power mimics those whom he views as lesser, the powerful assumes that the two can never be the same. However, when the Other mimics those in power, it can be done subversively – such as the slaves' impersonation of their masters in the cake walk.

What I find most helpful about the term "mimicry" is that whether those in power mimic the subordinate or the other way around, either way there is always slippage, excess and difference – even the person in power cannot flawlessly perform the mimicry. Acknowledging that within each act of mimicry there is slippage allows me to look at each case individually and determine what does not quite match up. For example, in Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*, the teenage protagonist Edgar indirectly compares his own problems to the sufferings of Blacks. While Edgar does have several real problems and rightfully feels alienated by society, it seems audacious to compare society's prejudice against his long hair to racial prejudice against Blacks. This comparison cannot match up perfectly. But why not? What does the slippage say about the protagonist's ideas about himself and his ideas about Blacks? I am interested in the slippage that occurs when German characters mimic Black popular culture, and also how Black

⁶⁸ Sabine Broeck, "The Erotics of African American Endurance, Or: On the Right Side of History? White (West)-German Sentiment between Pornotroping and Civil Rights Solidarity," in *Germans and African Americans: Two Centuries of Exchange*, ed. Larry Greene and Anke Ortlepp (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 138.

⁶⁹ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 54.

⁷⁰ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 122.

characters resist becoming puppets for German desires, which is something I will address in Chapter Five.

Within the larger category of mimicry, I find ventriloquism⁷¹ a helpful framework when thinking about how several German characters and texts seem haunted by Black popular culture. This is a metaphor Ella Shohat and Robert Stam also allude to when they describe how some American films “enthusiastically foreground the Black and Latino influence on ‘White’ popular culture, projecting communal utopias in which Euro-American characters are viscerally ‘possessed’ or ‘entranced’ by the very Afro-American or Latin cultures repressed in antecedent cinema.”⁷² Nevertheless, films like *Dirty Dancing* and *Hairspray* “retain the old hierarchies in focalization, narratively privileging the Euro-American... perspective, even though it is Afro-Latin music/dance that energizes the film.”⁷³ Likewise in several of the texts I will look at, Black popular culture is not necessarily the focus, but more often than not fleeting references are made to it in order to articulate something about German and Turkish German characters. It is not unproblematic to describe the phenomenon I am concerned with as ventriloquism. Eric Lott uses the term ventriloquism to discuss early American blackface, which he calls “popular racial ventriloquism.”⁷⁴ As Lott states, “The blackface performer is in effect a perfect metaphor for one culture’s ventriloquial self-expression through the art forms of someone else’s.”⁷⁵ In blackface, whites used the guise of Blacks to speak about their own insecurities and anxieties.

While the actors I discuss are definitely more concerned with themselves than with Blacks, when they mimic Black popular culture or use Black popular music to articulate their experience it is not in the same malicious tone of blackface. The rebels I discuss do not seek to mock Black popular culture and they do not disguise themselves as Blacks, which is why I chose the phrase “Black Voices, German Rebels” and not “Black Masks, German Rebels” – the phrase “White Skin, Black Masks” (an inversion of Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*) is much more common.⁷⁶ The idea of a Black mask focuses more on physical appearance, whereas a Black voice is something much more unstable and unreliable. “Black voices” could refer to the fact that several of the German rebels are concerned with Black struggles against oppression. These Germans not only make it a point to listen to Black voices, but also echo them within German society by making Germans aware of these struggles. Furthermore, to speak with a Black voice recalls debates in pop music about whether or not whites can sing Blues or Soul or whether a white singer can “sound Black.”⁷⁷ This is an issue some music critics suggest has become irrelevant today and I will return to this concern in the conclusion. To speak of a white German with a Black voice could also stress common experiences. If for example, Soul music is about “testifying” – speaking the truth in the face of oppression – then a person can have “soul” irrespective of their origin or skin color. In this respect, German rebels who stand by their

⁷¹ Steven Connor defines the term ventriloquism as “the power to speak through others or as the experience of being spoken through by others” in Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14.

⁷² Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, 235.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 102.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁷⁶ Both Dick Hebdige and Joseph Roth have sections with the title “White Skin(s), Black Masks” in *The Meaning of Style* and *Cities of the Dead* respectively.

⁷⁷ See Moritz Ege, *Schwarz Werden: >>Afroamerikanophilie<< in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2007), 70-2.

convictions in the face of their struggles can definitely be thought of as having “soul” or having a Black voice.

Regardless if it is called appropriation, mimicry or “ethnic drag,” the phenomenon of whites, in particular white males, impersonating or identifying with Blacks has a long history in the West; from Germany and France to England and the U.S., Eric Lott believes whether we are talking about impersonation (e.g. blackface performers) or identification (e.g. jazz Bohemians), these are all cases of white men who are marginalized “by temperament, by habit (often alcoholism), by ethnicity, even by sexual orientation, [and] these artists have immersed themselves in ‘Black popular culture’ to indulge their felt sense of difference. It was an avenue that allowed them certain underground privileges (and accrued many demerits) which a more legitimate course would not have provided.”⁷⁸ Lott stresses that the engagement with Black popular culture in these past trends was always ephemeral, creating “brothers for the time being.” He argues that because of the history of white men projecting onto Black men and white men’s anxieties about their own prowess and the binary of rational vs. corporeal, white masculinity in America is largely modeled on Black masculinity to such an extent that the white participants in this performance are unaware of it.⁷⁹ As Kobena Mercer describes it, “Like a photographic negative, the white negro was an inverted image of otherness, in which attributes devalored by the dominant culture were simply revalorized or hypervalorized as emblems of alienation and outsidersness, a kind of strategic self-othering in relation to dominant cultural norms.”⁸⁰

The reason Black masculinity is so important for white American masculinity is likely due to the intimate history shared between white and Black men in the U.S. from the days of slavery to what some have called the modern-day “lynchings” of Black men like O.J. Simpson and Michael Jackson.⁸¹ In contrast, due to the significantly small population of Blacks throughout German history, German men have not lived very intimately with Black men. Nevertheless, Black men and their representations have also circulated in Germany, especially with the large numbers of African American men stationed there after the war. Coincidentally, the rebels’ engagement with Black popular culture on which I focus is also entangled with their fears and anxieties about their own masculinity.

Hegemonic German Masculinity

All of the protagonists, authors and directors I have chosen to study are males, either German, Turkish German or African American. The German and Turkish German men feel uneasy with German culture, and part of their unease has to do with their discomfort with hegemonic German masculinity. I take my definition of hegemonic masculinity from R.W. Connell who defines it as:

⁷⁸ Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, 51.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁰ Kobena Mercer, “Skin Head Sex Thing: Racial Difference and the Homoerotic Imaginary,” in *Masculine Studies Reader*, ed. Rachel Adams and David Savran (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2002), 197.

⁸¹ R.W. Connell briefly discusses the role of race in American masculinity in *Masculinities*, 75. Linda Williams discusses the history of the “Uncle Tom” and “Anti-Tom” from the days of slavery to the present in *Playing the Race Card*.

the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. This is not to say that the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are always the most powerful people. They may be exemplars, such as film actors, or even fantasy figures, such as film characters...Nevertheless, hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual...It is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony (though violence often supports or underpins authority). I stress that hegemonic masculinity embodies a 'currently accepted' strategy. When the conditions for the defense of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony. The dominance of *any* group of men may be challenged by women.⁸²

Connell points out that although most men do not meet the normative standards for hegemonic masculinity that does not mean they are automatically subordinate to the norm. The majority of men merely comply with the hegemony, they may not necessarily be part of the "frontline troops of patriarchy" but they still generally "gain from the overall subordination of women."⁸³

Connell's approach to the study of masculinity has since been criticized for its focus on a female-male struggle, its reinforcement of "sex" as a fixed biological category and its failure to deal significantly with race. On the subject of Black masculinity, Connell merely theorizes:

Race relations may also become an integral part of the dynamic between masculinities. In a white-supremacist context, black masculinities play symbolic roles for white gender construction. For instance, black sporting stars become exemplars of masculine toughness, while the fantasy figure of the black rapist plays an important role in sexual politics among whites, a role much exploited by right-wing politics in the United States. Conversely, hegemonic masculinity among whites sustains the institutional oppression and physical terror that have framed the making of black communities.⁸⁴

Connell's speculation that race will become important for thinking about different kinds of masculinities was accurate, but I will discuss this more in detail in the next section. While Connell's work belongs to the second wave of masculinity studies, third wave masculinity studies has since sought to incorporate more queer theory and performativity. Nevertheless, I find Connell's theoretical approach especially helpful for my study because of his:

wider consideration of social structures and their relationship to a plurality of masculinities and indeed a complexity of outcomes...Thus, some forms of masculinity

⁸² R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 77.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸⁴ Connell, *Masculinities*, 80.

[a]re perceived as hegemonic and indeed oppressive to others that [a]re subordinate... More significantly still, [in Connell's study] men's practices of masculinity [a]re open to scrutiny as actively challenging, passively complying with, or simply negatively reinforcing the status quo.⁸⁵

Corresponding to this model, in each chapter I will consider the hegemonic German masculinity of the time, its deviations and how these masculinities relate to whiteness and Black popular culture and the competing feelings of desire, envy, sympathy and fear that Black popular culture can evoke in some Germans. However, my approach will differ from Connell's because, aside from race, I will also consider the importance of queer studies and performativity in the texts I discuss. In regards to Connell's focus on the female-male struggle, I would like to stress that although I consider all of the rebels I will discuss representatives of subordinate masculinities, their challenge to the hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily a desire to construct a new hegemony or to take part in the domination of women. While there are some rebels whose treatment of women is degrading and at times abusive, there are others who seek a more equal standing with women.

There are certainly examples of encounters between German women and Black popular culture/ Black men or German men and Black women. These instances seem to be generally underrepresented, both in German culture and investigations thereof. Eric Lott notes that Black-white cultural exchanges have commonly been between men.⁸⁶ It is possible that regarding Black-white cultural exchanges, female-male encounters might be especially undesired for fear of miscegenation.⁸⁷ Females are capable of producing children and this creates the possibility to racially modify whiteness in a more physical or permanent way that is not implied by male-male encounters. As I mentioned above, the German "preoccupation with black-white miscegenation ... emerged in response to German colonialism and culminated under Hitler."⁸⁸ German colonial policies on the citizenship of racially mixed children revealed a "strong cultural presumption of race-based nationhood, which considered blackness antithetical to color-free German *Volk*."⁸⁹ Furthermore, despite the fraternization between German women and Black occupying soldiers in the immediate postwar years, studies show that "already in the early Sixties, most young men expressed that they would like to have a friend who is Black (87 percent) – there was much less enthusiasm about the idea of being friends with a Jew (21 percent) – girls however were more skeptical in respect to Blacks, but regarding Jews they were more open to friendship (45 to 49 percent)."⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Ibid., 106.

⁸⁶ Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, 49. See also Reid-Pharr, *Once You Go Black: Choice, Desire, and the Black American Intellectual*.

⁸⁷ Richard Dyer, *White* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 25.

⁸⁸ Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 81.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 82.

⁹⁰ "Die meisten Jungen bekundeten schon in den frühen sechziger Jahren, gern einen Schwarzen zum Freund haben zu wollen (87 Prozent) – auf sehr viel weniger Begeisterung stieß die Vorstellung, mit einem Juden befreundet zu sein (21 Prozent) – während Mädchen im Hinblick auf Schwarze skeptischer, im Hinblick auf Juden offener waren (46 zu 49 Prozent).“ Detlef Siegfried, "Authentisch schwarz: Blues in der Gegenkultur um 1970," in *Ich hab' den Blues schon etwas länger*, ed. Michael Rauhut and Reinhard Lorenz (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2008), 278.

German males' engagement with Black masculinity actually forms a kind of dialectic: Black masculinity is perceived as both safe and threatening. It is safe because male-male encounters produce no children and pose no biological threat to the nation. Yet, any homosexual desire in such an encounter would deviate from hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, Black masculinity is also threatening because of the racist myth of the Black man as hypersexual perpetrator. The proliferation of German performances of Black masculinity in the postwar period could be a symptomatic response to the greater presence of Black men in the then occupied Germany and the resulting fear of Black male sexuality. For example, there are several Black male characters in Fassbinder's films ranging from a Moroccan guest worker in *Angst Essen Seele auf* (Fear Eats the Soul, 1974) to the many roles played by Afro-German actor Günther Kaufmann including a slave in *Whity* (1970), Black G.I.s in *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (The Marriage of Maria Braun 1979) and *Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss* (The Longing of Veronika Voss 1982) and a queer bar owner in *Querelle* (1982). Representing Black masculinity in German media could possibly serve as an attempt to contain the fear of the Other through performativity.

In his seminal work on German masculinity, *Männerphantasien* (Male Fantasies), Klaus Theweleit suggests that according to Nazi Germany's notions of masculinity, miscegenation was not understood as purely the biological "mixing" of races. Rather, miscegenation could loosely signify the infiltration of the racial Other into the pure Aryan *Volk* by way of foreign influence over the individual and the blurring of the boundary between *eigen* and *fremd* (own and foreign). And it is actually this looser understanding of miscegenation that is important for my study. Considering that I am specifically discussing postwar masculinities and how German males' engagement with Black popular culture may or may not have related to their guilt over the Holocaust, it is important to get an idea of hegemonic masculinity under the Nazi regime and how postwar masculinities compare to or differentiate from that model.

According to Theweleit, the Nazi male's fear of miscegenation relates to a general anxiety over being associated not with the "highest" rank – Aryan masculinity – but with the "lowest" ranks which could include women, racial Others and the proletariat masses:

...the man who assigns himself a place in the Aryan, or any other 'higher' race, is aligning himself with in opposition to the lower classes, the mass, the proletarian, the woman, the animal. What he is saying is, 'as a man, I am an upstanding individual, a formation, one of a kind, the upper echelons, always on the side of domination and the army. For anyone who libidinally invests the molecular organization of the mass – not the 'whole,' but the 'enclaves and peripheries,' in the words of Deleuze and Guattari – the precise opposite may be inferred. 'I am one of you'; 'I am of a race inferior for all eternity'; 'I am a beast, a black.'...The man of 'superior race' needs to dominate in order to retain his body intact. He prevents himself from being 'torn apart,' and his bodily interior from emerging into the open, by adopting a position of absolute domination. It now becomes evident what constitutes the horror of processes such as 'racial

miscegenation' for the fascist man. Miscegenation would inexorably cause him to disintegrate.⁹¹

In contrast to the Nazis' fear of miscegenation, the protagonists and actors I will discuss actively seek to *incorporate* Black popular culture into their lives. Nonetheless, each male's engagement with Black popular culture is distinct, depending on his historical context. In *Die Blechtrommel* (The Tin Drum), for example, the protagonist Oskar Mazerath comes of age during Nazism. He aligns himself with Black popular culture at an early age to hold on to a youthful innocence that can differentiate him from his peers. Nevertheless, Oskar is not entirely innocent of complying with the regime. Occasionally he expresses Social Darwinist beliefs that assign racial inferiority or superiority to certain physical and behavioral traits. These racist beliefs correspond to his, albeit positive, opinions of Black popular culture.

Furthermore, Oskar invites identification with Black masculinity, but he still has anxieties over miscegenation as invoked by Black femininity. While he enjoys jazz and compares his rebellious drumming to that of Africans and African Americans, he is still fearful of the dark sides of his soul – a darkness he projects onto the figure of the *schwarze Köchin* (female black cook)⁹². According to Theweleit, the Nazi male feared miscegenation due to the idea that “His body armor would succumb to his chaoticized interior; it would be devoured by the ‘primitive man’ within. (It is only in war, in an organized act of murder, that he can expel the ‘primitive within’ without perishing in the process...”⁹³ However, due to his dwarfism, Oskar cannot go to war. And resultantly, his positive view of Black popular culture quickly succumbs to anxiety over his inability to expel the primitive within.

In contrast to Oskar, the German protagonists of the other chapters belong to another generation – those born after the war. Consequently, one notices they have less of an anxiety about Black popular culture and Black masculinity. In fact, by the 1970s, the previously threatening myth of the hypersexual Black male is embraced along with a general interest in the American Black Power Movement.

Yet, in order to get a clear idea of hegemonic masculinity in the postwar era, it is not enough to consider masculinity under Nazi dictatorship. Prior to the sexual revolution of 1960s, hegemonic masculinity was very patriarchal. Despite German students' beliefs at the time that the authoritative households they had been raised in were a watered-down version of Nazism, this was not the case, something Dagmar Herzog points out in her essay “The Sexual Revolution and the Legacies of the Nazi Past.” Herzog stresses that “...Theodor Adorno in 1955 made the case that Nazism was in fact not (despite the popularity of this view in the US) the result of patriarchal German family structures, but rather, if anything, of the breakdown of such structures.”⁹⁴ Thus, in order to really understand the origins of West German hegemonic

⁹¹ Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 75.

⁹² I do not capitalize “black cook” because it is based on a nursery rhyme in which *schwarz* could refer to a person colored black or to a Black person.

⁹³ Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 75-6.

⁹⁴ Dagmar Herzog, “The Sexual Revolution and the Legacies of the Nazi Past,” in *Coping with the Nazi Past: West German Debates on Nazism and Generational Conflict, 1955-1975*, ed. Philipp Gassert and Alan E Steinweis (New York: Berghahn, 2006), 171. Maria Höhn also discusses the Nazis' surprisingly relaxed view of sexuality in *GIs and Fräuleins*. Höhn remarks that while during the American occupation of the

masculinity, it is necessary to consider earlier discourses on masculinity from before the Nazi dictatorship.

In his history of how German masculinity has been represented in German literature since the eighteenth century, Klaus-Michael Bogdal sees a correlation between “economic, social, political, and cultural upheavals” of the 18th century, the rise of bourgeois culture and a shift in the definition of masculinity from an emphasis on physicality to one on property:

Male gender identity was constructed around and through the category of property; ‘real’ men were identified as *producers-protectors-providers* for themselves, their families, and their communities. The body, which the heroes of antiquity and the Middle Ages were continually required to expose to deadly risks in order to be ‘manly,’ was now martyred in other ways. It was scientifically (rational-enlightened) grounded and thus disciplined as a goal-oriented and organic-economic (*lebensökonomisch*) construct... The bourgeois man was still considered a fighting hero only when fighting for the fatherland... Consequently, bourgeois masculine identity became bound to the ideal of the family man.⁹⁵

One does find deviations from this hegemonic masculinity in German literature of this period, for example the “man who was emotionally oriented or connected to nature [who] simply became a marginal, antibourgeois figure who was mostly equated with an artistic lifestyle.”⁹⁶ In Chapters One and Four we will encounter such artistic, marginal figures in the characters of Oskar from *Die Blechtrommel*, Edgar from *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* and Schultze from the film *Schultze Gets the Blues*. In the nineteenth century, little change was made to this hegemonic masculinity – only “The universalization of the male image to encompass all of humanity ... finally became dominant.”⁹⁷ The changes brought forth by modernity in the twentieth century – such as the “new” androgynous, working woman – introduced several, more fluid masculinities which blurred gender differences. However, this time also witnessed the backlash of an even stricter, more military “cult of masculinity” promoted by fascism. Interestingly, literature of the postwar era, which is the focus of this study, “yielded to a ‘bourgeoisification’ similar to that aspired to in the bourgeois realism of the nineteenth century” with the exception of the ’68 generation of “young, rebellious sons... who did not want to become ‘real’ men.”⁹⁸

Taking Bogdal’s history of German masculinity into consideration, I suggest that the male characters of the subsequent chapters primarily stand on opposite poles in relation to postwar hegemonic German masculinity. If the bourgeois demands of being producer, protector and provider are at the center of postwar hegemonic masculinity, then Oskar, Edgar and Schultze

Rhineland-Palatinate, the US army refused to set up brothels for its soldiers, the Nazis had ran brothels for its troops. The Nazis also encouraged women to have children out-of-wedlock with soldiers to help support the “race.”

⁹⁵ Klaus-Michael Bogdal, “Imagining Masculinity in the German Academy, Literature, and the Media,” in *Conceptions of Postwar German Masculinity*, ed. Roy Jerome (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001).

⁹⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 35-6.

all suffer from the failure to fulfill these requirements. Each character desires more freedom than society allows. Oskar does not want to grow (physically) and be forced to partake in all of the awful responsibilities that go along with being a full-sized adult in Nazi Germany. Edgar also would prefer to stay young – his affinity for nature and art make him more a fan of children than adults. Schultze desires freedom of mobility across physical spaces but also acoustical freedom to consume and play new kinds of music. As a result of their unusual characters, lifestyles and life choices, neither man succeeds in having a family in Germany – for reasons that I will explore in greater detail in each chapter.

While those characters suffer from weak masculinity or hypomascularity, on the other side of the spectrum are men whose hypermasculinity (often expressed as hypersexuality) makes it impossible for them to conform to bourgeois norms. In Chapter Three, the mulatto slave Whity is already subordinate based on race. His ambiguous sexuality may further marginalize him, but it also gives him power in a situation in which he would otherwise be powerless. In Chapter Five, the African American protagonists Ferguson and “Youth” come to Germany precisely because they believe the country can offer sexual experiences free of the Puritan norms confining them in America. Both men eventually realize that a stay in Berlin’s countercultural jungle will not help them escape normative heterosexual relationships and the responsibilities that go along with them. And the fictional Turkish German characters in Chapter Six believe hip hop can help them express their inability/refusal to fit into the confines of German masculinity and the models for masculinity Turkish men have been forced to occupy in Germany. Finally, Jochen Rull, the protagonist discussed in Chapter Two, suffers neither from weak nor hypermasculinity. Rather, a quintessential figure for the ’68 student movement, Rull rejects becoming a “real” man and we have no inkling as to whether or not he inevitably returns to the fold.

Black Masculinity

In a chapter on race in *Cultures of Masculinity*, Tim Edwards gives a brief overview of the small amount of literature that has addressed Black masculinity – a body of literature he finds significantly lacking. According to Edwards, the earliest and most influential investigation of this topic is Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* which addresses the myth of the Black man who has been emasculated as a result of slavery, imperialism and racism. The theme of the emasculated Black man has since been taken up by Robert Staples in the book *Black Masculinity* where he is especially critical of second-wave feminism for its failure to acknowledge the suffering of Black men. David Marriot’s *On Black Men* focuses on how representations of Black men are psychologically damaging. Black feminists’ discussion of Black masculinity has ranged from condemning Black men for their part in the oppression of Black women (see Michelle Wallace’s *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*) to bell hooks’ attempts to analyze Black masculinity in a way that is “at once critical and supportive of black men.”⁹⁹ And it is because hooks seeks an approach that allows feminists to work *with* Black men that I have

⁹⁹ Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity*, 72.

chosen to use her study of Black masculinity, *We Real Cool*, to guide my discussion of Black masculinity and its appeal to German men. I am, of course, aware that hooks' account concerns *one* kind of Black masculinity among multiple possibilities.

hooks locates the source of Black male self-abuse and violence against others in the transatlantic slave trade. "Racist sexist iconography in Western culture during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries depicted black males as uncivilized brutes without the capacity to feel complex emotions or the ability to experience either fear or remorse."¹⁰⁰ Quoting Orlando Patterson, hook continues "In all these stereotypes we find the idea of the slave as dishonorable brute whose maniacal desires must be kept in check by the master's discipline," which mirrors Hegel's thoughts discussed earlier.¹⁰¹ The realization that whites justified brutality against Blacks with the belief that Blacks' primitivity demanded it was suggested over fifty years ago in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, when Hannah Arendt argues that Europeans' abuse of Blacks, during the age of colonialism, is what prepared them for potential violence against humanity in Europe as well. For example, some have described the camps in which Germans imprisoned the Herero during their genocide (1884-1915) as concentration camps. According to Arendt, it was the confrontation with Africa's primitivism that led Europeans to commit acts of brutality; Africans were viewed as barely human – animals that *needed* white rule.¹⁰² Considering the similarities between German approaches to colonial rule and American approaches to rule during chattel slavery, it is not surprising that some Germans agreed with American (mis)treatment of Blacks in the nineteenth century. Prior to the genocide of the Herero, German travelogues from America suggested an annihilation of Blacks as an answer to America's "African problem."¹⁰³

In the preface to *We Real Cool*, hooks takes aim at Ellis Cose's book *The Envy of the World: On Being a Black Man in America*. She argues that Cose's "chosen title, taken from the novel *Sula* by Toni Morrison, implies an audience of non-black males looking through the lens of their envy. Cose's book certainly lets them know that they have nothing to envy."¹⁰⁴ hooks directs her critique against the misconception that the celebration of Black masculinity in the mainstream is the same as *loving* Black males. The picture Cose paints is that everyone, white men, white women and Black women, love Black masculinity and there is nothing to love about it. But hooks insists, this is not *love*, it is envy and desire. And Black men cannot learn to love themselves, or others, until everyone recognizes "that envy and desire are not aspects of love."¹⁰⁵

But what is it about Black masculinity that Cose and others would argue is nothing to be envious or proud of? There is a wealth of negative images of Black men in American media: including the "gangsta", the dead-beat dad, the inmate, the drug dealer and the "playa." Despite

¹⁰⁰ bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York; London: Routledge, 2004), 48.

¹⁰¹ Orlando Patterson quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Michael Rothberg criticizes the way Arendt differentiates between African victims of colonial violence and Jewish victims of the Holocaust. "The logic of her [Arendt's] argument is that the Nazis turn their victims (and even their own adherents) into the deindividualized humans that Africans already are." Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 61. According to Rothberg, Arendt did not understand that Africans are just as much produced as deindividualized humans through their mistreatment at the hands of Europeans and discourses that create such binaries as black/white, cultured/primitive and mind/body.

¹⁰³ Heike Paul, "Cultural Mobility between Boston and Berlin: How Germans Have Read and Reread Narratives of American Slavery," in *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 141-2.

¹⁰⁴ hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, xi.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

all of these negative ideas about Black masculinity, it still appeals to a lot of America – including white suburbia. From video games like “Grand Theft Auto” to gangsta rap, white America actively consumes and simulates Black masculinity. Echoing Eric Lott and Dick Hebdige, hooks suggests one of the reasons for this phenomenon is that “Black masculinity, then and now, [has been] seen as the quintessential embodiment of man as ‘outsider’ and ‘rebel.’ Black males [have] had access to the ‘cool’ white men longed for.”¹⁰⁶ Before I address the appeal of Black masculinity for Americans *and* Germans, I would like to address the reasons behind the *negative* images.

According to hooks, “the primarily genocidal threat, the force that endangers black male life, is patriarchal masculinity.”¹⁰⁷ She finds the reason for a lot of destructive components of Black masculinity are located in slavery and American patriarchal culture. One of the lessons Black men took from slavery was that being a true man was dominating others, especially women: “...[A] large majority of black men took as their standard the dominator model set by white masters. When slavery ended these black men often used violence to dominate black women, which was a repetition of the strategies of control white slavemasters used.”¹⁰⁸ Adopting the patriarchy model provided by white America, Black women and men believed Black men had to be “protectors and providers” which sounds very similar to the *producers-protectors-providers* model of hegemonic German masculinity. However, this German model would not have fit Black men, because their limited access to employment due to institutional racism made it difficult for them to be producers of wealth. As hooks phrases it, “White-supremacist capitalist patriarchy’s refusal to allow black males full access to employment while offering black females a place in the service economy created a context where black males and females could not conform to standard sexist roles in regard to work even if they wanted to.”¹⁰⁹

The following six chapters concern German and Turkish German men who see Black masculinity as an alternative to hegemonic German masculinity. Black masculinity did feature a bit more flexibility – albeit as a result of Black men having to negotiate a life impeded by racial discrimination and resulting social and economic hardships. hooks points out that since employment and a living wage were often denied to Black men, these men found alternative paths to fight subordinate masculinities: through sport, hustling and music, the last of which is of especial importance to this dissertation. Regarding music, she says “Certainly the musical culture of blues and jazz had its roots in the black male quest for a vocation that would require creativity and lend meaning to one’s labor.”¹¹⁰ And this is an experience shared by all but one of the protagonists I will discuss. From Oskar, to Rull, Edgar, Schultze, Ferguson, Youth and several narrators in Zaimoğlu’s *Kanak Sprak*, for all of these men, Black popular music helps provide an outlet to fight their subordinate masculinity.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 13-4.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., xiv.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 23.

Hegemonic German Culture

My discussion of hegemonic German masculinity will naturally be embedded within the context of hegemonic German culture. Just like Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity is based on Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony, I will also use Gramsci's approach in order to discuss how not only ideas, but also how interlocking political, social and cultural elements deeply contribute to the definition of hegemonic German culture and affect the lived social process at any point in time. Who builds the dominant social group in each of the texts and practices I discuss depends on the context. While in Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* and Thomas Valentin's *Die Unberatenen* (The Unadvised, 1957) the dominant group consists primarily of white male bourgeois civil servants, intellectuals and business owners, in *Whity* the wife of a rich planter is part of the dominant group and she actively exercises her power onto her Black servant with verbal insults. On a metanarrative level, *Whity* also rebels against the hegemony represented by Hollywood and German cinema's traditional depictions of race. *Whity* complicates the dominant representation of Black characters in film as typically either docile servants or threatening criminals.

In several chapters, school is especially important as a site where hegemony is practiced. In modern German society, school is the first step of socialization outside of the family. In the *Die Blechtrommel*, the protagonist Oskar Mazerath bypasses formal schooling altogether. In *Die Unberatenen*, the main character Jochen Rull attempts to disrupt the order of the school. In *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*, Edgar leaves his apprenticeship prematurely to become an artist. Aside from school, two other realms are of particular importance to my analyses: the workplace and the subculture. *Whity* is set in the pre-industrial Western United States and the title character is a Black slave. Barred from formal schooling, *Whity's* socialization and rebellion both take place in his workplace, the plantation estate. Schultze, the title character of *Schultze Gets the Blues*, rebels during a later life stage, when he is forced into early retirement. Having been made redundant in most areas of society, one of Schultze's only spaces of socialization is his music club and the music club and its annual festival are both sites of hegemony and of Schultze's resistance. Finally, Chapters Five and Six both deal with conformity and resistance in the subcultural realm.

I believe that in the texts I will analyze, the goal of the hegemonic group is to preserve the community and the rebels whom I discuss are deemed thus not only because they resist hegemonic culture, but because they pose a threat to the community. Despite both East and West Germany's pledge to break with the ideologies of the Nazi regime, race continued to be an issue from the founding of the two countries in 1949 until the present unified Federal Republic of Germany. In both East and West Germany, cultural hegemony was seen as white and foreign culture was considered a potential threat. In West Germany there was initial resistance to American culture, including African American culture, but the wealth and prosperity American occupation brought convinced West Germans to accept the occupiers' way of life. In East Germany, American culture was considered capitalist and imperialist and therefore there was even more resistance against it.

Here we come back to the contradiction of popular culture to which I eluded earlier. By the 1950s, Black popular culture was on its way to representing American culture in general.

Thus, while Black popular music was eventually accepted in mainstream West Germany after fears of primitivism and hypersexuality subsided, in East Germany some forms of Black popular music were still seen as a tool of the enemy. This is not to say, however, that East Germany disregarded *all* American culture. While rock ‘n’ roll was criticized, there was an active Blues community.¹¹¹

Thinking of this struggle between hegemonic German culture and rebellious culture as a process also allows me to acknowledge that the terms are constantly changing. When the rebels I will discuss resist German culture, they simultaneously produce it. Throughout this dissertation I will ask, when does the engagement with Black popular culture inevitably move from merely rebelling against German culture towards changing German culture? Is the use of Black popular culture to express alterity always an essentializing act? Stuart Hall seems to believe so. For Hall, viewing Black popular culture as rebellious functions within the typical racist double:

Racism ... attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness. ... Just as masculinity always constructs femininity as double – simultaneously Madonna and Whore – so racism constructs the black subject: noble savage and violent avenger. And in the doubling, fear and desire double for one another and play across the structures of otherness, complicating its politics.¹¹²

Further questions I will pose are, does viewing Black popular culture as inherently rebellious and different merely recreate hegemonic German culture? □ Is this really rebellion if those who have inherited dominant rule (i.e. white Germans of the postwar generation) use Black popular culture to rebel against a system they simultaneously uphold? Can this really result in changing how dominant German culture is conceived or will such rebellious gestures inevitably be neutralized?

Chapter Overview

My dissertation is chronologically structured and divided into six chapters. My study begins in the 1950s and ends in the 1990s. It is important for me to begin my study after WWII, because I believe that in several of the texts, the engagement with Black popular culture is related to German guilt over the Holocaust. Furthermore, it is also important to begin after the founding of the two German states. A decisive ideological break was made between the Nazi regime and the postwar era with the founding of West Germany and East Germany in 1949. For each decade, I look at East or West Germany, and finally a reunified Federal Republic of Germany, through one particular cultural artifact.

In each cultural artifact I try to be aware of how each rebel positions himself in relation to German society and how he is positioned as deviating from hegemonic masculinity. I will examine how the rebel defines Black popular culture and investigate whether his use of Black

¹¹¹ See Michael Rauhut and Thomas Kochan, ed., *Bye Bye, Lübben City: Bluesfreaks, Tramps und Hippies in der DDR* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2004).

¹¹² Hall, “New Ethnicities,” 445.

popular culture implies something flat, for example a primitive, one-sided idea or whether he embraces the many contradictions, nuances and differences found in Black popular culture. I am aware that how a German or Turkish German male defines Black popular culture might be influenced by his class, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity. For example, when a white middle-class German male chooses to participate in the hip hop scene it is a different engagement with Black popular culture than when an Afro-German plays a Black slave in a film.

In Chapter One, “Who’s Afraid of the Black Cook?”, I revisit the modernist interest in Black popular culture and jazz and how it continues through the postwar period. Günter Grass’ *Die Blechtrommel* primarily deals with the Third Reich, including the years leading up to this period and the time immediately following World War II. One of the main goals of Nazi ideology was to rehabilitate Germany after its defeat in World War I and the resultant economic loss. Nazism suggested that only a military country of strong men and domesticated women could achieve this; healthy Germans, not different – homosexual, non-Aryan, leftist or disabled. This ideology subordinated Germans to working towards the common goal of a strong and “pure” Germany. Oskar, the novel’s protagonist, threatens this goal because of his self-inflicted disability (purposely remaining the size of a 3 year-old), his “non-German” Polish/Kashubian heritage, and his resistance to the ideological state apparati (including religion, formal schooling and military service). Although Oskar stunts his growth, he continues to mature mentally. Physically; however, he not only has the stature of a child but he communicates primarily through the beating of a toy drum. In this chapter I will ask how Oskar’s refusal to inherit his father’s colonial goods store, his penchant for speaking through rhythm, his adult career as a jazz musician and his fear of the mythical female “black cook” from children’s nursery rhymes articulates a German shame and desire to come to terms with its persecution of Others in the colonies and under the Nazi regime.

In Chapter Two, “Waiting for My Band”, my analysis begins with Thomas Valentin’s novel *Die Unberatenen* which takes place in the postwar years of denazification and democratization during the 1950s. In the Fifties, chancellor of West Germany Konrad Adenauer sought to rebuild Germany and rehabilitate it from the experiences of war, population loss and destitution. The path to a new democratic Germany included reintegrating former Nazis and creating citizen soldiers who could protect the country from Cold War threats and equally dedicated to upholding the democracy. The strong women who had cleared the country’s rubble had to be re-domesticated; for strong women implied weak men and delinquent children. Furthermore, West Germany was viewed as a homogenous, white nation; foreigners could be guests, such as guest workers or occupying soldiers, but they were not expected to remain permanent fixtures in the society. Foreign culture, such as American rock ‘n’ roll, could possibly harm the nation by encouraging delinquent behavior and non-traditional gender roles.

In Valentin’s novel, the student Jochen Rull is considered a rebel because he resists the state’s rhetoric about East Germany, he questions how “democratic” his teachers really are and wonders whether some fascist ideology still lingers among West Germany’s civil servants. *Die Unberatenen* also speaks more to class than *Die Blechtrommel*, because there is a clear animosity between the manual workers such as Rull’s father and the intellectuals and civil servants who are seen as the representatives of state ideology. Just like Oskar, Rull attempts to reject his German

cultural legacy and identify with Black and Jewish oppressed victims, in part, through his musical preferences.

Valentin's novel was later adapted by director Peter Zadek and made into a stage production by the same name and a film titled *Ich bin ein Elefant, Madame* (I'm an Elephant, Madame, 1968). Zadek displaces the narrative and sets it during the 1960s, at the time of the then budding student movement. Furthermore, the novel's preoccupation with *Black* popular music, represented by Louis Armstrong, is replaced with the rock music of the white American group, Velvet Underground. Rull's main desire to uncover lingering fascism among his authority figures and identify with the oppressed remains the same, but his identification with foreign culture is transferred from Black musicians to a white group influenced by Black popular culture. One of the major differences between the novel and the film is that while in the novel Rull's "rebellion" was relatively reserved, in the film, Rull's more erratic and confrontational behavior is influenced by the countercultures of the 1960s.

In Zadek's film, part of rejecting German culture is refusing to become a "real" man. Rather than succeeding at school, finding a job and starting a family, Rull's main goal is to expose the faults of German culture and his method of doing so includes childish antics that threaten his expulsion from school and with it put an end to his path to maturation and integration into adult society. By focusing primarily on the German student movement, Chapter Two also serves as a bridge between a generation that wishes to cling to tropes of innocence (embodied by the primitive Black who has not been ruined by civilization) to a generation of young people who celebrate the Black man as hypersexual revolutionary in contrast to their imperialist and conservative fathers.

In Chapter Three, "Lessons in Liberation", I discuss Fassbinder's Western *Whity*, an anomaly compared to the other texts because it is not set in postwar Germany, but in the American West in 1878. Nevertheless, the film still speaks to the political and social situation of West Germany during the transition from the 1960s to the 1970s. Following the pinnacle of the student protests in 1968, West Germany felt threatened as a state. Leftist German students like Rudi Dutschke promoted Marxism, which posed a threat from within the perspective of the hegemonic culture at the time of the Cold War. Simultaneously, the women's liberation movement challenged gender norms which had been in place to keep the birth rate up and ensure for strong parents to keep young people in line. The oil crisis of 1973 and the subsequent economic crisis resulted in a bleaker outlook than the more prosperous days of the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic wonder) in the 1950s. Increasing numbers of foreign guest workers from Southern Europe, whom the state expected would leave after short periods or during economic hardship, opted to make West Germany their home. The German students' solidarity with the Civil Rights Movement and Third World Struggles around the world meant challenging traditional notions of race at home and abroad. Eventually, a more radical wing of the student movement would evolve into homegrown terrorists.

During this time of national fear, citizens longed for the good old days when race, class and gender boundaries were clearer. Fassbinder addresses the fears of the mainstream by engaging with the American plantation genre – a genre that had intended to indulge Americans' fantasies of the good old opulent and segregated South. However, Fassbinder rebels by presenting a grotesque version of this Southern fantasy where the white plantation family is

greedy and mentally and physically “sick.” Furthermore, he resists American and German cinematic portrayals of race by presenting a Black male protagonist who deconstructs the racist notions of the Black man, typically portrayed as noble savage, threatening murderer or subordinate lacking subjectivity.

One might wonder, why instead of solely choosing texts in which music plays a central role, I would include a text for which Black popular music is of little importance. My reason for doing so is that in my opinion, *Whity* serves a very important function as a representative for its time and a bridge between two ruling perceptions of Black masculinity. From the Fisk Jubilee singers in the 19th century to the jazz orchestras of the early 20th century, most representatives of Black popular culture in Germany performed music. However, film was another important medium for Germans to encounter representations of Blacks. Furthermore, prior to the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s, the dominant images of Black masculinity that reigned in music and film were the obedient “Uncle Tom” and the violent “Anti-Tom.” With the Black liberation movement of the 1960s, Blacks began taking greater control of the representations of Black popular culture that were sent out into the world. And not only artists, but also political activists were very important for this development.

When one reads accounts about Germans during the 1960s, one observes their fascination with Soul music and R&B, but also a fascination with political figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Angela Davis. These activists were responsible for giving the world a more empowered image of Blacks that countered previous caricatures. And this empowered Black figure was most stylishly packaged in the Blaxploitation films of the 1970s. Thus, in this third chapter in order to look at how this new image of the empowered Black revolutionary affected German notions of Black popular culture, I will focus on Fassbinder’s Blaxploitionesque film.

The title character, played by Afro-German actor Günther Kaufmann, is the illegitimate son of white plantation owner Ben Nicholson and his Black cook Marpessa. In this chapter, aside from examining how German issues of race and racism are discussed in the estranged setting of the American West, I also draw comparisons between Fassbinder’s film and American Blaxploitation films, in particular Melvin van Peeble’s *Sweet Sweetback’s Badaasss Song* (1970). It appears that Fassbinder’s film shares the Blaxploitation genre’s rejection of Hollywood’s portrayals of African Americans. I believe that as an excellent example of “anti-fascist drag,” Fassbinder’s project for the film is not to further Black liberation, but to use the “tragic mulatto” and American race relations in slavery as a space where he can reflect on West German issues of racism, patricide and terrorism. *Whity* is also important, because its loner Black anti-hero reveals a shift in Black politics from capitalist critique to embracing the individualism of late capitalism – a shift which is very important for the final chapter on hip hop.

In Chapter Four, “Of Blues and Blue Jeans - American Dreams in the East”, I will look at the encounter with Black culture in Eastern Germany both during the existence of the GDR and after German re-unification in Ulrich Plenzdorf’s *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* and Michael Schorr’s *Schultze Gets the Blues* (2003). Despite the over 40 year time difference between the texts and their existence in disparaging political contexts, they both address the issue of developing a romantic idea of Black popular culture as liberating in constrictive spaces where there is little access to it. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* is set in the 1970s. At this time, the East German state was as vulnerable as West Germany. East Germany ensured its citizens’

subordination not only with the help of secret police (*Staatssicherheit* or *Stasi*) but also by convincing them that they must protect the state from Western and capitalist influence. That is why the wall surrounding the country was referred to as the *Antifaschistische Schutzwall* (Anti-fascist Protection Wall). East Germany's founders proclaimed that the state was not built from the rubble of the Third Reich, rather it was founded by only anti-fascists and therefore had no implications in Nazism. This repressive way of dealing with the past possibly gave citizens less of a chance to deal with continuations from the fascist state. East Germans were reassured that they were the "good" Socialist Germans as opposed to those living in West Germany.

The Socialist rhetoric of East Germany included the equality of all citizens, including women and foreigners. However, manual labor was especially lauded in this "worker's state" and non-participation in ideological state apparatus such as refusing to join the Socialist Unity Party, refusing to participate in the Free German Youth or serve in the army meant you would face disadvantages – perhaps not being able to study at university. The state deemed subversive behavior to be treason and the mere act of handing out oppositional fliers could result in jail time.

In Plenzdorf's text, the protagonist Edgar Wibeau is positioned outside of the community, in part because he addresses the continuities between Nazi Germany and the East German state. More importantly, he quits his factory job and pursues a career in art. Edgar refashions himself as a misunderstood artist by running away to Berlin, where he listens to jazz, paints and writes Blues songs. In contrast, Schultze, the protagonist of *Schultze Gets the Blues*, feels his social role disappears when he is forced into early retirement. Having never been married and remaining childless, his job as a miner was one of the few roles he had in the community. Thus, after he loses his job, Schultze's participation in the local music club becomes even more important. It is when he attempts to integrate Zydeco into the club's routine and at the local music fest that he becomes a threat. Eventually, he journeys to the southern United States in search of an authentic Zydeco experience.

Chapter Five, "Two Black Boys Look at the White Boy", does exactly what its title proclaims; reversing the gaze in an examination of how German expectations of an essential Black subject come into conflict with the real experience of African Americans in Germany in two aesthetic works by African American men, Paul Beatty's novel *Slumberland* (2008) and Stew's musical *Passing Strange* (2009). Both texts portray the journey of young, middle-class African American men to Berlin during the 1970s and 1980s – a tumultuous period for the city during which it had a vibrant counter culture. By this time, African Americans and Black culture are no longer perceived as a threat to Germans, but enjoy a privileged status compared to other foreign cultures.

Both Beatty's and Stew's protagonists are musicians from Los Angeles who challenge stereotypes about Black popular culture and (white) American privilege by traveling to Berlin *and not Harlem* in order to rebel. This experience allows them to learn something about themselves by negotiating their identities in relation to Berlin's vibrant pre-unification counterculture and Germany's love affair with African American men who have become a fixture in the landscape as occupying soldiers. This unique space allows these Black protagonists to challenge American notions of Black popular culture, while simultaneously battling German notions thereof. In my analysis of these texts I will consider both the larger history of Black men

– from soldiers to musicians – who sought freedom in postwar Germany as well as the fetishization of Black masculinity during this era. Do these experiences by African American *men* provide a counter narrative to the common one shared by Afro-German *women*? I will also address the difference between the male and the female Black experience in Germany. While Afro-German male Hans J. Massaquoi was able to pass himself off as an African American during the immediate postwar years and enjoy the preferential treatment that came long with this masquerade, Afro-German *women*'s narratives about the postwar era convey stories of racist exclusion (see Oguntoye et. al. *Farbe bekennen* [Showing Our Colors, 1992] and Ika Hügel's *Daheim unterwegs* [Invisible Woman, 1998]).¹¹³ What are we to make of this disparity and the relative absence of Black femininity in much of the discourse on the Black experience in Germany?

From the mid 1950s until the 1970s, Germany recruited *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers), primarily from Southern European countries. These workers and their families faced discrimination and hostility from Germans and were alienated by limited language skills and isolated housing. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the children and grandchildren of guest workers often looked to Black popular culture to level the playing field and give them more leverage in their power struggle with mainstream society. If Black popular culture is cool and desired, then one would think aligning Turkish Germans with Black popular culture could make them be viewed more positively. But Black popular culture's coolness can also be a prison. Both Chapters Five and Six address a post-68 society where white Germans strive for difference, actively engaging with foreign cultures and trying out different identities. Yet, at the same time, these Germans do not allow Blacks and other minorities the same privilege. Both the protagonists of *Passing Strange* and *Slumberland* and Turkish German author Feridun Zaimoğlu reflect on what it means to be the Other in Germany when Germans have not yet realized that there is no essential Black or essential Turkish subject.

Chapter Six, "Ali's Got Attitude", looks at Zaimoğlu's writings on assimilation and subculture in modern Germany in relation to his first book *Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (Kanaki Speak: 24 Discords from the Margins of Society, 1998), which was published nearly a decade after reunification. In this chapter, I will consider how the most recent genre of Black popular music, hip hop, has influenced Germans, in particular Turkish Germans, who resist the country's hegemonic culture. Following re-unification (1989/90), rhetoric about protecting Germany shifted from the Socialist threat of the East to the increasing foreign population consisting of former guest workers, their children and grand children and refugees and asylum seekers. In this reluctant multicultural state, Turkish Germans occupy a precarious position often theorized as being "caught between two worlds" or "bridging two cultures." Despite the popularity of a particular Black masculinity that is characterized by patriarchy and violence, a similar form of Turkish masculinity is figured as an *alien* and certainly subordinate form of masculinity existing on the margins.

In this chapter I will do close readings of the "protocols" in *Kanak Sprak* to discuss how Turkish German masculinity is subordinated by hegemonic German masculinity. Several of the

¹¹³ For a discussion on Massaquoi's masquerade as an African American, see Broeck, "The Erotics of African American Endurance, Or: On the Right Side of History? White (West)-German Sentiment between Pornotroping and Civil Rights Solidarity."

narrators in *Kanak Sprak* identify with Blacks and Black or more specifically hip hop culture. But when Turkish German men associate themselves with Black popular culture to rebel does this empower them or further entrench them in the power structure? In order to address this question, I will contextualize my analysis of *Kanak Sprak* within the larger history of Turks' migration to Germany during the postwar era, the reception of hip hop in Germany and how Turkish Germans' recognition by the mainstream has changed since they began using hip hop culture to express their marginalization.

Although Zaimoğlu's works often use hip hop aesthetics and he has openly associated with the German hip hop scene, I believe several of his essays reveal a more skeptical opinion of what hip hop culture can do for Turkish Germans. Zaimoğlu suggests that the power to create and designate identities still does not belong to everyone and that subculture is a privilege – while white Germans can engage in “cultural slumming,” assuming the voice of the Black Other for a certain purpose, those who are Othered by their skin color or their parent's foreign citizenship cannot necessarily remove the mask of difference. Thus, has hip hop really enabled Turkish Germans to achieve more equal recognition in German society or has it put them in danger of being further misrecognized, assigning Turkish Germans to restricting, marginal categories?

In the concluding chapter I question to what extent Germans' engagement with African American history – a history of Others for whose suffering they are not responsible – is an attempt to right the wrongs of the past or to refuse to recognize these wrongs? Throughout the chapters I look closely for any kind of engagement with Germany's Nazi past in the texts I examine. Occasionally the German rebel positions himself outside of the Nazi past such as in the case of Edgar whose age group (he was born after the war) and his French name help place him on the “right side of history.” In contrast, Oskar is implicated in Nazism not only because of his age group, but his stint performing for the Nazis as a part of the propaganda effort. Oskar's shame about Germany's Nazi past is betrayed in his fear of the black cook. But what about those protagonists who do not explicitly mention Germany's fascist past? If a German expresses a connection to Blacks without feeling the need to position himself regarding Germany's Nazi past, is this a sign of normalization? Is it a sign of the natural “cosmopolitical memory”¹¹⁴ emerging in our age of globalization? Or is this a sign of historical revisionism and an attempt to down play the trauma caused by this past? And how have notions of Black popular culture in Germany been affected by globalization? Or by the recent election of America's first Black president?

Relevance

My dissertation seeks to complement several relating fields of interest. Some of the fields it will contribute to are studies on the notions of Blacks and Black popular culture in Germany (Gilman 1982; Martin 2000), the Afro-German experience (Faria 2002; Camp 2004; Fehrenbach

¹¹⁴ See Daniel Levy and Nathan Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001).

2005; Mazon & Steingröver 2005)¹¹⁵, Black cultural traffic to Europe (McBride et. al. 1996; Blackshire-Belay 1996; Elam 2005; Greene & Ortlepp 2010; Dietrich & Heinrichs 2010)¹¹⁶, Diaspora Studies (Anim-Addo and Scafe 2007; Hine et. al. 2009),¹¹⁷ and whiteness studies (Dyer 1997; Linke 1999; Bonnett, 2000; Tißberger et. al. 2006).¹¹⁸ Much of what has been written on African American-German relations has concerned the relationships between white German women and Black men, in particular Black GIs – thousands of whom served in the European Theater of Operations from World War II until the end of the Cold War. Further popular topics among scholars working on African American-German cultural exchange have been Black artists who performed in Germany during the Weimar era and the Nazi dictatorship (Lusane 2002; Alonzo & Martin 2004; Nagl 2009),¹¹⁹ the Afro-German experience, the influence of Black popular music on German culture (Maase 1992; Poiger 2000; Schroer 2007; Fenemore 2007)¹²⁰ and most recently the link between African Americans' experiences in Germany and the Civil Rights movement (Klimke 2006; Höhn and Klimke 2010).¹²¹

The unique nature of this dissertation is that I use a literary and cultural studies perspective to approach subject matters that scholars have typically approached from a historical perspective. There are several recent works that look at how the cultural exchange between African Americans and Germans has influenced Black popular culture, such as *From Black to Schwarz* edited by Maria I. Dietrich and Jürgen Heinrichs and *Germans and African Americans* edited by Larry A. Greene and Anke Ortlepp. What separates my dissertation from these volumes is that I am more concerned with how Black popular culture and notions thereof are reflected in *German* cultural production. In that sense, my work is better aligned with Moritz

¹¹⁵ Yara-Col Lemke Muniz de Faria, *Zwischen Fürsorge und Ausgrenzung* (Berlin: Metropol, 2002). Tina Campt, *Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004). Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America*. Patricia Mazon and Reinhild Steingröver, ed., *Not so Plain as Black and White: Afro-German Culture and History, 1890-2000* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005).

¹¹⁶ David McBride and Leroy Hopkins C. Aisha Blackshire-Belay, eds., *Crosscurrents: African Americans, Africa, and Germany in the Modern World* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1998). Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay, ed., *The African-German Experience* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1996), Harry J. Elam, ed., *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), Maria I. Dietrich and Jürgen Heinrichs, ed., *From Black to Schwarz: Cultural Crossovers between African America and Germany* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010), Larry A. Greene and Anke Ortlepp, ed., *Germans and African Americans: Two Centuries of Exchange* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2011).

¹¹⁷ Joan Anim-Addo and Suzanne Scafe, ed., *I am Black/White/Yellow: An Introduction to the Black Body in Europe* (London: Mango Publishing, 2007). Trica Danielle Keaton, Darlene Clark Hine, and Stephen Small, ed., *Black Europe and the African Diaspora* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

¹¹⁸ Uli Linke, *German Bodies: Race and Representation after Hitler* (New York: Routledge, 1999). Alastair Bonnett, *White Identities: Historical and International Perspectives* (Harlow, England; New York: Prentice Hall, 2000), Gabriele Dietze Martina Tißberger, Daniela Hrzán and Jana Husmann-Kastein, ed., *Weiß - Weißsein - Whiteness* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006), Martina Tißberger, "The Project(Ions) of 'Civilization' and the Counter-Transferences of Whiteness: Freud, Psychoanalysis, 'Gender' and 'Race' (in Germany)," in *Weiß - Weißsein - Whiteness*, ed. Gabriele Dietze Martina Tißberger, Daniela Hrzán and Jana Husmann-Kastein, *Kritische Studien zu Gender und Rassismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006).

¹¹⁹ Clarence Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era* (New York; London: Routledge, 2002). Peter Martin; Christine Alonzo, ed., *Zwischen Charleston und Stechschritt: Schwarze im Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 2004). Tobias Nagl, *Die Unheimliche Maschine: Rasse und Repräsentation im Weimarer Kino* (Munich: Edition Text und Kritik, 2009).

¹²⁰ Kasper Maase, *Bravo Amerika* (Hamburg: Junius, 1992). Ute G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California, 2000). Timothy L. Schroer, *Recasting Race after World War 2: Germans and African Americans in American-Occupied Germany* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007).

¹²¹ Martin Klimke, "Black Power, die Black-Panther-Solidaritätskomitees und der bewaffnete Kampf," in *Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, ed. Wolfgang Kraushaar (Hamburg: HIS Verlag, 2006). Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

EGGE'S INVESTIGATION OF AFROAMERICANOPHILIA, *Schwarz werden* (2005).¹²² My project is different from Egge's because he limits his study to the 1960s and 1970s and much of his findings are based on newspapers and magazines. In contrast, I look at a broader time range (the 1950s until the 1990s) and I primarily look at aesthetic texts and practices.

My dissertation will intervene in this long line of work on Black popular culture in the German context by seeking a more nuanced discussion of how Black popular culture functioned in Germany during the postwar era. While well-known Afro-Germans' narratives of victimization and misrecognition are very important for countering racism in Germany, at the same time one must acknowledge that during these postwar years there was a desired engagement with Black popular culture on the part of Germans. Perhaps in the context of postwar infatuation with Black popular culture, the desire for this culture and the hate thereof are two sides of the same coin. Whether one loves or hates a mythical idea of Black popular culture, in both cases a judgment is made based on something that is not tangible.

By asking what is at work when Germans in the postwar era seek not to only engage with, but speak through a specific, American Black popular culture while failing to recognize a *German* Black popular culture, my dissertation can also contribute to studies of trauma, historical shame/guilt and memory (Levy & Sznajder 2001; Rothberg 2009).¹²³ As I mentioned above, unlike France, England or Belgium, Germany did not lose its African colonies during the postcolonial struggles of the postwar era, rather Germany had to relinquish its colonies as part of the Versailles treaty following WWI. As a result, there appears to be less feeling of responsibility in Germany to come to terms with its colonial crimes. Due to Germany's short colonial history and its then strict laws inhibiting Black colonial subjects from immigrating to Germany, the country has been much less influenced by former colonies as other European nations. However, Monika Albrecht has demonstrated that one cannot say Germans turned a blind eye to postcolonialism (Albrecht 2008).¹²⁴ Germans cannot move from modernity into postmodernity without the body of the Other, but rather than engaging directly with the Others whom they persecuted such as Jews, Afro-Germans and guest workers, they chose to stage an encounter with Others from without. My project poses the question, why is it easier to talk about the tortured bodies that one did not injure?

Finally, my study can be useful in both thinking about how culture is produced through resistance, and how culture is used to re-affirm imaginary boundaries and maintain power structures. Whether the refusal to grant illegitimate Black children of German colonialists citizenship in the 19th century, the attempt to erase the existence of Afro-German "occupation children" by having them adopted by American families or the failure to recognize famous Afro-Germans of the postwar era as *both* Black and German, all of these cases exemplify how the white German majority has tried to hold on to its power by governing Blacks and Black popular culture. The reason Black popular culture has been a useful tool for rebellion in these German contexts is because it was seen as contrary to German culture or whiteness.

¹²² Egge, *Schwarz Werden: >>Afroamerikanophilie<< in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren.*

¹²³ Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust.* Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization.*

¹²⁴ Monika Albrecht, *"Europa ist nicht die Welt": (Post)Kolonialismus in der Literatur und Geschichte der westdeutschen Nachkriegszeit* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2008).

Chapter One

Who's Afraid of the Black Cook?

In 2006, Günter Grass's autobiography *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (Peeling the Onion) was published, revealing a well-kept secret that the author had been a member of the SS during World War II. This came as a special shock to the German public considering that Grass was one of the forerunners of postwar German literature that broke with the past and publicly condemned fascism. Along with this secret, Grass's autobiography revealed that he felt a need to distance himself from his conformity during the Third Reich and he wished he had a stronger father who would have stood up to, instead of going along with, the Nazis. Then, perhaps, Grass's fate would have also been nobler. Grass's feelings of guilt and the animosity he expresses towards his father – at one point he even admits having wanted to commit patricide – all shed a new light on Grass's very first novel *Die Blechtrommel*.

Die Blechtrommel caused quite a controversy when it was first published in 1959. Part of the uproar stemmed from the novel's unusual protagonist Oskar Mazerath, a boy who voluntarily stunts his growth at the age of three. Oskar's childlike appearance and innocence in combination with his strangely sophisticated mental capacity – he claims to have been born with fully matured intelligence and awareness – results in a rather unusual take on Nazi Germany and the early postwar years. The novel poses many contended questions pertaining to the roots of German fascism and German guilt during and after World War II. As I will elaborate later on, part of the reason why Oskar is such an uncomfortable character is he seems to qualify as both perpetrator and victim of Nazism. This chapter is concerned with why Oskar expresses an affinity for Black popular culture and whether a tin drum from a toy store can effectively stand in for the sound of Black resistance against oppression.

While Oskar continues to mature mentally after his third birthday, he physically maintains the stature of a child and he communicates primarily through the beating of a toy drum. At birth, Oskar experiences a natural affinity for drumming and he especially praises Africans' inherent talent for this activity. Oskar associates Black popular culture with a primitive, undetermined state – an eternal childlike innocence which he aspires to achieve through the stunting of his growth and his drumming. His unusual appearance and behavior, including his jazz inspired drumming, allow him to rebel against society's expectations, for those around him find it impossible to integrate him in the normal ranks of society. This attraction to Black popular culture and its positive associations with freedom and rebellion is, however, juxtaposed with a fear thereof embodied by the figure of the *schwarze Köchin* (black cook). *Ist die schwarze Köchin da?* (Is the black cook there?) is a children's circle game which could stem from as far back as the fifteenth century. In *Die Blechtrommel*, it is one of many nursery rhymes sung by the neighborhood children. Oskar grows to associate this song and the figure of the black cook with several traumatic experiences in his life. The song also appears a few times in Volker Schlöndorff's film adaptation from 1979. In the form of the black cook, Black popular culture appears to Oskar as something uncanny, like a mirror to the dark sides of his soul that haunt him.

Oskar does not engage with Black popular culture to understand the Other, he does so to understand himself – his psyche. Whether Oskar describes Black popular culture as something positive or negative, my main concern is what his relationship to Black popular culture expresses about his relationship to his own whiteness and to the greater white supremacist and sexist Nazi society in which he grows up. Nazi hegemony presupposed a masculinity that needed to dominate the racial Other:

The alien race appears, then, to be the most intense embodiment of the terrors represented by the mass. While it is most usual, and most often sufficient, for the mass to be encoded with femininity (in which case it suffices for the mass to be made subordinate, put in its place by firing a few shots into it), the alien race is predominantly encoded with the inexorably murderous forces of the man's own interior; it must therefore be exterminated.¹

Theleweleit believes the German fascists sought to counter Marxist utopia by confronting the notion of a classless society with “bodily certainties; the body's interior is not external; man is not woman; above is not below; the mass cannot lead; and so on. And above all: the one cannot be allowed to be the other – for this would mean death. Domination is imperative.”² In contrast, Oskar confronts “bodily certainties.” By stunting his growth, he maintains the appearance of a child even as he, mentally, grows into a man. The doubt over his paternity makes his German-Polish-Kashubian heritage all the more unclear. He does not conform to the pure Aryan ideal. Furthermore, by aligning himself with the Other, Oskar voluntarily rejects his belonging to the superior race. When Oskar praises Black popular culture, it is in association with rhythm, primitivism and innocence – an opinion which reflects his desire to avoid the corrupt behavior and guilt of the adults in his life. His fear of Black popular culture, specifically of Black femininity as embodied by the black cook, reveals that he feels incapable of ever truly *knowing* or understanding Black popular culture and its power over him. At the start of the novel, Black popular culture is characterized positively as something which can empower him and guide his rebellion. By the end of the novel, however, Black popular culture has become something frightening that forces him to commit evil deeds.³

In order to better understand Oskar's dialectical attraction and repulsion towards Black popular culture, the tropes of Black popular culture found in the novel need to be unpacked in multiple contexts: first, the story of Germany's infatuation with jazz culture; secondly Grass' stance toward German history and memory in his recent autobiography *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, and finally racialized iterations of Black femininity. I believe the tropes of Black popular culture in the novel articulate a German association between Black culture and

¹ Theleweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 76.

² Ibid.

³ In Richard Dyer's exploration of the construction of whiteness, he notes the association between whiteness, rationality and masculinity as opposed to Black popular culture, femininity and a connection to the body. One of the reasons black women and men have historically been characterized as hypersexual is because they were deemed unable to transcend the physical. Thus, when white men submit to their bodily desires it is seen as submitting to Black popular culture. I will return to this issue later on. See Dyer, *White*, 27-9.

rebellion/resistance, but also a German shame and desire to come to terms with their persecution of Others in Germany's former colonies and under the Nazi regime.

Jazz' First Influences in Germany

Since America's discovery by Europeans, Germans have always held competing positive and negative perceptions of the "new world." In the eighteenth century, the German Romantics considered "natural rather than revolutionary development to be real and historically significant" and therefore viewed the the American War of Independence (1776) and the French Revolution (1789) as examples of "contemptible rationalism and materialism – mechanical rule of abstract institutions."⁴ In the nineteenth century, among the German fans of America who longed for more freedom, some saw the country's democracy as a political model, while others were attracted to Native American culture and the fantasy of the Wild West. Critics of American culture, however, were turned off by its modernity,⁵ Puritanism and utilitarianism and considered America the absence of both nature and culture.

In *Künstler, Cowboys, Ingenieure...: Kultur- und mediengeschichtliche studien zu deutschen Amerika-Texten 1912-1920*, Deniz Göktürk links the images of America from the 19th century to those from the Weimar Republic. While the negative view of the U.S. substantially exacerbated following Germany's defeat in WWI and the subsequent treaty with America left Germans feeling humiliated,⁶ Göktürk has argued that the discourse about Americanism in Germany dates back to pre-Weimar and pre-WWI times. "Apparently the term 'Americanism' did not designate the actual influence of American culture, rather it was burdened with the internal developments of German society which one could roughly subsume under the term modernization."⁷ However, after Germany's defeat in WWI, the term "Americanization" described a more direct connection to American culture. According to Dan Diner, in the 1920s Americanization referred to the "economic infiltration of Germany by American capital and the onslaught of mass culture associated with America. Germany's economic independence and cultural identity seemed to be threatened by the peace agreement and American loan policy."⁸ What added to this negative image was the birth of the androgynous new woman⁹ and the

⁴ Dan Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), 31.

⁵ Here I do not refer to modernity as it was championed by the thinkers of the Enlightenment; progress in the arts and science that would "harness the forces of nature, to give meaning to the world, to promote moral progress and social justice, and ultimately to guarantee human happiness" (Lamb and Phelan 1995: 53). Instead, I refer to the hijacking of this project "by the instrumental rationality of capitalism. What had been progressive and emancipatory, had become, in the growth of the culture industry, coercive and exploitative." Stephen Lamb and Anthony Phelan, "Weimar Culture: The Birth of Modernism," in *German Cultural Studies*, ed. Rob Burns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 53.

⁶ By signing the Versailles Treaty on June 28, 1919, Germany accepted full responsibility for starting World War I. The country also relinquished its colonies, agreed to restore all invaded territories and pay reparations of 20,000,000,000 gold marks each year from 1919 to 1921. See Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman, and Elisabeth Glaser, eds., *The Treaty of Versailles: a Reassessment after 75 Years* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). And "The Treaty of Versailles: The Reparation Clauses (1919)," in *The Weimar Source Book*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁷ "Offensichtlich bezeichnete der Begriff 'Amerikanismus' nicht den tatsächlichen Einfluß amerikanischer Kultur, sondern wurde befrachtet mit internen Entwicklungen der deutschen Gesellschaft, die man grob unter dem Begriff der Modernisierung zusammenfassen könnte." Deniz Göktürk, *Künstler, Cowboys, Ingenieure-- : Kultur- und Mediengeschichtliche Studien zu Deutschen Amerika-Texten 1912-1920* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1998), 2.

⁸ Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans*, 55.

⁹ In *America in the Eyes of the Germans*, Diner quotes from a speech delivered by C.G. Jung in which he argues that the dominance of women in America stems from the matriarchal culture of Native American tribes.

argument that the psychological dominance of women in the U.S. made the men inferior and the nation materialist.¹⁰

The fact that America had defeated Germany economically, culturally and in battle was especially difficult for Germans to come to terms with because America was not as respected as the countries of the “old world.” As Diner describes, “America [...] was seen both culturally and socially as a lower class artificially inflated to a nation. It was thus much more humiliating to be inferior to America, a colonial nation of hybrids, as this was combined with nightmares of degeneration and decline.”¹¹ One area where Germany saw itself as superior to American culture was in terms of music. Music has long been tied to the construction of a German national identity. “Since the days of the Protestant Reformation at least, Germanic composers have cultivated a distinctive national voice in music and have created a body of compositions – sacred and secular, instrumental and vocal – valued among the finest expressions of European art.”¹² Richard Wagner’s statement in 1878 that “the German national character found its truest expression in music...,”¹³ strongly influenced the Nazis’ conception of German music. While Germany was viewed as having an old, *white*, folk tradition that represented “an authentic culture untainted by foreign influences,”¹⁴ America’s first recognized folk tradition was minstrelsy, a performance clearly influenced by Black popular culture. Because the Nazis believed in a naturalistic, biological connection between a race and its music, “German music purportedly reflected the superior racial character of the Aryan or Nordic race”¹⁵ and American music reflected Black, Jewish and therefore inferior culture.

Thus, for those who viewed Americanization as a threat, defending German music from alien influences was an important effort. In the nineteenth century, prior to the practice of minstrelsy, even Americans did not think highly of their national music. Initially, American musicians were sent to Europe, especially Germany, to learn their trade. But in the 1830s, minstrelsy became popular as the first national American culture and minstrel acts toured Europe. This music was, however, not received positively by everyone. Equations were made of “American music with ‘negro music,’ and of ‘American’ with debased art forms generally, as if minstrelsy were the most natural example of both.”¹⁶ Despite these negative connotations with Black music in the form of minstrelsy, Rainer Lotz points out that even prior to jazz’s popularity in Germany, African American music was both admired by and played by Germans. German musicians earned money manufacturing mechanical musical instruments for export. Lotz states, “people, who had not even heard of St. Louis or Sedalia, arranged and manufactured authentic

¹⁰ Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans*. Bertolt Brecht, for example, notes how there was an equation made between the decay and ailments of “old culture” and Americanism. He describes a “whole radical transformation of the mentality of [his] time. The symptoms of this transformation are familiar enough, and so far they have been seen as symptoms of disease. There is some justification for this, for of course what one sees first of all are signs of decline in whatever is *old*. But it would be wrong to see these phenomena, so-called *Amerikanismus* for instance, as anything but unhealthy changes stimulated by the operation of really new mental influences on culture’s aged body” in Bertolt Brecht, “The Epic Theater and its Difficulties,” in *Brecht on Theater: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. John Willett (New York: Hill & Wang), 3. Nietzschean inspired vitalists hoped war would be the cure for German society’s ailing state.

¹¹ Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans*, 51.

¹² Michael J. Budds, ed., *Jazz & the Germans: Essays on the Influence Of “Hot” American Idioms on 20th-Century German Music* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2002), 6.

¹³ Schroer, *Recasting Race after World War 2: Germans and African Americans in American-Occupied Germany*, 153.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, 98-9.

cakewalks and ragtime for piano rolls and metal disc symphonies.”¹⁷ German musicians who toured the U.S. during this time were also exposed to African American music.

Throughout the nineteenth century, African American musicians not only toured but also recorded music in the UK and continental Europe, including Germany.¹⁸ For many of these musicians, compared to the racist violence of the Reconstruction period at home, the freedom they experienced touring Europe made working abroad more attractive. The first time German audiences experienced an “authentic” performance of Black music by African Americans, and not white performers in blackface, was when the Fisk Jubilee singers toured during the season of 1877/78. From the late-nineteenth century until the beginning of World War I, African American music was so popular that hundreds of Black artists toured Germany and the categories “Nigger Song & Dance” and “Black and White” (referring to racially mixed acts) were created in the music industry.¹⁹ With the onset of WWI, these musicians may have left Germany, but many remained in France and the UK.

Jazz was first introduced to Germany on a larger scale at the end of WWI, most likely through exposure in the Allied camps and by Allied soldiers bringing sheet music and records into Germany.²⁰ According to Michael J. Budd, “the communication technologies of the age and dramatic advances in opportunities for personal travel contributed immeasurably to the dissemination of American popular music abroad.”²¹ By the 1930s, several types of jazz circulated in Germany, including what J. Bradford Robinson calls genuine Black jazz, commercialized Black jazz and *Tanzjazz*.²² “Jazz quickly became another symbol of modernity for Weimar Germans, and black jazz performers confirmed German visions of America as at once ‘ultra-modern and ultra-primitive.’”²³ The first African American musicians to perform since the end of WWI were the “Chocolate Kiddies,” led by Sam Wooding in Berlin in 1926.²⁴ Wooding was an African American pianist who had been working in New York when his band was asked to be the orchestra for a European revue called “The Chocolate Kiddies.”²⁵ The fact that this name was given to the revue by its European organizers and did not originate with Wooding is a testament to the exoticism projected upon Black performers. The association between Blacks and chocolate has long been made in European society,²⁶ exemplified by such

¹⁷ Rainer Lotz, “Black Music Prior to the First World War: American Origins and German Perspectives,” in *Cross the Water Blues: African American Music in Europe*, ed. Neil A. Wynn (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007), 71.

¹⁸ See *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Rainer Lotz, “Mohrischer Reiz, schwarze Gefahr: Afroamerikanische Musik in Deutschland vor 1945,” in *Ich Hab den Blues schon etwas länger*, ed. Michael Rauhut and Reinhard Lorenz (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2008), 59-60.

²⁰ See Michael H. Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). See also Budds, ed., *Jazz & the Germans: Essays on the Influence Of “Hot” American Idioms on 20th-Century German Music*. “Immediately after the end of the First World War, what can only be described as a craze for American popular music swept German urban circles. This craze was fuel itself for – and was fueled by – the phenomenon of an invigorated nightlife in the form of dance halls, cabarets, revues and nightclubs; the growing number of performances by American musicians, both in person and on radio broadcasts; the dissemination of sheet music; and the availability of recordings, both imported and locally pressed,” (Budds 2002: 9).

²¹ Budds, ed., *Jazz & the Germans: Essays on the Influence Of “Hot” American Idioms on 20th-Century German Music*, 5.

²² Lotz also suggests that because Berlin lacked a large African American community, as opposed to London or Paris, jazz in Germany was quickly cut off from its African American roots.

²³ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 16.

²⁴ Lotz, “Mohrischer Reiz, schwarze Gefahr: Afroamerikanische Musik in Deutschland vor 1945,” 63.

²⁵ ([cited 6 November 2010]); available from <http://www.redhotjazz.com/woodingo.html>.

²⁶ “In everyday German culture blacks are figuratively consumed in the form of *Mohrköpfe* and *Negerküsse* – two different sorts of cream-filled chocolate cake; hence the name the ‘edible Negro.’ The principle that blacks exist to satisfy white needs has thus been well established.” Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*, 159.

products like Sarotti chocolate featuring a Moor on the package and the German foods *Mohrenkopf* (Moor's head – a round chocolate cake) and *Negerkuss* (Negro's kiss – a chocolate covered marshmallow). Imaging Blacks as consisting of chocolate suggests fantasies of consuming the Other. The fact that the revue was named *Chocolate Kiddies* also proposes infantilization.²⁷ Contemporary racist beliefs of Blacks insisted they were not as intelligent or rational as Whites and needed a paternal relationship to Whites. Furthermore, naming a band that consisted of adult Black men “Kiddies” neutralizes any fears of Black masculinity.²⁸

However, early jazz reception was marked by ambivalence. As Uta Poiger states in *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, “critics charged that black performers represented the primitivism of African Americans more generally and for some of them this held a promise of rejuvenation and renewal for German audiences.”²⁹ That jazz was perceived as having the potential for the rejuvenation Nietzschean vitalists sought at the turn of the century is exemplified in Ivan Goll's text “Die Neger erobern Europa” (The Negroes are Conquering Europe) where he describes African American culture as something primitive, original and dark (as opposed to cultivated). “The Negroes are conquering Paris. They are conquering Berlin. They have filled the whole continent with their howls, with their laughter [. . .] the old world calls on its failing strength to applaud them.”³⁰ In contrast to the vital African Americans, Goll depicts Europe(ans) as dead and decaying. His declaration, “Some say it is the rhythm of Sodom and Gomorrah . . . Why should it not be from paradise? In this case, rise and fall are one,”³¹ heralds that African American culture represents a sensual, low- or popular culture and a fashion trend among the more intellectual and upper-class. Although Goll's description of African American culture appears to reinforce common stereotypes of the primitive Black, he is still aware enough that these are performances, exaggerations, and the joke is on the European audience: “It confronts us all, it confronts everything with the strange impression of a snarling parody. And it is parody. They make fun of themselves when they perform the ‘Dance of the Savages’ with the same mockery, wearing only the usual loin cloth— and a silk brassiere.”³² The loin cloth (a manifestation of European fantasies) is combined with a silk bra to refer to Black modernity and style.

As one can tell from Goll's account, ironically jazz quickly became a fashion statement in Europe, while “in New Orleans and in Chicago at this time jazz was the preserve of the dregs

²⁷ According to Michael Kater, “African blacks were dubbed, ‘the chocolate people.’” Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*, 30. And Heide Fehrenbach notes that in the postwar era, “It was not uncommon, for example, for black German children to be likened to house pets (with their ‘sweet, black, poodle hair-dos’) or dubbed ‘chocolate princes’ or ‘Moor-heads’) after the German confection...” Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America*, 97.

²⁸ In his analysis of the reception of African American director Oscar Micheaux's films in Sweden in the 1920s, Tommy Gustafsson found that Micheaux's controversial dramatic film that addresses racist violence, *Within Our Gates*, had been renamed into the playful title *Chocolate Kiddies*. Tommy Gustafsson, “The Visual Re-Creation of Black People in a ‘White’ Country: Oscar Micheaux and Swedish Film Culture in the 1920s,” *Cinema Journal* 47, no. 4 (2008): 35.

²⁹ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 16-17.

³⁰ Ivan Goll, “The Negroes Are Conquering Europe,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Tony Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1926), 559.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.* In his reading of Josephine Baker's performances, Jed Rusula also argues that Black performances of the “primitive” during the jazz age were self-aware parodies of European fantasies. See Jed Rusula, “Jazz as Decal for the European Avant-Garde,” in *Blackening Europe: The African-American Presence*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (London: Routledge, 2004).

of the population.”³³ Thus, some Europeans, especially avant-gardists, appear to have been more open to listening to jazz than white and middle-class Black Americans initially were. This could have been the case for several reasons. First of all, regardless of the color of the musicians, European fans perceived jazz as American and therefore modern and desirable. Simultaneously, these fans enjoyed the primitive nature they read into the music, because as opposed to the United States, few Blacks lived in Europe and their small numbers might have enhanced the exotic appeal of Black popular culture. It is also possible that by consuming jazz culture, Germans could lament the African colonies (and culture) they lost after WWI.³⁴

Jazz was viewed as popular music, music for the masses – not real art. Its use of improvisation and wild dancing gave fans the impression that jazz music was somehow freer, making it especially appealing to the European avant-garde.³⁵ Meanwhile, Theodor Adorno’s essay “Über Jazz” (On Jazz, 1936), condemned the genre for being much more bound to the culture industry than it suggested. Budd summarizes what specifically about African American music made it stand out for white listeners:

The power of this [African American] music – and, in fact, its appeal to the mainstream audience – must be closely associated with the non-European aspects of its performance practice. Emphasis on the creative powers of the performer (rather than the composer), a sophisticated variation technique based on elemental patterns, the intentional exploration of a heterogeneous sound ideal and of mesmerizing levels of emotional intensity, and the cultivation of ‘hot’ rhythm represented an approach that was properly perceived as fundamentally different from any European import or imitation, both in terms of process and product ... The impact of this music on European ears must be attributed to a network of factors: its provenance and unfamiliar nature; its less than respectable connotations amplified by its associations with African Americans; and its perceived spirit of rebellion and unapologetic sensuousness.³⁶

³³ Robert Goffin, *Jazz from the Congo to the Metropolitan* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1944), 74. The reception of jazz was even split among African American intellectuals. While some feared jazz attacked black middle-class bourgeois sensibilities and represented poor, low brow and Southern culture, others praised jazz for its participatory nature and for being rooted in the African American struggle for freedom and equality. See Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era*, 196.

³⁴ Reclaiming Germany’s African colonies continued to be of importance to the Nazi regime. Even after Jewish teachers were banned from working, Africans continued to teach African languages at German universities, in preparation for the civil servants who would be needed in the colonies. See Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era*. Testaments to the Nazis’ desire to reclaim the colonies are the numerous colonial propaganda films made during this era such as *Quax in Afrika* (1947).

³⁵ Rasula, “Jazz as Decal for the European Avant-Garde,” 14.

³⁶ Budds, ed., *Jazz & the Germans: Essays on the Influence Of “Hot” American Idioms on 20th-Century German Music*, 4-8. See also Goll, “The Negroes Are Conquering Europe.” Reputed German musicologist Peter Wicke, who teaches in the Department for the Theory and History of Popular Music (Lehrstuhl Theorie und Geschichte der populären Musik) at Humboldt University in Berlin, shares a similar sentiment to Budds’s. Wicke has published extensively on the white reception of Black music. In *Rock Music*, Wicke suggests Black music has something authentically “folky” about it because it developed isolated from white society. “Remote from ‘whites only’ society, banished to the black districts of the city, Afro-American music preserved all those features that link music to a collective and communal experience, to the shared experience of suppression. Thus the subjectivity of the musician, his emotions and his ideas, were simply the medium through which the collective fate of all black Americans was given expression.” Peter Wicke, *Rock Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 17.

Regarding politics, however, Michael Kater stresses that German jazz fans

did not necessarily espouse jazz because they might have championed the cause of black and Jews. Or, putting it differently, they did not necessarily like jazz simply because a dictatorial regime happened to have placed Jews and blacks on some index. Nazi racist propaganda notwithstanding, the figure of the Negro was too abstract to bear any relevance for even politically aware young Germans ... An individual's reluctance to conform to the predominant political and cultural patterns of the day frequently was the result of distinctive socialization at home (and sometimes also in the classroom) and then could lead to acculturation in jazz as a restrained form of personal protest ... Apart from dodging Hitler Youth service, which was possible until inscription became compulsory in March 1939, jazz fans showed no signs of counterdisciplinary activities.³⁷

For critics of jazz, its roots in African American culture were precisely the problem. In his description of the psychological influence of Black popular culture within American culture, C.G. Jung depicts Americans as naïve and childish with a lively temperament and he compares the endless chattering of Americans to that of a "Negro" village.³⁸ It was the association between jazz and African American *and* Jewish culture in Germany that led the Nazis to ban the music in some occupied territories.³⁹

Despite the Nazis' beliefs that jazz was too sensual and an example of "entartete Kunst" (degenerate art) that Jews intentionally promoted in order to subvert German culture, overall the Nazis' response to jazz was quite ambivalent. When the Nazis seized power, the German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels founded the Reichsmusikkammer (Reich Chamber of Music, RKK) in 1933. From then on, all musicians had to be registered as members at the RKK and Jewish, "gypsy" and other foreign musicians living in Germany were usually denied membership due to their non-Aryan status. The RKK banned Black orchestras from performing and its insistence that "foreign musicians be subject to the same stipulations as those governing the professional life of native Germans,"⁴⁰ made it difficult for many foreign musicians who eventually left the country. Nonetheless, individual Black artists were able to work scattered

³⁷ Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*, 96.

³⁸ Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans*, 72.

³⁹ Budds quotes a list of prohibitions written by Czech writer Josef Skvorecky when the Germans occupied his homeland. Among the prohibitions are restrictions on the key of the music, the major key is preferred while minor key compositions are perceived as Jewish. For example the yowling sound of Blues is also condemned as a Jewish element. Speed is also regulated: the music must be fast enough to combat bluesy, melancholy associated with Black and Jewish culture, but it cannot be too fast as to "commensurate with the Aryan sense of discipline and moderation." Finally, any instruments or style of playing that are "alien to the German people" and "alien to the German spirit" are forbidden, such as the plucking of strings that might damage the instrument. Budds, ed., *Jazz & the Germans: Essays on the Influence Of "Hot" American Idioms on 20th-Century German Music*, 14-15. While these prohibitions were in Czechoslovakia, Lotz claims jazz was never officially banned in Germany. Lotz, "Mohrischer Reiz, schwarze Gefahr: Afroamerikanische Musik in Deutschland vor 1945," 67. Lusane also discusses the Nazi regime's constantly shifting relationship to jazz in *Hitler's Black Victims*. According to Lusane, while Goebbels publicly condemned the music on several occasions, he could not deny its popularity among German soldiers and civilians. Therefore, Goebbels made several unsuccessful attempts to create German bands playing a jazz style. Furthermore, the Nazis profited from the sale of jazz music in occupied countries such as France.

⁴⁰ Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*, 37.

throughout Germany.⁴¹ Although the Nazis tried to prohibit the recordings of most Black jazz performers from being imported, “In the end it was sheer ignorance that induced the propaganda ministry to forbid certain black players and allow many others to pass, and to show slackness even in the treatment of singular individuals.”⁴²

Aside from ignorance about jazz musicians, a further reason why the Nazis’ handling of jazz was so ambivalent is because they could not deny its popularity among the masses. During the Nazi dictatorship, radio broadcasts became an important way of reaching the people. “From 1932 to 1943 the number of listeners in the Reich grew from four to over sixteen million.”⁴³ Goebbels was well aware that many Germans listened to foreign stations, such as Radio Luxemburg, in order to hear their beloved jazz. He worried that these jazz programs on foreign stations “might be framed by news in English, and anti-Nazi propaganda to boot!”⁴⁴ For example, the BBC was especially popular among Nazi pilots. In order to appease the people’s desires for jazz and keep them from listening to foreign stations, “the minister was forced against his will to accept a minimum of German-sponsored jazz productions.”⁴⁵ By allowing for a watered-down German version of jazz to be broadcasted, Nazi officials soon recognized the genre’s potential.⁴⁶

Kater documents the Nazis’ early attempts to use jazz, creating a kind of German jazz approved by the Nazi party called “Neue Deutsche Tanzmusik” (New German Dance Music). For example in 1935, two years after Hitler seized power, a nation-wide radio sponsored contest was initiated to find the best German jazz band.⁴⁷ Part of the Nazis’ leniency towards jazz-like bands was an attempt to maintain a guise of normalcy during the war years. The Nazis’ even attempted to attribute a *German* past to this music, stressing incorrectly that the saxophone was a German invention and that Blacks had merely distorted the instrument’s uses. Nevertheless, the Nazis’ efforts to hijack jazz culture were in vain because true jazz fans found Nazi imitations of jazz outmoded and lacking in “all those special ingredients of jazz that had effected its sophistication.”⁴⁸ According to Kater, despite myths that jazz culture went into hiding after the Olympic Games, “Jazz in the Third Reich turned out to be a resilient art. Because of the imperfection of controls, improved conditions after the economic depression, and the centrality of Berlin, which ostentatiously hosted the 1936 Olympics, this music continued not only to exist, but to flourish in Germany after January 1933, right up to the beginning of the war.”⁴⁹

⁴¹ Lotz, “Mohrischer Reiz, schwarze Gefahr: Afroamerikanische Musik in Deutschland vor 1945,” 66.

⁴² Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*, 51.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ The government-sponsored *Entartete Musik* exhibition took place in June 1938. Its poster famously portrayed a Black saxophone player with exaggeratedly large lips wearing a Jewish star of David on his lapel and a gold hoop earring in his right ear. The poster demonstrates the Nazis’ attempts to link jazz with Jewish and gypsy culture, therefore stressing its “inferior” qualities.

⁴⁷ Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*, 52-3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

Jazz in the Postwar Era

In the postwar period, older forms of jazz continued to be popular.⁵⁰ This is demonstrated in Grass's autobiography, where during the years immediately following the war, he tells of frequenting jazz dance clubs and forming a jazz trio inspired by Dixieland and Blues. The first of the postwar jazz fests was in Frankfurt am Main in 1953.⁵¹ As part of democratization, starting in 1946 the U.S. government opened up *Amerikahäuser* throughout Germany to educate Germans about democratic and American "high" culture. This "high" American culture still, however, did not include jazz, for its old stigma of being low or popular culture continued after the war.⁵² The East German label *Amiga* actually released more jazz recordings between 1946 and 1948 than West Germany. By the 1950s, American and West German entertainment industries had become more important for cultural exchange than direct fraternization with GIs and both East and West German parents became increasingly concerned about the influence of American culture on German youth. For some Germans, negative attitudes from the Weimar Republic persisted and American popular culture still appeared as emasculating, self-destructive, hypersexual and consumer driven.

Around 1945/46 jazz "hot clubs," like the one frequented by Grass and his protagonist Oskar in *Die Blechtrommel*, were created by fans. "Critics of jazz employed vocabulary drawn directly from the Weimar and Nazi years."⁵³ Poiger quotes one critique of a West Berlin jazz club as satisfying the *Urwaldinstikte* (rain forest instincts) of the audience. "The author thus reiterated the link between jazz that dated from the 1920s and the African jungle."⁵⁴ An example of such an attitude is a sequence from the 1957 film *Die Frühreifen* which depicts the *Halbstarke* youth culture.⁵⁵ In the film, the bourgeois former *Halbstarke*, Freddy, expresses his disgust for the youth culture, comparing the teenagers' wild dancing to the primitivism of "prehistoric people." During one music sequence, his voice is heard offscreen accompanied by images of German youth dancing erratically to drum beats, knocking over glasses and behaving in a sexual manner. German critics of jazz worried it would make women hypersexual and men effeminate – opinions that both stem from racist stereotypes about Blacks. In an immediate postwar

⁵⁰ See Budds and Poiger.

⁵¹ Budds, ed., *Jazz & the Germans: Essays on the Influence Of "Hot" American Idioms on 20th-Century German Music*, 16.

⁵² "Until the mid-1950s, they [*Amerikahäuser*] rarely sponsored jazz events, because most American elites themselves considered jazz low culture ... But American popular culture found its way into East and West Germany through other channels: American soldiers; Allied radio stations, especially the American and British Forces Networks; the increasing efforts of the American movie industry to gain access to the West German market and German musicians and music fans who now shared their enthusiasm for music publicly ... Initially, the direct interactions between West Germans and American GIs were the primary source of cultural contact. In the American Zone, members of the military began to provide adolescents with opportunities for sports and entertainment at the end of 1945. Formalized in 1946, the offerings of the army-sponsored German Youth Activities (GYA) ranged from baseball to lessons on how to behave as a democratic citizen ... in many cases they exposed German adolescents to American music and movies." Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 39. According to Timothy Schroer, however, the US government did attempt to use jazz in democratizing and denazifying the Germans, but too little success. So-called "Negro spirituals" proved to be more popular with Germans of all ages. Schroer, *Recasting Race after World War 2: Germans and African Americans in American-Occupied Germany*, 158-63.

⁵³ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 56.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Halbstarke* was a term used in the 1950s in West Germany to refer to youth who were influenced by American popular culture, listened to jazz, rock 'n' roll and wore blue jeans and so-called Texas shirts. Many of these young people were accused of rioting at concerts and causing havoc in the streets. Several films in the 1950s thematized this phenomenon including *Die Halbstarcken* (1956). I will discuss this youth culture more in chapter two.

Germany especially concerned with moral influence by the church, defenders of jazz stressed its European influence on African Americans, thus still reaffirming the superiority of European classical music.

Resistance and Rhythm in *Die Blechtrommel*

In order to explain why I consider Oskar a rebel, I will first situate him and his behavior within the larger context of Nazi Germany before I elaborate on the unique character of his behavior. In Nazi Germany, rigid gender roles such as the masculinity defined by military appearance and performance and femininity defined by motherhood were so important that, for example, Tina Campt demonstrates how Afro-German Hans Hauck was eventually drafted into the *Wehrmacht* although his non-Aryan status had previously resulted in his forced sterilization and exclusion from the Hitler Youth. In the final days of the war, Nazi Germany was so in need of soldiers and desperate to keep the cult of militant masculinity alive that Hauck's gender outweighed his race.

Because Hauck's race did not hinder him from participating in masculine activities, he still found a certain amount of acceptance among fellow Germans. In Oskar's case; however, despite his whiteness, his short stature and apparent muteness eventually exclude him from any communal activities, making him an outsider who is abused and ridiculed by others. In fact, although Oskar's whiteness does protect him from Nazi persecution to a certain extent, this whiteness is complicated by his Kashubian and possibly Polish heritage. Oskar's multiethnic background threatens the Nazis' goal of a homogenous, Aryan German race. Although he cannot be held responsible for his heritage, Oskar still makes himself an Other through his self-inflicted disability (dwarfism). By purposely remaining the size of a 3 year-old and pretending to be mute, he is able to avoid participation in the ideological state apparatus (including religion and formal schooling) and is physically unable to participate in institutions that define German masculinity such as the Hitler Youth or the military. Oskar's lack of participation in these institutions is what makes him, in the minds of others, an eternal child. This is why his burgeoning sexuality – his alleged intercourse with his stepmother Maria and his affair with his neighbor Frau Greff – are perceived as so perverse.

Oskar's appearance, behavior and sexuality exist outside of the possible realm policed by Nazi hegemony. Thus, as he grows older and sexually matures, his threat to the "healthy" German *Volk* is more pronounced and the state's attempts to commit him to a mental hospital intensify. The final aspect which adds to Oskar's outsider status is his affinity for Black popular culture which he expresses through his drumming. Although he is very much a part of the community – he is a white German male, has a family and is recognized by local residents as belonging to the community – simultaneously his lack of participation in ideological state apparatus makes him detached. While his peers are in school and later fighting in the war, Oskar remains at home, roaming the streets. His privileged status of being an observer of the world around him without having to participate allows him to question certain aspects of German culture, which he confronts with his drumming.

Resistance

In *Die Blechtrommel*, on his third birthday Oskar Mazerath decides to stunt his growth:

I remained the three-year-old ... I did so in order to be exempted from the big and little catechism and in order not, once grown to five-foot-eight adulthood, to be driven by this man who face to face with his shaving mirror called himself my father, into a business, the grocery business, which as Mazerath saw it, would, when Oskar turned twenty-one, become his grownup world.⁵⁶

Oskar's willful fall down the stairs symbolizes a fall from grace; for his third birthday is also the day when he loses his innocence. After witnessing the drunken adulterous behavior of the adults present at his birthday party, Oskar reaches the conclusion that being an adult is not something to strive for. Grass claims to have got the idea for a drumming three-year old protagonist while on vacation visiting a friend in Switzerland. At a family gathering: "a boy about three years of age, the son of my clear-sighted moviegoer friend's sister, entered the smoke-filled room with a toy drum hanging from his neck and struck the round sheet of tin with wooden sticks ... He was not to be deterred by bribes of chocolate or silly distractions and seemed to be looking through everyone and everything."⁵⁷ This boy's dedication to his drumming and ability to block out the world of the adults seems to be a quality Grass meant to convey in Oskar.

Yet, as is hinted at in the quote from the novel above, Oskar's decision to remain small in stature does not only have to do with his disgust at his mother's affair with her cousin Jan. Oskar equates recognition as an adult with the burden of taking over his father's business. Unlike the famous *Swing-Heines*, upper-class youth who proudly adhered to flamboyant Swing fashions and danced forbidden Swing styles in order to stress their individualism in the face of Nazi Germany's drab cult of conformity, as the child of a middle-class business man Oskar would not have the same (social and financial) freedoms.⁵⁸ When Oskar is born, Mazerath sees in him a purpose. Oskar is immediately given the burden of being both the reason for his parents' existence and the one who is supposed to inherit their work. Speaking of a past incident, Oskar recounts: "'It's a boy,' said Mr. Mazerath, who presumed himself to be my father. 'He will take over the store when he grows up. At last we know why we've been working our fingers to the bone'" (TD 47).⁵⁹

Oskar's father owns a *Kolonialwarengeschäft* (literally colonial goods store) – a store which was struggling when his parents bought it. The term *Kolonialwarengeschäft* is simply translated into English as "grocery store." According to Paul Kretschmer's *Wortgeographie der*

⁵⁶ Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Vintage International, 1990), 60. This text will otherwise be cited as *TD*. The original German is "ich blieb der Dreijährige [. . .] um Unterscheidungen wie kleiner und großer Katherchismus erhoben zu sein, um nicht als einundzweiundsiebzig groß, sogenannter Erwachsener einem Mann, der sich selbst vor dem Spiegel beim Rasieren mein Vater nannte, ausgeliefert und einem Geschäft verpflichtet zu sein, das, nach Mazeraths Wunsch, als Kolonialwarengeschäft einem einundzwanzigjährigen Oskar die Welt der Erwachsenen bedeuten sollte." Günter Grass, *Die Blechtrommel* (Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, 1993), 71. This text will otherwise be cited as *BT*.

⁵⁷ Günter Grass, *Peeling the Onion*, trans. Michael Henry Heim (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2007), 341. This text will otherwise be cited as *PTO*.

⁵⁸ For information on *Swing-Heines* see Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*, 102-10.

⁵⁹ "'Ein Junge,' sagte jener Herr Mazerath, der in sich meinen Vater vermutete. 'Er wird später einmal das Geschäft übernehmen. Jetzt wissen wir endlich, wofür wir uns so abarbeiten'" (*BT* 52).

hochdeutschen Umgangssprache (Word-Geography of Colloquial High German), *Kaufmänner* (salesmen) often refer to themselves as *Kolonialwarenhändler* (dealers in colonial goods). The term *Kolonialwarenhändler* is not further explained, aside from its more common use in northern Germany and its definition being the equivalent of *Kaufmann* – someone who sells “goods that are needed for the household like sugar, salt, spices, rum, vinegar, coffee, tea, eggs...”⁶⁰

Considering that several of the items Kretschmer lists did not originate in Germany but had to be imported and traded for – salt, spices, coffee, tea – perhaps northern Germans’ referred to salesmen as “dealers in colonial goods” because these salesmen brought (not necessarily literally) goods produced abroad to local customers.⁶¹ The fact that “colonial” is a part of the word also suggests that these goods are not from independent foreign countries, but from colonies. Perhaps the store once sold goods imported from abroad, but the closure of the national markets during WWI resulted in a transition to selling only domestically produced goods, and therefore when Mazerath bought the business, only the name “colonial goods store” remained. Monika Albrecht understands the use of the term as evidence of how colonialism was more present in postwar German society than scholars have argued until now.⁶² Mazerath’s ownership of a *Kolonialwarengeschäft* is a reminder of Germany’s defeat in WWI and the loss of its colonies, the majority of which were in Africa.⁶³ Mazerath’s *Kolonialwarengeschäft* also shows a desire to hold on to the past and the continued economic exploitation of the Other. Grass’s family actually owned a *Kolonialwarengeschäft* which he briefly mentions in his autobiography. One gets a sense of the foreign goods sold by the Grass family from his account of the Egyptian cigarettes his mother smoked (*PTO* 6).

The *Kolonialwarengeschäft* is not the only autobiographical element Grass included in *Die Blechtrommel*. Throughout his autobiography, Grass alludes to the similarities between himself and his protagonist Oskar. Like Oskar, Grass saw himself as a “curious spectator” during the rise of Nazism who “used [his] status as a child to play dumb” to the Nazis’ crimes (*PTO* 18). Both he and Oskar were often tortured by childhood bullies and sought refuge in the attic (*PTO* 52). And just like Oskar the narrator, in Grass’s autobiography he often refers to himself in the third person because he finds it difficult to accept his involvement in the Nazis’ ideology and crimes. An example thereof is the following statement: “During the final years of the Free State – I was ten at the time – the boy bearing my name voluntarily joined the Jungvolk, an

⁶⁰ “Unter Kaufmann wird in Berlin nicht nur der Händler im Allgemeinen, sondern in der Umgangsprache ... der die für den Haushalt nötigen Waren verkauft wie Zucker, Salz, Gewürze, Rum, Essig, Kaffee, Tee...” Paul Kretschmer, *Wortgeographie Der Hochdeutschen Umgangssprache* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 267.

⁶¹ For example, in his chapter on Blacks in advertising, Pieterse specifically looks at campaigns for tobacco, rum cocoa, chocolate and coffee. See Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*.

⁶² “...colonialism [was] present in postwar West Germany. With this new perspective we can now see relative phenomena in a new light; for example terms like *Kolonialwarenladen* which we still in use in the 1950s. Apparently in the case of such phenomena we are not dealing with hard to understand remnants of a long forgotten time, rather they are signs of a presence that one still recognizes today. But they have been widely left unidentified because they are taken for granted.” “...der Kolonialismus [war] in der bundesdeutschen Nachkriegszeit auf vielfältige Weise gegenwärtig. Mit dieser Neuperspektivierung stellen sich auch verwandte Erscheinungen in anderem Licht dar, so beispielweise Begriffe wie >Kolonialwarenladen<, die in den 1950er Jahren noch im Umlauf waren. Offenbar handelt es sich bei solchen Erscheinungen nicht um die kaum noch verstandenen Überbleibsel einer längst vergessenen Zeit, sondern eher um die noch heute erkennbaren Zeichen einer ansonsten weitgehend unbezeichneten, weil selbstverständlichen Präsenz.” Albrecht, “*Europa ist nicht die Welt*”: (Post)Kolonialismus in der Literatur und Geschichte der westdeutschen Nachkriegszeit, 139.

⁶³ German colonies prior to WWI included German Southwest Africa, German East Africa, Togo, Cameroon, Kiautschou in China and parts of the Marshall Islands.

organization that fed into the Hitler Youth” (PTO19). Grass even admits to why he uses this technique, “... the temptation is great to discount one’s own silence, or to compensate for it by invoking the general guilt, or to speak about oneself all but abstractly, in the third person” (PTO 28).

The novel begins with present-day Oskar, who is roughly thirty years old and a patient in a mental institution. Oskar writes his life story while under the supervision of his caretaker Bruno. Oskar’s reliability as a narrator is called into question by his positionality (speaking as a patient in a mental hospital) and the fact that his narration is based on his highly subjective memory. Some of his “memory” even includes telling the story of his mother’s conception based on hear-say. While Oskar addresses his audience in writing, Bruno makes miniature figurines out of twine. For a brief moment, however, Oskar even passes on the task of writing to Bruno, to whom he then narrates the story. The novel’s multiple layers of narration, competing perspectives, and Oskar’s reflection on the act of narration itself make it difficult for the reader to know how reliable the story is. This problematic is best exemplified by the novel’s opening sentence “Granted: I am an inmate of a mental hospital...”⁶⁴ (TD 15). The first word, “granted,” is a speech act that qualifies whatever follows. Oskar admits that he is not speaking from a position of authority, but we should listen to him anyway. But why can’t Oskar speak with authority? Is it because he has a mental illness and his testimony is therefore biased? Or is he unable to speak from a position of authority because for his entire life, society has viewed him as Other and therefore not belonging to the hegemony. The questions raised in this first word alone and the admission that he is in a mental hospital immediately make the reader skeptical towards Oskar’s story.

Rhythm

Oskar’s affinity for music is revealed on the night of his birth when he observes a moth “drumming” its wings in the room: “Today Oskar says simply: The moth drummed” (TD 48).⁶⁵ Reflecting on the moth’s drumming talent, thirty-year old Oskar associates an inherent talent for drumming with Africa:

Perhaps there are Negroes in darkest Africa and others in America who have not yet forgotten Africa who, with their well-known gift of rhythm, might succeed, in imitation of African moths – which are known to be larger and more beautiful than those in Eastern Europe – in drumming with such disciplined passion; I can only go by my Eastern European standards and praise that medium-sized powdery-brown moth of the hour of my birth; that moth was Oskar’s master. (TD 48)⁶⁶

⁶⁴ “Zugegeben: ich bin Insasse einer Heil-und Pflegeanstalt...” (BT 9),

⁶⁵ “Heute sagt Oskar schlicht: Der Falter trommelte” (BT 53).

⁶⁶ “Vielleicht gibt es Neger im dunkelsten Afrika, auch solche in Amerika, die Afrika noch nicht vergessen haben, vielleicht mag es diesen rhythmisch organisierten Leuten gegeben sein, gleich oder ähnlich meinem Falter oder afrikanische Falter imitierend – die ja bekanntlich noch größer und prächtiger als die Falter Osteuropas sind – zuchtvoll und entfesselt zugleich zu trommeln; ich halte meine osteuropäischen Maßstäbe, halte mich also an jenen mittelgroßen, bräunlich gepuderten Nachtfalter meiner Geburtsstunde, nenne ihn Oskars Meister” (BT 54).

Oskar's use of the superlative "dunkelsten" (darkest) as well as his hesitation to attribute the same rhythmic talents of Africans to African Americans suggests he believes that rhythm is something inherently African, for only those African Americans who have kept something of their *Ur-kultur* (primal culture) can drum well. In the German, Oskar's use of the conjunctive "vielleicht mag es . . . gegeben sein,"⁶⁷ when he proposes that during his birth Africans or African Americans were simultaneously having the same experience, reveals some doubt on his part. This connection to African culture appears to be a part of a fantasy. Even if Oskar expresses that he shares something with African culture, a gift for rhythm, he immediately qualifies this similarity by suggesting that he can only drum as well as an Eastern European moth. Thus, it is affirmed that both African moths and African men are superior drummers and Oskar has to be content with what he is capable of.

Not only does Oskar depict Africans as more rhythmic and primitive, there is distinct racial separation. Oskar imitates his Eastern European moth, while Africans imitate African moths and the African moth is described as bigger and more magnificent which recalls stereotypes of African anatomy.⁶⁸ Oskar keeps Black and white (German) separate and never suggests that Black popular culture can be a part of German culture. If, in Nick Nesbitt's words, a "familiarity with African-American music is essential for an understanding of African-American culture in general,"⁶⁹ the innate feeling this moth evokes in Oskar might suggest that he has some attraction, tie to or understanding for African and African American culture.⁷⁰ Oskar's choice of using his drum, using rhythm, to resist the world around him also has historical resonances with Black popular culture.⁷¹ Several of Oskar's statements reveal older, Social Darwinist racist beliefs about Black popular culture. Despite his attempts to remain untouched by the negative beliefs of adults, Oskar is not untainted by racism. He believes in eugenics enough to conclude that the flaws in his stepmother Maria's person are due to her attached ear lobes (*TD* 262, *BT* 339-40).

Interestingly, the only instances of racism that Grass discusses in his autobiography have to do with American racism. Grass suggests that he may have read Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) from his mother's library (*PTO* 45). And immediately after Germany's defeat, Grass recalls encountering the racism of white GIs directed towards Black GIs when witnessing: "another guard, a black truck driver with whom, as a matter of principle,

⁶⁷ This is more accurately translated as "Perhaps there may have been."

⁶⁸ For example Europeans marveled at the physical attributes of Saartjie Baartman, whom they called the "Hottentot Venus," and who was exhibited in 19th century Völkerschauen. See Brandi Wilkins Cantanese, "Remembering Saartjie Baartman," *Atlantic Studies* 7, no. 1 (2010). Until this day, her preserved genitals, which were taken off display in 1985, still belong to the French Museum of Man. Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era*, 59.

⁶⁹ Nick Nesbitt, "Sounding Autonomy: Adorno, Coltrane, and Jazz," *Telos* Summer, no. 116 (1999): 83.

⁷⁰ Nesbitt references Amiri Baraka's *Blues People*, W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* and James Baldwin's 1955 essay "Many Thousands Gone." To those who argue that jazz is "just music", Nesbitt responds "it is in the very nature of jazz to offer critical reactions and alternatives, whether via its often overt function as a music of protest, or within the structural modifications it has enacted on American music." *Ibid.*, 86.

⁷¹ In tracing the roots of Caribbean music, Hebdige discusses how the drumming of slaves was feared by white slave owners who viewed this practice as subversive communication. The attempts by the white population to control this aspect of West Indian culture has left its mark in the legacy of West Indian music. For example, in some slums in Kingston, Jamaica, residents played *burra* music, consisting of bass, funde and repeater drums, to help direct criminals seeking a place of refuge. Dick Hebdige, "From Reggae, Rastas and Rudies: Style and the Subversion of Form," in *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub*, ed. Chris Potash (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 119-20.

the pink-skinned farm boy exchanged not a word” (*PTO* 170).⁷² The fact that Grass would mention this detail regarding a story of how he traded the Black GI two Siegfried Line pins for a loaf of corn bread suggests that he had strong feelings about this incident.

Later on, Grass recalls how the German POWs and Jews – displaced persons who had been liberated from the concentration camps and were working at the POW camp – were united over their shared condemnation of American racism: “When we argued with our Jewish coevals, they shouted ‘Nazis! You Nazis!’ We responded, ‘Get out of here! Go to your Palestine!’ But then we would laugh together over the crazy Americans, especially the education officer, whom we embarrassed with questions about his country’s contemptible treatment of the ‘niggers’” (*PTO* 197). This suggests that American racism trumps the outrage over German Anti-Semitism. Like Grass’s use of the third person, this serves as a further qualifier to redeem him from his involvement in Nazism, as if to say that German soldiers still argued and discussed with Jews like human beings as opposed to how white American soldiers mistreated Blacks and would not even speak to them. German racism is shrouded in a more sophisticated light as compared to crude American racism. Yet despite their disapproval of American racism, Grass and the others did not get involved. “They were white GIs and called the men in the neighboring company niggers. We and the young Jews pass this over in silence because we had other fish to fry” (*PTO* 195).

Oskar’s views are typical for the time. “Charges of blacks’ alleged primitivism reaffirmed racial hierarchies, both in the avant-garde, especially among the Expressionists who viewed primitivism as liberating, and in the right wing, where celebrations of primitivism fueled a much more pernicious racism that saw primitivism as a cause of racial decline.”⁷³ Grass, too, was drawn to images of Africa. As a youth he watched newsreels showing “Rommel’s tanks in the desert sand” (*PTO* 73) and in the novel, he has Oskar follow the battles of the *Afrikakorps* in Tunisia via radio (*TD* 318, *BT* 416).

Besides stemming from Grass’s encounter with the young Swiss boy rebelliously drumming at a family gathering, Oskar’s interest in drumming could also be a reference to the affinity some Weimar era avant-garde artists had not only to African culture, but drumming in particular. Jed Rasula notes that at Hugo Ball’s influential Cabaret Voltaire, “Richard Huelsenbeck ‘was obsessed with Negro rhythms . . . His preference was for the big tomtom, which he used to accompany his defiantly tarred-and-feathered ‘Prayers.’ Huelsenbeck ‘pleads for stronger rhythm (Negro rhythm),’ Ball observed. ‘He would prefer to drum literature into the ground.’”⁷⁴ Rasula also describes Dada *Lautgedichte* as “(sound poetry, which readily struck listeners as faux-Africaine) and often, Europeans including Germans thought ‘the jazz’ just meant the drum set.”⁷⁵ Thus, this equation of African culture with primitivism and drumming and therefore the idea of jazz as a stark change from European culture is already present following World War I, around the time Oskar is born.

⁷² Heide Fehrenbach also documents discriminatory acts by white GIs against Black GIs in the presence of German POWs. See Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America*, 21-22.

⁷³ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 17.

⁷⁴ Rasula, “Jazz as Decal for the European Avant-Garde,” 16.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Stacey Olster sees Oskar's identification with drumming and rhythm as a resistance of order, which would confirm the assumption that jazz is freer and offers more independence due to its improvisational nature.⁷⁶ "Because Grass's use of the drum spans many different contexts of the novel, and because the device often works against certain stereotypes – like that of jazz having no rhythmical beat – it becomes as crucial to identify what the drum is *not* as it is to identify what the drum actually is."⁷⁷ While I do agree that Oskar is fixated on the drum in order to resist Nazi hegemony, I do not believe Oskar is resisting order in general. Oskar does seem to have a problem with order when he criticizes the concept of time:

...there is something very strange and childish in the way grownups feel about their clocks – in that respect, I was never a child. I am willing to agree that the clock is probably the most remarkable thing that grownups ever produced. ... What, after all, is a clock? Without your grownup it is nothing. It is the grownup who winds it, who sets it back or ahead, who takes it to the watchmaker to be checked, cleaned, and when necessary repaired. Just as with the cuckoo that stops calling too soon, just as with upset saltcellars, spiders seen in the morning, black cats on the left, the oil portrait of Uncle that falls off the wall because the nail has come loose in the plaster, just as in a mirror, grownups see more in and behind a clock than any clock can justify. (*TD* 67)⁷⁸

But while Oskar criticizes the adults for their dependence on time, he does seek order through rhythm, for he denounce his schoolmates for their lack thereof when on his first day of school Oskar realizes while the other children sing and he drums that they have no rhythm (*TD* 79-80, *BT* 97).

Olster supports her claim that Oskar hates order by citing the scene when he disrupts a Nazi rally by drumming in a jazz style beneath the tribunal. Oskar senses the impending fascism in the tribunal's symmetry; a forced sameness that eliminates all divergence: "The longer I contemplated the rostrum from out in front, the more suspicious I became of its symmetry" (*TD* 118).⁷⁹ Although he does disrupt the rally, rather than initiating anarchy, "their [the spectators'] dancing displays a strict adherence to rhythm, both in the three-four waltz time with which Oskar begins drumming and the quicker Charleston tempo into which he later moves."⁸⁰ Below the tribunal, Oskar plays "Jimmy the Tiger" which the dwarf circus performer Bebra also plays on bottles. "Jimmy the Tiger" was originally recorded by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band in New York and London in 1918 and 1919 respectively. The recording was not available in Germany until 1923 where it set the model for many German jazz musicians.⁸¹ By playing this song in

⁷⁶ Stacey Olster, "Inconstant Harmony in 'the Tin Drum'," *Studies in the Novel* 73, no. 1 (1982).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: 73.

⁷⁸ "Es ist aber das Verhältnis der Erwachsenen zu ihren Uhren höchst sonderbar und kindisch in jenem Sinne, in welchem ich nie ein Kind gewesen bin. Dabei ist die Uhr vielleicht die großartigste Leistung der Erwachsenen. [...] Dabei ist die Uhr nach wie vor nichts ohne den Erwachsenen. Er zieht sie auf, er stellt sie vor oder zurück, er bringt sie zum Uhrmacher; damit der sie kontrolliere, reinige und notfalls repariere. Ähnlich wie beim Kuckucksruf, der zu früh ermüdet, beim umgestürzten Salzfaßchen, bei Spinnen am Morgen, schwarzen Katzen von links, beim Ölbild des Onkels, das von der Wand fällt, weil sich der Haken im Putz lockerte, ähnlich wie beim Spiegel sehen die Erwachsenen hinter und in der Uhr mehr, als eine Uhr darzustellen vermag" (*BT* 79-80).

⁷⁹ "Je länger ich mir die Tribüne, vor der Tribüne stehend, ansah, um so verdächtiger wurde mir jene Symmetrie" (*BT* 149-50).

⁸⁰ Olster, "Inconstant Harmony in 'the Tin Drum,'" 74.

⁸¹ Budds, ed., *Jazz & the Germans: Essays on the Influence Of "Hot" American Idioms on 20th-Century German Music*, 77-78.

particular, Oskar aligns himself with the Weimar jazz era. He explains that the Nazi officials did not recognize the music because “They belonged to a different generation. What could they know of the Charleston and ‘Jimmy the Tiger’” (TD 121).⁸² This reference to “Jimmy the Tiger” comes up again after the war when Oskar is at a dance club and the patrons refer to him as Jimmy. It is perhaps no coincidence that during Nazi dictatorship there was a “black drummer named Jimmy from South-West Africa” who performed in Berlin “as late as the summer of 1939.”⁸³ Aside from enticing the attendees of the rally into dancing to *entartete Musik*, Oskar rebels by orchestrating a massive display of public dancing. Public dancing in the daytime (before 7:00 PM) was actually banned under the Nazis.⁸⁴

In Volker Schlöndorff’s film adaptation *Die Blechtrommel* (1979), this scene under the tribunal especially emphasizes Oskar’s connection to jazz. As the scene begins, we see Oskar from behind as the camera travels on a Z axis and follows Oskar to the rostrum. On the way, he passes by a little girl who is urinating in a pot and to whom Oskar gives a concerned glance (I will discuss Oskar’s trouble with female sexuality later). While in the novel Oskar describes his drumming as a waltz, in the film it is certainly jazz influenced and with a much faster tempo. Only after Oskar’s drumming has disturbed the rally do some of the Hitler Youth begin playing the Blue Danube and those spectators who had been giving the Hitler salute begin to sway with the music and eventually dance. By repeatedly cutting quickly between a close up of Oskar’s drumming and the drumming of the Hitler Youth, Schlöndorff conveys the effect Oskar has on the order of the rally. Although in the novel, Oskar only mentions the Nazi officials’ frustration about the disorderly crowd, Schlöndorff visually portrays the officials’ inability to resist Oskar’s rhythm, despite their stern appearance. While a military march can still be heard, right before the musicians’ playing becomes more anarchic, we get a close up of the Nazi official’s feet as his marching is interrupted by a quick step back, then forward again, as he unconsciously dances to the beat.

In addition to reading Oskar’s drumming as a resistance to order, Olster sees his rejection to working in the grocery store in the same light.⁸⁵ I, however, do not believe Oskar has a problem with order or work as such, for why then would he refer to his drumming as work? For Oskar, (child’s) play is destructive; one need only look at how the few encounters he has with other children result in their torture of him and taking advantage of his small size. Perhaps in child’s play Oskar sees children practicing for adult life. Child’s play is in fact a kind of mimicking of their environment; how children learn to become adults. When the children in Oskar’s courtyard play, they engage in behavior witnessed from adults: cooking, doctor visits, etc. In contrast to this kind of play, Oskar sees playing music, playing the drums, as work and singing as a means of defense. “I never played, I worked on my drum, and as for my voice, its miraculous powers were mobilized, in the beginning at least, only in self-defense” (TD 65).⁸⁶ Oskar’s differentiation between work and play also suggests that Oskar does not equate *all* work

⁸² “Das war eben eine andere Generation. Die hatten natürlich keine Ahnung von Charleston und >>Jimmy the Tiger<<” (BT 153).

⁸³ Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*, 70.

⁸⁴ Lusane, *Hitler’s Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era*, 204.

⁸⁵ Olster, “Inconstant Harmony in ‘the Tin Drum,’” 73.

⁸⁶ “Ich spielte nie, ich arbeitete auf meiner Trommel, und was meine Stimme anging, gehorchte diese vorerst nur der Notwehr” (BT 77).

with adults and it is not *all* work which Oskar wishes to avoid. There are several other musicians in the novel, who happen to be adults, who might serve as possible models for Oskar: Meyn the trumpeter, Bebra the circus performer and Oskar's fellow band members in the The Rhein River Three. One sees Oskar's philosophy concerning the difference between work and play in Grass's depiction of Meyn. Meyn, previously an alcoholic who played music for fun, becomes sober, joins the SS and then music becomes his duty. The only time when his music can be free and pleasurable is when he is drunk and his music is not determined by others.

In addition to Oskar's talent for rhythm, the idea that his drum playing does work is perhaps yet another link between Oskar and Black popular culture. In the article "Sounding Autonomy: Adorno, Coltrane and Jazz," keeping Adorno's hatred of jazz in mind, Nick Nesbitt attempts to harmonize Adorno's aesthetic theories of music with jazz. Nesbitt states: "Adorno's concept of the historicity of musical material has at least two important implications for an understanding of the function of jazz in African-American society. First, it implies that jazz is operating as a vernacular technique of historiography, encoding a culture's memories within those practices it has developed out of an oral-based tradition."⁸⁷ Thus by beating his drum, Oskar *does work* acting as a historiographer. By setting music to his every day observations – observations that include such historical moments as *Kristallnacht*, a Nazi rally in Danzig and the battle at the Polish Post Office – he simultaneously makes note of these incidents. For Adorno, "Authentic [art works] are the unconscious historiography of the epoch."⁸⁸ Olster also claims that in *Die Blechtrommel* music is used to help disentangle German history; musical harmony provides the framework for German history.

Besides historiography, perhaps the additional work Oskar intends to do with his drumming is redeem the German people. If music has the capacity to redeem mankind,⁸⁹ that might explain why Oskar expects Jesus to be able to drum. Jesus is supposed to be the redeemer, thus when Oskar puts his drum around the Jesus statue in the Herz-Jesu church and places the drumsticks in his hands and nothing happens, Oskar concludes that he is superior to Jesus (*TD* 143, *BT* 182).

There are similarities between the goals of Oskar's drumming and the purpose of music in African American history: to express individual/subjective pain while telling the collective's story, to unite the individual and the collective, and to oppose oppression by those in power. Nevertheless, one cannot equate Oskar's drumming with African American performance. Unlike the tradition in the African Diaspora of indirect confrontation through music, Oskar's musical confrontation (his drumming and screaming) is very confrontational. This more direct form of challenging the status quo could depend on Oskar's status as an outsider from within. Oskar is different because he refuses to grow and interact with his world according to the rules, but he is enough a part of the society that he does not have to fear for his life. His guise as a child

⁸⁷ Nesbitt, "Sounding Autonomy: Adorno, Coltrane, and Jazz," 91.

⁸⁸ Adorno quoted in Nesbitt. "The way social content specifically infiltrates musical practice, allowing it to function as what Adorno terms a 'seismogram of reality' (SM180) is through the existence of musical material as a historically mediated entity, pre-formed by society, which is absorbed and explored by the musician in the process of schooling and artistic reflection," *Ibid.*, 91.

⁸⁹ In *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (The Birth of Tragedy), Nietzsche proposes that the Apollonian represents the art of the *Bildner* (visual) and the Dionysian the *unbildliche* (nonvisual) – music. These two unite in the form of tragedy. Contact with the Dionysian tragedy resolves the conflict between individual and society and brings man back to nature.

typically keeps him out of harm's way in dangerous situations. And even during the most threatening time of his life, at the height of the Nazi regime when the local mental hospital intends to commit him, he is still able to escape this threat by joining a circus troupe. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that Oskar's survival during the Nazi regime was pertinent to his childlike appearance and ability to perform – both qualities that were often attributed to Blacks who could find some form of oppressive acceptance in Germany at the time.⁹⁰ In Nazi Germany, for those Otherted based on race, sexuality and physical or mental difference, staying out of public view was a means of survival. Likewise, when Oskar first encounters the clown Bebra at the circus he warns Oskar: “Our kind has no place in the audience. We must perform, we must run the show. If we don't, it's the others that run us. And they don't do it with kid gloves” (BT 114).⁹¹

Even towards the end of the second book, when Oskar decides to conform, in part, to society's expectations by growing, his sudden growth leaves him with an unusual hump that makes him stand out. After he, his stepmother Maria and his half-brother (and alleged son) Kurt move to West Germany to start a new life, one of the odd jobs he takes on to help support the family is acting as a model for art students to draw. The students focus on his hump and draw it in unrealistically large proportions. Just as African women were portrayed with protruding backsides like the “Hottentot Venus,” Oskar is drawn with an enormous hump. As a dwarf, Oskar was mistaken for a child and therefore his difference was most often hidden from strangers in plain sight. But as a short adult with a hump, his difference is pronounced and it trumps his whiteness epitomized by his blue eyes. In the imagination of the art students, he even becomes a gypsy. “My beautiful hair is a glossy chestnut-brown. They made me a scraggly-haired gypsy. Not a one of them ever noticed that Oskar has blue eyes” (TD 463).⁹² The art students racialize Oskar's physical features, emphasizing the darkness of his brown hair and ignoring his “Aryan” blue eyes. As a dwarf and even once Oskar has attained adult stature, he is placed in the same category as racial Others.

Parental Legacy and Culture

From the very beginning of the novel it is suggested that paternal inheritance is undesired. Even before Oskar explains why he decided to stunt his growth, while telling the story of his unusual grandfather who disappeared and possibly was killed while his mother was still young, Oskar's friend Vittlar comments that: “nothing would be more burdensome to you than to have a living grandfather. That makes you the murderer not only of your great-uncle but also of your grandfather. ... Your grandfather cheated the world and his grandchild out of his corpse. Why? To make posterity and his grandchild worry their heads about him for many years to come”

⁹⁰ “Open racism against Blacks thus persisted in Weimar Germany. Black Germans from former African colonies found it difficult to get employment as anything but servants, waiters, or entertainers” and attackers of jazz “saw blacks as playful, naive, and exuberant performers” Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels : Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 17-20. See also *Not so Plain as Black and White* and Tobias Nagl's *Die unheimliche Maschine: Rasse und Repräsentation im Weimarer Kino*.

⁹¹ “Unsereins darf nie zu den Zuschauern gehören. Unsereins muß vorspielen und die Handlung bestimmen, sonst wird unsereins von jenen da behandelt. Und jene da spielen uns allzu gerne übel mit” (BT 144).

⁹² “Mein schönes Haar glänzt dunkelbraun. Die machten aus mir einen strahnigen Zigeuner. Keinem der sechzehn Kunstjünger fiel auf, daß Oskar blaue Augen hat” (BT 607).

(TD 39).⁹³ Throughout the novel, Oskar claims (indirect) responsibility for his mother's, father's, and alleged father's (uncle Jan's) deaths. By suggesting that Oskar is also responsible for his grandfather's death, which happened before he was born, Vittlar points out the desire in everyone to be born without the baggage of our forefathers.

Similar to Oskar, who wished that his mother's lover uncle Jan was his real biological father, Grass also seems to have wished for alternative paternity as a youth. He felt that he must have been illegitimate and he had fantasies of patricide concerning "the man [he] had wanted to murder with [his] Hitler Youth dagger and had stabbed many times over in [his] thoughts" (PTO 101). Grass also wonders if he had had a different father perhaps he would have been braver during the Third Reich (PTO 68). "*If only I'd had a strong father like Wolfgang Heinrichs and not one who, when only thirty-six and when the pressure to do so in the Free State of Danzig was not yet particularly great, joined the Nazi Party* (italics in the original)" (PTO 18). Such laments about the effects of paternity will be echoed in Chapter Two in my analysis of Thomas Valentin's novel *Die Unberatenen*.

Despite his desire to distance himself from inheriting his father's burden, Oskar makes the exact same mistake with his alleged son Kurt. On Kurt's third birthday, Oskar returns from the circus to give his son a drum. With this gift, Oskar seeks to prohibit the same life trajectory he avoided at age three:

In my own infancy Mazerath had chosen me as his successor in the shop. Now that I had failed him, there was every reason to suppose that he had transferred his designs to Kurt. This, I said to myself, must be prevented at all costs. But I should not like you to see in Oskar a sworn enemy of retail trade. If my son had been offered the ownership of a factory, or even of a kingdom complete with colonies, I should have felt exactly the same. Oskar had wanted no hand-me-downs for himself and he wanted none for his son. What Oskar wanted – and here was the flaw in my logic – was to make Kurt a permanently three-year-old drummer, as though it were not just as nauseating for a young hopeful to take over a tin drum as to step into a ready-made grocery store. (TD 348)⁹⁴

Here Oskar makes two mistakes. First of all, he neglects to see that Kurt needs to find his own means of rebellion. Oskar only realizes this in hindsight. In the mental hospital he reflects, "For he [Oskar] knows from experience that children despise their father's collections and that

⁹³ "nichts wäre lästiger, als einen lebenden Großvater zu haben. Du bist nicht nur der Mörder deines Großonkels, du bist der Mörder deines Großvaters! . . . Dein Großvater unterschlug der Welt und seinem Enkelkind die Leiche, damit sich die Nachwelt und das Enkelkind noch lange mit ihm befassen mögen" (BT 42).

⁹⁴ "Mit gutem Grund durfte ich annehmen, daß Mazerath, der einst mich fürs Geschäft bestimmt hatte, nun, nach meinem Versagen, in Kurtchen den zukünftigen Kolonialwarenhändler sah. Wenn ich jetzt sage: Das mußte verhütet werden!, sehen Sie bitte in Oskar keinen ausgemachten Feind des Einzelhandels. Ein mir oder meinem Sohn in Aussicht gestellter Fabrikkonzern, ein zu erbendes Königreich mit dazugehörenden Kolonien hätte mich genauso handeln lassen. Oskar wollte nichts aus zweiter Hand übernehmen, wollte deshalb seinen Sohn zu ähnlichen Handeln bewegen, ihn – und hier lag mein Denkfehler – zum Blechtrommler einer permanenten Dreijährigkeit machen, als wäre die Übernahme einer Blechtrommel für einen jungen, hoffnungsvollen Menschen nicht gleich scheußlich wie die Übernahme eines Kolonialwarengeschäfts" (BT 457).

his son Kurt will look with indifference at best on all those pitiful drums he will one day inherit“ (TD 210).⁹⁵

Secondly, by now Oskar’s drumming has been tainted by his stint in the circus and he can no longer serve as a moral role model for his son. Bebra’s circus troupe is an example of *Truppenbetreuung* (troop entertainment). “After a series of agreements between the propaganda ministry and Robert Ley’s ‘Strength-through-Joy’ organization, German artists, both male and female, were contracted to go on special troop entertainment missions, at first to home military bases, but increasingly to the occupied countries, such as France, Holland, and Norway.”⁹⁶ When Oskar joins the front theater group, he becomes implicit in the regime. This is made most clear in the scene when Oskar and his co-performers visit a bunker on the coast of France. Oddly, for this scene Grass switches into the form of a drama with stage directions and dialogue. The man in charge, Private First Class Lankes, is a former artist (a possible reference to Hitler) and engineer who now finds himself building bunkers for the war effort. Lankes has named one bunker “Mystisch, Barbarisch, Gelangweilt” (Mystical, Barbaric, Bored) which seems to be a good summary of the situation. The bunker’s perhaps mystical, impressive architecture is overshadowed by its barbaric purpose and the builders’ practice of including live puppies in the foundation for superstitious reasons. The soldiers’ boredom is evident by the fact that Bebra’s circus troupe has been sent to entertain them. When the performers decide to picnic on the bunker, unpacking a long list of exotic goods from British corned beef to American cookies, it becomes clear that Bebra’s troupe has been living a very privileged life. While the occupied French and even the German soldiers have little food and luxury goods in their possession, Bebra and his performers have a wealth of food, cigarettes and free time. The audacity of their conditions during the war is contrasted with a group of French nuns who comb the beach for crabs in order to feed the kindergarteners they care for. The barbaric nature of war and the Nazis is underlined, when a superior orders Lankes to have the nuns shot for fear they could be British soldiers in disguise. Oskar seems undisturbed by this hideous scene, he merely tells his love, the Italian dwarf Roswitha, “stop your ears, there’s going to be shooting like in the newsreels” (TD 342).⁹⁷

It is at this moment that in order to drown out the noise of the gun fire, one of the acrobats, Feliz, puts on a record: “*He puts on the gramophone: The Platters singing ‘The Great Pretender’*. *The rat-tat-tat of the machine gun punctuates the slow mournful music*” (TD 342).⁹⁸ This is an anachronism, for The Platters’ “The Great Pretender” was not released until 1955. One wonders, therefore, what led Grass to choose this song in particular for this scene. The song’s title and lyrics definitely resonate with the action. Bebra’s troupe uses humor to ignore the war’s brutality. Oskar pretends that he is enjoying his adventures abroad; meanwhile he longs to be back home in order to give his son Kurt a drum for his third birthday. The song tells of a man who is,

⁹⁵ “Weiß er doch aus Erfahrung, daß Kinder die Sammlungen ihrer Väter mißacht, daß also sein Sohn Kurt auf all die unglückseligen Trommeln eines Tages, da er das Erbe antreten wird, bestenfalls pfeifen” (BT 268).

⁹⁶ Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*, 117.

⁹⁷ “halte dir bitte beide Ohren zu, jetzt wird geschossen, wie in der Wochenschau” (BT 449).

⁹⁸ “*Er stellt das Grammophon an: >>The Platters<< singen >>The Great Pretender<<. Der langsamen, tragisch schleppenden Musik angepaßt, knattert das Maschinengewehr*” (BT 449).

Just laughing and gay like a clown
I seem to be what I'm not (you see)
I'm wearing my heart like a crown
Pretending that you're still around⁹⁹

Bebra performs as a clown and shortly after the nuns are killed, when Oskar destroys a chamber pot with his voice, “Bebra, in white grease paint, wept clown’s tears over the broken pot” (*TD* 344).¹⁰⁰ But in a book that is otherwise so historically accurate, why would Grass have Oskar and his friends listen to a song during the war that was not recorded until years later? Perhaps this is a further desire to link Black popular music with catharsis. Playing this song helps Bebra’s circus troupe cope with the cruelty of the scene they are witnessing. The broken chamber pot, a metaphor used for Germany in Heinrich Heine’s *Deutschland, ein Wintermärchen*, might symbolize Germany’s destruction by the Nazis. The link between working through trauma and Black popular music resurfaces in the third book of the novel, when Oskar joins a jazz band in West Germany that performs in a bar called the Onion Cellar.

Grass remembers how while working as a stonemason’s assistant in the postwar years he spent his weekend dancing, especially to American music:

It was a dance-crazy time. We, the defeated, couldn’t get enough of the twelve-bar liberation offered by our transatlantic victors. “Don’t Fence Me In . . .” We needed to celebrate our survival and forget the chance scenes staged by war. What was shameful or horrific we left to luck below the surface. The past, and the hills rising above its mass graves, were leveled on Saturdays and Sundays to the dance floor. (*PTO* 270)

Here, just as in *Die Blechtrommel*, Grass suggests that American music helped Germans move past the horrors of the war. His reference to the song “Don’t Fence Me In” could be an example of the kind of music he heard. It could, however, be an equivalence drawn between American music, fantasies of cowboys and the Wild West and ideas of freedom. The twelve-bar music Grass refers to is typical of Blues.

The Onion Cellar

The Rhine River Three, the jazz trio in which Oskar plays when he moves to West Germany, performs in the Onion Cellar, a fancy bar frequented by intellectuals who pay for onions to peel and bring them to tears. Oskar describes a time when even those with full hearts were unable to cry and therefore it “will be known to posterity as the tearless century” (*TD* 525).¹⁰¹ Thus, while most Germans were unable to deal with the emotions of the past, those who could afford to went to the Onion Cellar to cry. “At last they were able to cry again. To cry

⁹⁹ Lyrics taken from <http://www.lyricsdownload.com/platters-the-great-pretender-lyrics.html>. Accessed 04 July 2010.

¹⁰⁰ “Fettgeschminkt weinte Bebra seine Clownstränen über dem zerbrochenen Töpfchen” (*BT* 451).

¹⁰¹ “deshalb wird unser Jahrhundert später einem das tränenlose Jahrhundert genannt werden” (*BT* 693).

properly, without restraint, to cry like mad” (*TD* 525).¹⁰² An example of this otherwise inability to feel is the story of Fräulein Pioch and her love Willy Vollmer who is only able to feel emotion/love for her when he steps on her toe making her reliant on him – eventually crippling two of her toes. Only when he visits the Onion Cellar is he able to cry and can put an end to this destructive, sadist behavior (*TD* 526-7, *BT* 694-5).

It is significant that a jazz band is needed in the novel to help the Germans work through the emotions of the past. The dialectic of communal catharsis and assertion of the individual has a long history in Black popular music. According to Ben Sidran:

Blues, the secular “devils music,” was both a catharsis for the anxieties caused by irrational suppression and, finally, a healthy, if cynical, assertion of the black ego. The pain of catharsis and the joy of assertion are not inconsistent and are both resolved in the blues. The cry and rhythmic freedom of the blues were transferred to Western instruments in the urbanization of black music. Today, jazz is not only the black idiom to employ these influences, but what can be allowed into the category *jazz* covers almost all blues music at the turn of the century. The ‘cry’ was the trademark of the rural individual, derived from the Arwhoolies, or field-hollers, and the vocalizations of the spirituals. It signaled that the individual was feeling in such-and-such a way, that he was alive and present, and that he was black. . . . The “cry” was also used as a release of tension when the individual was alone and out-of-hearing range.¹⁰³

Sidran states, “the most basic common denominator of black tradition” is “the striving for personal freedom through complete collective catharsis,”¹⁰⁴ something Adorno would call the “objectivity of subjectivity.”¹⁰⁵ This communal catharsis is demonstrated when Oskar tells of a young couple, Gudrun and Gerhard, who due to a lack of money,

had tried to save the six marks forty [cents – the cost of an onion in the Onion Cellar]; they had tried doing it by themselves in [Gudrun’s] room with a cheap onion, but it wasn’t the same. You needed an audience. It was so much easier to cry in company. It gave you a real sense of brotherhood in sorrow when to the right and left of you and in the gallery overhead your fellow students were all crying their hearts out (*TD* 528-9).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² “Da wurde endlich wieder einmal geweint. Anständig geweint, hemmungslos geweint, freiweg geweint” (*BT* 693).

¹⁰³ Ben Sidran, *Black Talk* (New York: De Capo Press, 1983), 36. The “cry” Sidran describes is also reminiscent of the “yowl” Nazi officials condemned in jazz music because they linked it to melancholic Jewish culture.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁰⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, “On Lyric Poetry and Society,” in *Notes to Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

¹⁰⁶ “... versucht hatten, die sechs Mark vierzig zu sparen; auf ihrer Studentenbude hatten es beide mit einer billigen Zwiebel versucht, aber es war nicht dasselbe wie im Zwiebelkeller. Man brauchte Zuhörer. Es weinte sich in Gesellschaft viel leichter. Zu einem echten Gemeinschaftsgefühl konnte man kommen. Wenn links und rechts und oben auf der Galerie die Kommilitonen von dieser und jener Fakultät, selbst die Studenten der Kunstakademie und die Pennäler zu Tränen kommen” (*BT* 697).

The association between Black or foreign music and this kind of catharsis is so strong, that when the bar owner fires Oskar's band he replaces them with a violinist, "who, if you closed an eye or two, might have been taken for a gypsy" (TD 535).¹⁰⁷

Oskar and his bandmates only start playing after the guests are finished crying (TD 529, BT 698). Ironically, instead of reproducing the stereotype that jazz invokes shameless behavior, Grass has this crowd of intellectuals engage in orgies and cross dressing as a result of excessive crying, meanwhile Oskar's music helps *restore* order, which also contradicts Olster's claims that Oskar hates order (TD 531-534, BT 700-03). But Oskar does not really play jazz in the Onion Cellar. Oskar, the historiographer, plays the past set to a jazz beat: "I drummed my way back, I drummed up the world as a three-year-old sees it" (TD 533).¹⁰⁸ Here is an example of a character who, though strongly influenced by African American music and culture, now uses Black popular culture to not just confront but *change* German culture. Oskar plays several German children's rhymes, among them "Ist die schwarze Köchin da?" which summons her, whom he describes as "riesig, kohlschwarz" (gigantic, coal-black) (BT 704, TD 534). Aside from the song of the black cook, Oskar plays several other nursery rhymes which reduce the crowd to a childlike state; they wet themselves and wreak havoc in town, unable to find their ways home. It is this juvenile state that leads Elisabeth Krimmer to argue that although "... the telling name 'Zwiebelkeller' provide(s) an emotional outlet for feelings of shame and guilt. In encouraging mass infantilization rather than reflection and remembrance, [Oskar's] drumming prevents true mourning or remorse."¹⁰⁹ I, however, disagree with Krimmer on this point. I believe as a historiographer of the German people, drumming up the past, Oskar's playing can recall the past events the patrons of the Onion Cellar suppressed, forcing them to remember.

In contrast to the guests of the Onion Cellar, Oskar, does not need onions to mourn, music alone helps him express his pain. "Oskar was one of the fortunate who could still weep without onions. [His] drum helped [him]. Just a few very special measures were all it took to make Oskar melt into tears that were no better or worse than the expensive tears of the Onion Cellar" (TD 530).¹¹⁰ The fact that Oskar uses a tool of Black subjectivity in order to express his own subjectivity is another moment of solidarity between him and African American culture and it sets him apart from his fellow countrymen. Oskar has a hard time fitting into the West German economic miracle not only because of his physical deformity, but also because of his status as a refugee from the East. His economic struggles offer yet another connection to the African American experience: "[After slavery was abolished] It was necessary for the black ego to express itself in economic terms, particularly in an industrial, urban economy. 'In a capitalistic society, economic wealth is inextricably interwoven with manhood' ... Hence the black musician has proceeded to take an aggressive stand in the realm of economics."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ "...den man bei einiger Nachsicht für einen Zigeuner halten konnte" (BT 707). Adorno also address the connection between Europeans' romantic notions of the gypsy violinist and their interest in African American jazz in his essay "Über Jazz."

¹⁰⁸ "Alte Wege trommelte ich hin und zurück, machte die Welt aus dem Blickwinkel der Dreijährigen deutlich" (BT 704).

¹⁰⁹ Elisabeth Krimmer, "'Ein Volk von Opfern?' Germans as Victims in Günter Grass's Die Blechtrommel und im Krebsgang," *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 44, no. 2 (2008): 277.

¹¹⁰ "Doch gehörte Oskar zu den wenigen Glücklichen, die noch ohne Zwiebel zu Tränen kommen konnten. Meine Trommel half mir. Nur weniger, ganz bestimmter Takte bedurfte es, und Oskar fand Tränen, die nicht besser und nicht schlechter als die teuren Tränen des Zwiebelkellers waren" (BT 699).

¹¹¹ Sidran, *Black Talk*, 37.

Playing in the jazz band is a way for Oskar to make money outside of the system and rehabilitate his manhood that is harmed by his deformity and Maria and Kurt's rejection of him. Perhaps this makes him feel some kind of solidarity with the African American experience, just as Grass who, although he had been seduced by Nazi ideology, suggests he immediately sympathized with the African American GI discriminated by his peers. The location of the Onion Cellar bar in *Die Blechtrommel* is based on a real-life experience Grass had playing in a jazz trio in Düsseldorf. Aside from Grass who played the washboard, the trio consisted of the flutist Horst Geldmacher and Günter Scholl who played the guitar and banjo. Grass states he joined the band out of his longtime love for ragtime and Blues. They frequently performed in a bar called the Czikos that had Hungarian flare. When Grass's band was not playing, another regular performer was a Gypsy cymbalon player and his son on double-bass. Grass comments on why he has music patrons of the Onion Cellar cut onions and weep in *Die Blechtrommel*. These tools "were well suited to poke a few holes in what later came to be known as postwar society's 'inability to mourn'"¹¹² (PTO 330). Grass's comment challenges this assumption and suggests that postwar society did in fact mourn. Most remarkable of this account is Grass's claim that jazz great Louis Armstrong once visited the bar to play with flautist Geldmacher, who "had a knack for turning German folk songs into restless emigrants and transplanting them to Alabama" (PTO 332) and in this sense Geldmacher's playing could be compared to Oskar's – both musicians use the influence of Black popular culture to *change* German tradition.

Loss of Innocence/Discovery of Female Sexuality

The final trope of Black popular culture in *Die Blechtrommel* is the image of the black cook mentioned in the nursery rhyme "Ist die schwarze Köchin da?". Oskar's compulsion to repeat this nursery rhyme and relive the trauma and fear it invokes has to do with a specific childhood experience and a resulting fear of and disgust towards female sexuality. While still a young boy, one day the neighborhood kids concoct a disgusting soup which they force Oskar to eat. Although Oskar witnesses the children adding many repulsive ingredients to the soup, including frogs, bricks, spit and urine from several boys, Oskar is most bothered when Susi Kater urinates into the mix. It is not until Susi's act that Oskar runs away (TD 98, BT 122). Oskar seems most traumatized by Susi's public urination, for this trauma follows him later in life. Schlöndorff references this fear in the film when Oskar sees the girl urinating in a pot at the Nazi rally. In the novel, Oskar asks readers, "Is it any wonder if to this day I can't abide the sound of women urinating in chamber pots?" (TD 98).¹¹³

¹¹² Grass's rejection of Germans' so-called "inability to mourn" is a reference to the book of the same title, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (The Inability to Mourn), published in 1967, eight years after *Die Blechtrommel*, by psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich. The Mitscherlichs argued that Germans were unwilling to confront the past and therefore unable to mourn. Germans' preoccupation with industry, modernization and building a successful economy in the postwar years made it possible for them to forget the past. In the debate that followed, some Germans argued it was necessary to maintain a certain silence around National Socialism in order to build a functioning society (Herman Lübbe), while others believed the German public needed to come to terms with the past more explicitly and there was otherwise a danger that Germans would see themselves as victims. Grass' portrayal of The Onion Cellar is interesting because he stresses Germans' desire *and* ability to mourn during the immediate postwar years. Nevertheless, Oskar might help Germans come to terms with the past, but he still sees himself as a victim of Nazism. I will explore the issue of Germans seeing themselves as victims in the conclusion of this chapter.

¹¹³ "Was Wunder, wenn ich es heute noch nicht anhören kann, wenn Frauen auf Nachttöpfen urinieren" (BT 122).

Schlöndorff also suggests a link between the traumatic event of being force fed the “soup” and Oskar’s fear of the black cook. In the scene leading up to the soup incident, Oskar is seen drumming in the courtyard. By now his drumming has become jazzier compared to his initial more military rhythm. In the courtyard, Oskar’s peers sing the song of the black cook as they mix their disgusting soup. When they reach the line, “Da ist sie ja” (There she is), they point at Oskar. The line “Da ist die ja” feminizes Oskar. As opposed to an earlier scene where the children, including Oskar, marched and sang this song together, now that the other children have grown and Oskar has remained the same size, he has become the Other which is reflected in his feminization.

The act of forcing bodily fluids into Oskar’s mouth functions as a kind of rape, one that is repeated later when the youth become more sexually mature. Susi seduces the young boys of the courtyard with “the kind of temptation that lured the fourteen-year-old sons on [Oskar’s] block down to the cellar with Susi Kater to play doctor and patient” (*TD* 126).¹¹⁴ Playing doctor is a normal occurrence among children – a stage of sexual curiosity on the road to maturity. However, Oskar does not wish to take part in this, for instead of a participant he sees himself as a potential victim. He reflects, “That tempted me not at all. I avoided it like the plague after the little monsters, Axel Kater playing the doctor, had used me as a patient, making me swallow medicines that were not so sandy as the brick soup but had an aftertaste of putrid fish” (*TD* 126).¹¹⁵ Both incidents paint Susi Kater as a promiscuous girl and although the boys also participate in this torture of Oskar, in the second incident in particular, Susi is the agent that delivers it.

Another interesting thing about the soup scene is that it is the first moment where Oskar cannot use his voice to protect himself and it is this experience which gives Oskar *Fernweh*; a desire to escape the domestic realm of his home because it has been made unsafe by the other youth. This marks a new stage in Oskar’s life where his mother begins taking him to Markus Sigismund’s toy store so that Markus can look after Oskar while his mother has an affair with her cousin Jan on Thursday evenings. On one of these Thursday evenings, Oskar sneaks out of Markus’s care to a tower from which he uses his voice to destroy several windows in the theater house purely for fun. In this moment “[he] who had hitherto screamed only for good and sufficient reason, became a gratuitous screamer (*TD* 104).”¹¹⁶ These consecutive scenes: witnessing Susi urinate in the soup, being force fed the concoction of bodily fluids and realizing that his mother’s affair is more important to her than he, represent a further loss of innocence for Oskar related to the knowledge of female sexuality and the propensity women have for doing bad. This loss of innocence is also reflected afterwards in Oskar’s trip to the beach with his mother, Jan and his father Alfred. Oskar holds his drum before his nude body and hides himself in the sand. He is also ashamed by Alfred and Jan’s nude torsos. Although his body gives the appearance of an innocent child, mentally through experience he has become aware of the sexual

¹¹⁴ “...jener Versuchung, die die vierzehnjährige Bengels mit Susi Kater in den Keller lockte, damit dort Arzt und Patient gespielt wurde“ (*BT* 161).

¹¹⁵ “Das versuchte mich nicht, dem ging ich aus dem Wege, nachdem mich die Gören unseres Mietshauses, Axel Mischke und Nuchi Eyke als Serumspender, Susi Kater als Ärztin, zum Patienten gemacht hatten, der Arzneien schlucken mußte, die nicht so sandig wie die Ziegelstinsuppe waren, aber den Nachgeschmack schlechter Fische hatten” (*BT* 161).

¹¹⁶ “...wurde [er], der sich bislang nur aus zwingenden Gründen geschrien hatte, zu einem Schreier ohne Grund und Zwang” (*BT* 130).

lives of those around him. While at his third birthday he learned the adulterous nature of adults, his run-ins with the neighborhood children have taught him that youth does not save one from depravity.

The Black Cook

As Barbara Becker-Cantarino claims in her article, “‘The Black Witch’: Gender, Sexuality and Violence in the Tin Drum,” the female characters in the novel are often portrayed in a misogynist way. Women are often merely the object at which Oskar’s desire and simultaneously his disgust are directed. Oskar seems to both admire and detest powerful women. For example, while en route from Danzig to West Germany in a train, he witnesses how a young girl who is traveling with her uncle does not shy away from fighting over his last bits of clothing after he is killed on the train and his corpse is stripped and removed. Her uncle is a self-proclaimed Social Democrat who dies because he is unwilling to part with his suit and is therefore beaten to death by young Polish bandits. This young woman’s determination to survive, which makes her willing to wear the clothes of her dead uncle to shield her against the cold, likens to other unscrupulous postwar heroines like Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s Maria Braun. Oskar appears both attracted to and disgusted by such a woman (*TD* 426, *BT* 560), which might suggest he has an uncomfortable relationship to powerful women.

It is this disgust of and fear of femininity and female sexuality that determines Oskar’s later experiences with women where he suppresses their subjectivity and tries to manipulate them, performing sexual acts with questionable, if not lacking, consent. And this disgust/fear of female sexuality is represented by the black cook. It is not surprising that Oskar would project his fear of powerful women onto a black figure. In *On Blackness without Blacks*, when discussing Germans’ historical notions of Blacks in Hegel’s work, Sander Gilman finds “an anecdote concerning the fabled African state dominated by women [...] The murder and rape of the male by the female is a classic example of the disruption of divine order in the world of the Black.”¹¹⁷ Oskar’s fear of the black cook invokes this mythical fable. Aside from representing powerful femininity, the black female is also a reflection of the white man’s darkest desires. Richard Dyer points out that “White men are seen as divided, with more powerful sex drives but also a greater will power. The sexual dramas of white men have to do with not being able to resist the drives or with struggling to master them. The drives are typically characterised as dark... the whiteness of white men resides in the tragic quality of their giving way to darkness and the heroism of their channeling or resisting it.”¹¹⁸ Thus, for Oskar, the appearance of the black cook suggests he is giving in to his darker side.

In the novel, we first encounter the *schwarze Köchin* as one of the many nursery rhymes the children in Oskar’s building sing. As I mentioned earlier, this is conveyed in Schlöndorff’s film in a scene where Oskar, drumming away, leads a group of children who sing the rhyme as they parade through the street. Although Oskar has already decided to stop growing, his peers are still relatively young and therefore his size does not yet stand out. While the children march,

¹¹⁷ Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks*, 96.

¹¹⁸ Dyer, *White*, 27-8.

simultaneously a small Nazi parade enters the frame from the left – a sign of the impending change in the political climate. As the Nazi parade marches from the left to the right of the frame, Oskar and the children march diagonally across the frame, cutting them off. The visual conflict of this scene might suggest that the children still symbolize hope against the emerging fascism. However, since the children get lost in this crowd of adults and they are singing the racist lyrics of the “*schwarze Köchin*” nursery rhyme, this scene might also foreshadow that Oskar’s peers will inevitably become a part of the regime.

Becker-Cantarino links the figure of the black cook to witch hunts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:¹¹⁹ “‘Schwarze Köchin (‘black female cook’) was a circumlocution for *witch* during the witch hunts of the sixteenth to eighteenth century, to avoid being hexed by the real witch.”¹²⁰ Due to the song’s link to the witch trials, Becker-Cantarino does not believe there are any racial connotations in Grass’s use of this nursery rhyme: “That the novel closes with a ditty using the word ‘black’ prominently should not be read as a racial slur or even comment. Grass plays with several symbolic – all derogative, if not politically problematic – meanings of ‘black in German.’”¹²¹ Some examples Becker-Cantarino uses are *schwarze Währung* (black or illegal currency), *schwarzer Markt* (black market), the fact that *schwarz* is the color of the Christian Democratic Party and how *schwarz* is related to the devil, upon which she does not elaborate.

We can hardly assume, however, that there are no racial connotations behind the many German sayings that use the word *schwarz*. Jana Husmann-Kastein traced the historical associations with the colors white and black in Western Europe from the middle Ages through the 18th century. During the Crusades, the European crusaders were associated with Christ’s light and the Muslim Moors in contrast with the devil and were therefore referred to as the “*Söhne der Finsternis*” (sons of darkness).¹²² In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, European travelogues described the foreigners whom the Europeans encountered as black and associated them with darkness and nature. In general, there was a tendency to link Blacks with nature and femininity. “The black woman embodies this intersection in theses about the mixing between people and animals.”¹²³ With the growing interest in colonization and scientific development, up until the 17th century, theologians dominated discussions on Blacks and whiteness. To refute the possibility of “another Adam” in the non-Western world, theologians explained away black skin as a punishment for sins. It was not until the 17th century that scientific racism emerged and black and white became anthropological categories used to describe Africans and Europeans.¹²⁴

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Franz Fanon reflected on the tendency of Europeans to associate anything evil, sinful, backwards and frightening as black.¹²⁵ And Chima Oji, author of *Unter die Deutschen gefallen: Erfahrung eines Afrikaner* (Fallen Among the Germans: the

¹¹⁹ Jana Husmann-Kastein also refers to the “black witch” as a common Christian figure. See Husmann-Kastein, “Schwarz-Weiß. Farb- und Geschlechtssymbolik in den Anfängen der Rassenkonstruktionen,” 48.

¹²⁰ Barbara Becker-Cantarino, “‘The Black Witch’: Gender, Sexuality, and Violence in the Tin Drum,” in *Approaches to Teaching Grass's the Tin Drum*, ed. Monika Shafi (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2008), note 1. p. 184.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹²² Husmann-Kastein, “Schwarz-Weiß. Farb- Und Geschlechtssymbolik in Den Anfängen Der Rassenkonstruktionen,” 44-5.

¹²³ “Die Schwarze Frau verkörpert diese Schnittstelle in den Thesen zur Mensch-Tier-Vermischung.” *Ibid.*, 49.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹²⁵ See Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. See also Sander Gilman’s *On Blackness without Blacks* for a lengthier discussion of this issue.

Experience of an African), draws attention to the hidden racism in German sayings and children's rhymes. He suggests that these children's games plant the seeds for racist behavior as an adult. He remarks "whoever as a child ran away from the 'black man' in a game, is still afraid of him today; and whoever plays the 'black Peter game' or the game of the black cook or learned the children song about busy craftsmen has systematically learned to discriminate. In case of an emergency, he must only apply what he learned."¹²⁶

When Oskar "summons" the black cook during his drum performance in the Onion Cellar, he describes the black cook as *kohlenschwarz* (coal-black). If the label "black cook" only referred to her being a witch, this description of her dark physiognomy seems unnecessary. Yet, the "cook's" black skin could come from working with coal. Peter Unbehauen suggests this rhyme of the black cook is "a song from long ago, when rust covered cooks with wooden spoons ran off begging children in fear"¹²⁷ and that these cooks also wore black uniforms.¹²⁸ However this explanation does not account for versions of the song which state that the black cook is from Africa and even America. This reference suggests we could be talking about an African or African American¹²⁹ cook and not just a witch. Even if one were to see Grass's use of this rhyme as not a comment on race, what about the earlier comments made by Oskar about Africa and African culture? Or Oskar's interest in jazz?

The oldest record of the rhyme in the *Deutsches Volksliedarchiv* (German Archive of Folk Songs) is from 1856. The following version I refer to was heard in Berlin and Saxony-Anhalt. The objective of the game of the black cook is to grant or deny the participants belonging

¹²⁶ "...wer schon als Kind im Spiel vor dem >>schwarzen Mann<< davongelaufen ist, der fürchtet sich auch noch als Erwachsener vor ihm; und wer beim Schwarzen-Peter-Spiel, im Spiel um die schwarze Köchin oder die fleißigen Handwerker systematisch gelernt hat, zu diskriminieren, der braucht das Gelernte im Ernstfall nur noch anzuwenden." Chima Oji, *Unter die Deutschen Gefallen* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1992), 282.

¹²⁷ "Ein Lied aus Zeiten, in denen rußverschmierte Köchinnen heischenden Kindern mit dem Kochlöffel Angst einjagten"

¹²⁸ Peter Unbehauen, *Daß ihr euch ja nich' schietig macht. 111 Lieder und Spiele von Hamburger Straßen und Höfen* (Hamburg: Dölling & Galitz, 2000), 105.

¹²⁹ Is the black cook there?

No, no, no!

I have to march around three times

The fourth time I lose my head

The fifth time: come with (Frau Schmidt)

Is the black cook there?

Yes, yes, yes!

She's standing there

She's standing there

The cook from America!

Zisch, zisch, zisch!

Ist die schwarze Köchin da?

Nein, nein, nein!

Dreimal muß ich 'rum marschieren

das vierte Mal den Stock (Kopf) verlieren

das fünfte Mal: komm mit! (Frau Schmidt)

Ist die schwarze Köchin da?

Ja, ja, ja!

Da steht sie ja

Da steht sie ja

die Köchin aus Amerika!

Zisch, zisch, zisch!

Quoted from <http://www.volksliederarchiv.de/text1355.html>. 04 July 2010.

to the group and this circle game is generally only played among girls. The rules of the game are as follows:

Before the game, the “black cook” is decided by counting. The children give each other their hands and close the circle around the “black cook” and sing the following song:
‘Is the black cook there?
No, no, no!
You have to march around three times
The fourth time, stir the pot
The fifth time, come with
When the black cook says “come with,” she gives the child who she touches on the back with these words her hand, and then the rest of the children continue the song.¹³⁰

So each time the first strophe is sung, the black cook chooses a child and in effect brings that child outside of the circle, the community, and into the black cook’s place of alienation. Thus, whoever is associated with the black cook is cast out of the community as well. The black cook continues to walk around the circle of children, choosing a new child each time. However, when everyone has joined the black cook and only one child remains, the object of the game is reversed. Rather than the black cook and her associates being on the outside, they now form the majority and the remaining child becomes the new outsider, the new black cook:

She now sings the same strophe while the circle of children continues to go around and on the fifth turn she takes another child with her. When only one child is left, all of the children walk around the last child and sing:
‘Is the black cook there?
Yes, yes, yes!
There she is, there she is
The old witch from Africa’
During the last two lines everyone stands still and points at the last remaining child, who often puts its hands before its eyes and hunkers down putting its arms in front of its face.¹³¹

¹³⁰ “Vor dem Spiel wird die ‘Schwarze Köchin’ durch Auszählen ermittelt. Die Kinder geben sich die Hände und schließen einen Kreis um den herum die ‘Schwarze Köchin’ läuft und das folgende Lied singt:

‘Ist die schwarze Köchin da?

Nein, nein, nein!

Dreimal muß sie rum marschieren

Viertes Mal den Topf umrühren

Fünftes Mal komm mit!’

Bei ‘Komm mit!’ schlägt sie das Kind, an dem sie bei diesen Worten angelangt ist, auf den Rücken und reicht ihm die Hand, um mit ihm das Umkreisen der anderen Kinder fortzusetzen.” (K XC 75), V 9/5885, Deutsches Volksliedarchiv Freiburg. Noted by Barabara Boock, 23 September 2003.

¹³¹ Sie singt nun die gleiche Strophe weiter beim Umlaufen des Kreises der Mitspieler und nimmt jeweils beim fünften Mal ein weiteres Kind mit. Wenn nur noch ein Kind übrig geblieben ist, laufen alle um dieses herum und singen:

‘Ist die schwarze Köchin da?

Ja,ja,ja!

Da steht sie ja, da steht sie ja

Die alte Hex aus Afrika’

An older reference to a black cook, whose skin has been blackened by coal, can be found in the Brother Grimm fairy tale *Allerleirauh* (Thousandfurs). In *Allerleirauh* the “black cook” turns out to be a beautiful princess in disguise. Christian Freitag acknowledges that there is a history of German language children’s rhymes that attempt to scare children by invoking a Black man or Black woman. The following rhyme is in an older form of German, possibly Middle High or Early Modern German:

Oh, dear mother of mine!
A Black man is pulling me away.
How can you leave me?
I have to dance, and cannot go¹³²

Freitag offers the following explanation for this rhyme:

The fact that the children’s rhyme does not just threaten with a (fictional) BLACK MAN, but also with a (real) Black woman, a moor, shows the reference to Spain’s Moor Period dealt with in Irmgard Faber du Fauer and Janne Minck’s German text which is meant to quiet the crying child:

Sleep, because the (female) moor is already sneaking
From door to door, not far from here.
Sleep, sleep, because she is listening
To hear which child screams so late.

(In contrast, the BLACK COOK, who appears in *Thousandfurs* (65), is not a fearful figure, thus she has no connection to the BLACK MAN or the MOOR (66).¹³³

I disagree with Freitag’s claim that the “black cook” is never a fearful character – Peter Unbehauen rebutted this claim earlier. It is true that the black cook of the Grimm fairy tale is not

Bei den letzten beiden Zeilen bleiben alle stehen und deuten mit ausgerecktem Zeigefinger auf das übrig gebliebene Kind, das oft die Hände vor die Augen schlägt und sich manchmal auch hinkauert und die Arme vors Gesicht nimmt. Ibid. In another version, instead of this last line, the children merely yell “Pfui, pfui, pfui!”

¹³² “Owe, liebe muoter min!

Ein swarzer man ziuht mich da hin.

Wie wiltu mich also verlan?

Muoz ich tanzen, und kan nicht gan.” It is interesting that the Black man who is abducting the child is forcing him to dance. This goes along with the trope of the Black as dancer.

¹³³ “Daß im Kinderreim nicht nur mit dem (fiktiven) SCHWARZEN MANN, sondern auch mit einer (realen) schwarzen Frau, nämlich der MOHRIN gedroht wird, zeigt der nächste, auf Spaniens maurische Zeit zurückgehende und von Irmgard FABER DU FAUR und Janne MINCK in deutscher Sprache aufgezeichnete Text, mit dessen Hilfe das schreiende Kind zum Schweigen gebracht werden soll:

Schlafe, den die Mohrin schleichet

Schon von Tür zu Tür nicht weit.

Schlafe, schlafen, den sie lauschet,

Welches Kind so spat noch schreit.

(Hingegen ist die SCHWARZE KÖCHIN, wie z.B. in ALLERLIRAUH auftritt (65), keine Schreckgestalt, weshalb sie sich auch weder mit dem SCHWARZEN MANN noch mit der MOHRIN in Verbindung bringen läßt (66).)” Christian Freitag, “Erwartung und Sanktion im Kinderreim – unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Verhaltenssteuerung durch Strafe und Strafandrohung,” (Diss. Phillips-Universität Marburg, 1974. Print), 165.

to be feared, but the black cook in the nursery rhyme definitely has a frightening nature about her.

In some versions of the rhyme, the line “The cook from America” or “The witch from Africa” is replaced by “The black cook is standing there!” Although the German Archive of Folk Songs has an earlier version of the song, according to Franz Magnus Böhme in *Deutsches Kinderlied und Kinderspiel*, this song was first written down in Dresden in 1887 and then in Kassel in 1896. If the first reference of the “cook from America” appeared in the late 1880s, thirty years after the first documentation of the song, I believe that the “black cook from America” could refer to the image of the Black mammy in American culture. During the heyday of minstrelsy in the late 19th century, white American men often dressed in drag and blackface in order to perform the black mammy. Eric Lott links blackface transvestitism to both a homosexual desire for the Black man and a misogynist fear of the Black woman. Such transvestite minstrel acts were meant to demonstrate “the profane and murderous power of women”¹³⁴ – the same power which seems to frighten Oskar. One description of the “black wench” which Lott shares is that she “had ‘a hair trigger sort of voice’ and an ‘unholy laugh’ capable of hurrying ‘little innocent children . . . into premature graves’ and convincing wicked unbelievers that ‘there must, at least, be a hell.’”¹³⁵ Given that blackface troupes performed in Germany in the late nineteenth century, for example Sam Hague’s Troupe of Georgia Minstrels in 1870, perhaps Germans were familiar with the image of the mammy and this changed the nursery rhyme about the black cook.¹³⁶

Another moment where the black cook makes an appearance in the novel is the day that Oskar discovers the grocer Greff’s body hanging in the store’s basement. Oskar had recently become close with the grocer – a closet pedophile whose business long suffered due to suspicion that he cheated customers with faulty weights. Because of Oskar’s small stature and underdeveloped body, Oskar had never been granted much attention from Greff, who as a Boy Scout leader spent most of his time with adolescent boys. However, after Oskar reached sexual maturity and supposedly had his first sexual experiences with his stepmother Maria, he set out on the search for a better understanding of the female body and began sleeping with Greff’s bedridden wife. Greff accepted their affair, as if there were a mutual understanding between him and his wife that their relationship remained purely platonic. Greff, undisturbed by Oskar’s relationship with his wife, started to spend more time with Oskar showing off his newest inventions. It is for this reason that Oskar was allowed a more intimate access into the depths of the Greff’s residence and he therefore not only consoled Frau Greff on the day her husband hung himself, but he was also able to sneak away to view the body for himself.

¹³⁴ Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, 159.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Annemarie Bean, et al., *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 165.

Oskar's motivations for viewing the body seem directed by curiosity but also mischief:

To check this hypothesis [that the grocer had committed suicide], meaning, if it were confirmed, to have a good laugh at the greengrocer's expense, I climbed cautiously down the steep stairs, drumming, if I remember correctly, something or other of a nature to create and dispel fear: "Where's the Witch, black as pitch?"¹³⁷ (TD 314)

It makes sense that Oskar would sing the song of the black cook while viewing the corpse. Otto Kammüller says of the rhyme:

The game 'The Black Cook,' originated from the idea of the demon that haunts and snatches people. The game is supposed to help people cope with their fear of the dark unknown while they are still children. [Hans] Scheuerl quotes Sigmund Freud: '...thus an unconscious compulsive repetition drives one to confront the undesirable quasi bit by bit in the game until one has completely overcome it and the soul is at peace again. Therefore, as a "motor-driven hallucination," the game can be labeled a quasi-neurotic appearance and can be equated with certain dreams and spurious actions . . .'¹³⁸

Oskar is clearly fearful of this scene, therefore he uses the song of the black cook to both to induce fear, using repetition compulsion to deal with the trauma, and drive the fear away. But what is Oskar afraid of? He is alone with Greff's corpse; therefore the presence of death could be what frightens him. However it is not just fear of the dead, but a combination of that fear and a feeling of guilt that makes him avoid the cemetery in Saspe where Jan, his uncle and alleged father, is buried – a death for which Oskar feels responsible. Oskar's decision to sing the song of the black cook in order to chase away death's demons suggests an equivalence between Blacks and death. The location of the body in the cellar also brings forth images of hell. Oskar fights his fear of death, hell and (Black) femininity by evoking the black cook – similar to the act of blackface.

While viewing Greff's body, Oskar begins to feel a pain as if he too were hanging.

... at this point a cutting, prickling sensation rose slowly from my private parts, slowly following my rump to my back, which grew suddenly numb, climbed my spinal cord (sic), settled down in the back of my neck, struck me hot and cold, raced down again between my legs, made my scrotum, tiny to begin with, shrivel to nothingness, leapt upward again, over my back, my neck, and shrank – to this day Oskar feels the same

¹³⁷ Manheim translates *schwarze Köchin* (black cook) into "black witch." "Um mich von der Richtigkeit meiner Annahme zu überzeugen, auch um den Gemüsehändler gegebenenfalls gehörig auszulachen, kletterte ich, auf den steilen Stufen alle Vorsicht bewahrend, die Treppe hinunter und trommelte, wenn ich mich recht erinnere, angstmachendes, angstvertreibendes Zeug dabei: >>Ist die Schwarze Köchin da? Jajaja!<<" (BT 411).

¹³⁸ "Das Spiel 'Die schwarze Köchin,' ursprünglich wohl zurückzuführen auf die Vorstellung 'von dem verfolgenden und die Menschen haschenden Dämon,' soll dem Menschen helfen, seine Angst vor dem Düsternen schon im Spielalter zu bewältigen. [Hans] Scheuerl zitiert Sigmund Freud: '...so treibt ihn ein unbewußter, Wiederholungszwang,' das Unlustvolle gleichsam stückweise im Spiel zu bewältigen, bis es verarbeitet und damit der Ruhezustand der Seele wiederhergestellt ist. Damit wird das Spiel als 'motorische Halluzination' zu einer quasi-neurotischen Erscheinung gestempelt und mit gewissen Träumen und Fehlhandlungen gleichgesetzt..." Otto Kammüller, *Oberösterreichische Kinderspiele* (Linz: Oberösterreichischer Landesverlag in Kommission, 1965), 90.

gagging, that same knife thrust, when anyone speaks of hanging in his presence, even of hanging out washing. (*TD* 315)¹³⁹

Viewing Greff's hanging body seems to evoke a fear of mortality in Oskar and therefore he feels the pains he imagines would be inflicted on his body if he were hanging there. These pains in his neck, however, originate in his genitals. This suggests he feels guilty about his affair with Greff's wife. Perhaps he wonders whether this affair helped push the grocer to suicide. The pain in his genitals could also refer to the common link between sexuality and mortality. It is when one becomes sexually active, becomes aware of one's life-giving capabilities, that one also becomes aware of one's mortality.¹⁴⁰

A further mention of the black cook is made when Oskar evades being punished for his participation in the Stäuber Gang – a group of boys who towards the end of the war terrorize Hitler Youth patrols, set fires and steal weapons and rations. While all of the members of the gang are sentenced to death by hanging, Oskar avoids this punishment because his young appearance convinces authorities that he is an innocent child under bad influence. When the other boys are sentenced to death, Oskar imagines them jumping from a diving board while being coaxed by the only girl in the gang, Luzie Rennwand. Because Oskar gets away, he fears Luzie will eventually come for him. "My nightmare is that Lucy Rennwand will turn up in the shape of a wicked witch [black cook in the original German] and for the last time bid me to plunge" (*TD* 386).¹⁴¹ Here, the evil nature of the black cook is associated solely with femininity and not race.

In the film, the rhyme of the black cook is also sung by Bebra's circus troupe. For example, when they visit the bunker on the coast of France, they sing the version of the black cook from America. This scene builds a parallel to the scene I discussed earlier when Oskar and a few neighborhood children sing the song and march through the street. Here, likewise, Oskar and the dwarves are playing like children despite the gravity of the war. The last time the song is heard in the film is during Bebra's troupe's final performance for Nazi officers. As Bebra rides a unicycle through a row of swastika flags, the rest of the troupe sing the rhyme and eventually all of the Nazis in the audience stand up, dance and sing along. Singing the song might be a tribute to their youth, an attempt to recapture a simpler time before the war. The song might also be used as a means to chase away their fears, for ironically, as they sing about the scary black cook from America, the lights go out and bombs explode signaling the American invasion.

¹³⁹ "...da zog sich langsam ein prickelndes Stechen von meinen Geschlechtsteilen, dem Gesäß folgend, den taubwerdenden Rückenhoch, kletterte an der Wirbelsäule entlang, setzte sich im Nacken fort, schlug mich heiß und kalt, prallte mir von dort wieder zwischen die Beine, ließ meinen ohnehin winzigen Beutel schrumpfen, saß mir abermals, den schon gekrümmten Rücken überspringend, im Nacken, verengte sich dort – es sticht und würgt Oskar heutzutage noch, wenn jemand in seiner Gegenwart vom Hängen, selbst vom Wäscheaufhängen spricht ..." (*BT* 412)

¹⁴⁰ According to Jacques Lacan, the sexually active being, loses a part of himself, "...the part of himself, lost forever, that is constituted by the fact that he is only a sexed living being, and that he is no longer immortal." Furthermore, sexual realization is "a death drive and represents in itself the portion of death in the sexed living being." Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan* (New York; London: Norton, 1998), 205.

¹⁴¹ "Mein Ensetzen heißt dann: Jetzt kommt Luzie Rennwand und fordert dich als Kinderschreck und Schwarze Köchin letztmals zum Sprung auf" (*BT* 507).

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I attempted to draw a connection between *Die Blechtrommel*'s Oskar Mazerath and Black popular culture via German assumptions of the rebellious nature of Black culture in the 19th and 20th centuries. Krimmer claims that in the context of *Die Blechtrommel*, the black cook is:

A symbol of guilt – “du bist schuld und du bist schuld und du am allermeisten” [you are guilty and you are guilty and you most of all] (778) – “die schwarze Köchin” embodies the obliteration of personal agency in the face of a demonized female force of destiny who is ultimately nothing but a bogeyman for little children (cf. Jendrowiak 49). In concluding with the Black Cook, the novel demonstrates that, though Oskar has become older and taller, he did not grow up at all.¹⁴²

Oskar's fear of the mythical “black cook” from children's nursery rhymes, along with his refusal to inherit his father's *Kolonialwarengeschäft*, his penchant for speaking through rhythm,¹⁴³ and his adult career as a jazz musician, articulate a German shame and desire to come to terms with Germany's persecution of Others in the colonies and under the Nazi regime. However, rather than focus on the failure to admit personal agency, I view the black cook as a figure who confronts Oskar's negative connotations with Black popular culture. The black cook represents Germany's racist past and Germans' essentializing understanding of Black popular culture that persists despite Oskar's/Germans' attempt to identify with the Black Other.

In August of 2006, preceding the publication of his memoir *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel*, Grass, an icon of the literary left, revealed that he had been a member of the Waffen-SS during the last months of the war revealing him to be a perpetrator. Long identified with German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), Grass now stood accused of the silence and obfuscation that he had reviled in others.¹⁴⁴

Krimmer believes the increased feeling of victimization among the German people is evident in the far-right's yearly protest on the anniversary of the bombing of Dresden, but is also felt in the political middle such as the suggestion for a “centre dedicated to the remembrance of World War II refugees.”¹⁴⁵ W.G. Sebald warned that if one neglected German suffering from the war, we might repeat history.¹⁴⁶ This prediction might have come into realization not only with the NPD's annual protests on the anniversary of the bombing of Dresden but also in the increasing

¹⁴² Krimmer, “‘Ein Volk von Opfern?’ Germans as Victims in Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* and *Im Krebsgang*,” 282.

¹⁴³ By refusing to speak for the most of his childhood, Oskar refuses to enter the realm of the symbolic which reflects a desire to remain close to his mother. This insistence on existing in a pre-lingual state associates him with primitivity and a further racist belief about Blacks. See Laurence A. Rickels, “*Die Blechtrommel*: Zwischen Shermen- und Bildungsroman,” *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* 20 (1986): 115.

¹⁴⁴ Krimmer, “‘Ein Volk von Opfern?’ Germans as Victims in Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* and *Im Krebsgang*,” 282.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 273.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

animosity among German school children when learning about the Holocaust.¹⁴⁷ Krimmer suggests the following modern-day consequences for this rhetoric of victimization:

Seen in this light, the discourse of victimization is problematic not only because it forms the unconscious underbelly of current German foreign policy – several scholars have pointed to a connection between the current German reluctance to engage in warfare and the propensity to identify with the victims of WWII (Huysen 164–71; Kettenacker 13) – but also because, in self-identifying as victims, Germans run the risk of eliding the responsibility for both the war and the Holocaust.¹⁴⁸

According to Krimmer, Oskar depends on his victim status.¹⁴⁹ As I mentioned earlier:

alternating between first and third person singular casts Oskar [and Grass in his autobiography] as both the subject and object of his story. As a child, Oskar is abused and maltreated by the children in the neighbourhood. As an adolescent, he is persecuted by the Stäuber gang, a group of delinquent young men. As a physically deformed individual, he is also a potential victim of Nazi eugenics. Hence, it is hardly surprising that Oskar, frequently victimized himself, would associate with other victims of the Nazi regime. He befriends the Jewish toy merchant Marcus, who commits suicide during *Reichskristallnacht*, and proclaims solidarity with his cousin Stephan, who is beaten up by his classmates because he is a Pole. In many ways, Oskar is among those who are particularly vulnerable to Nazi violence. At the same time, however, he also works to further the Nazi cause... Oskar is guilty not because he acts but because he fails to act when action is required.¹⁵⁰

This is something Grass also sees himself guilty of. In order to right Grass's wrongs – escape implication in Nazi Germany's crimes – Oskar needed to not only avoid taking part in the banal every day life of fascism by stunting his growth, but also take on the responsibility of being the people's conscience through his drumming. It is this rebellious drumming which turns Oskar into a historiographer constantly reminding the people of their history, helping them mourn and reconciling the individual with the collective and this links Oskar to Black popular culture. But neither Grass nor Oskar remained uninvolved in the Nazi dictatorship. In their late teen years, both become implicated in the regime: Grass joins the SS and Oskar joins a theater group that performs at the front for purposes of propaganda. The fact that Oskar is haunted by the black cook might underline his failure to truly break with Germany's crimes. The black cook is a mammy figure, the white man's construction of Black femininity come back to haunt white men with their fears and repressed desires.

¹⁴⁷ Younger generations of Germans feel they are not responsible for the Nazis crimes and that the nation should move forward from its feelings of guilt and instead cultivate a healthy feeling of patriotism. See Nicholas Kulish, *German Identity, Long Dormant, Reasserts Itself* (September 10 2010 2010)); available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/11/world/europe/11germany.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Krimmer, "“Ein Volk von Opfern?” Germans as Victims in Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* and *Im Krebsgang*," 273.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 275.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 277.

Lott states that fear of the Black woman is only one side of blackface transvestitism. The image of the “minstrel mammy allowed white men to relive ‘the forgotten liberties of infancy – the belly and the sucking of breasts, a wallowing in shit.’”¹⁵¹ This dialectic of desire/repulsion in American culture is typically embodied in the Black mammy alone and Laurence A. Rickels suggests that the black cook serves a similar function of uniting opposites in *Die Blechtrommel* – uniting the Apollonian and the Dionysian.¹⁵² However, I believe that in Grass’s novel each side of the mammy is represented by two characters. The black cook embodies Oskar’s fears of race and female sexuality. However, the source of nurturing feelings for Oskar cannot be found in this same Black mammy/cook figure, rather in his own grandmother. But what does it mean that Grass has pitted the Black mammy against the Kashubian grandmother?

Throughout the novel, Oskar constantly seeks to reconcile supposed opposites, for example Rasputin and Goethe or Jesus and the devil. He often sees himself as embodying these opposing forces. Olster suggests, “if musical harmony results from the arrangement of triadic tones into chords, the reconciliation for which Oskar strives can be transposed into various musical alternatives.”¹⁵³ Continuing with the idea of musical harmony providing structure in life, Olster states that the melody of a musical piece can be structured around a dominant chordal tone, which gives the piece a different sound from the completed sound of the tonic and therefore “the security of the tonic can be best found in the picture of Oskar’s grandmother.”¹⁵⁴

Oskar tries to reconcile the Black mammy and his grandmother, but is unable to: “What, will you ask, can Oskar be after beneath his grandmother’s skirts? Does he wish to imitate his grandfather Koljaiczek and take liberties with an old woman? Is he searching for oblivion, a home, the ultimate Nirvana? Oskar replies: I was looking for Africa under the skirts ...” (*TD* 125).¹⁵⁵ Just like his reflections on the moth at his birth, here Oskar attempts reconciliation between his desire to return to the womb and his desire for Africa as the source of rhythm, primitivism and a childlike innocence. But the negative image of the black cook, with which the novel leaves us, suggests that this reconciliation is not possible.

Interestingly, while on the one hand Oskar seeks to avoid inheritance and the problems that come along with it, on the other hand he wishes to return to the womb and find safety among his dead relatives. The contrast here is inside versus outside. One [outside/inheritance] is based on the deeds of your forefathers in society, in the outside world. The other [inside/blood] is based on genes. Oskar envisions telling his alleged son Kurt while looking at his grandmother, “Look inside, my son. That’s where we come from. And if you’re a good little boy, we shall be allowed to go back for an hour or more and visit those who are waiting” (*TD* 348).¹⁵⁶ He later reflects, “In those days it seemed to me that true family life was possible only in the interior of my

¹⁵¹ Lott quoted in M.M. Manring, *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 70-1.

¹⁵² Rickels, “*Die Blechtrommel*: Zwischen Shermen- Und Bildungsroman,” 130.

¹⁵³ Olster, “Inconstant Harmony in ‘the Tin Drum,’” 67.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ “Was sucht Oskar unter den Röcken seiner Großmutter? Will er seinen Großvater Koljaiczek nachahmen und sich an der alten Frau vergehen? Sucht er Vergessen, Heimat, das endliche Nirwana? Oskar antwortet: Afrika suchte ich unter den Röcken . . .” (*BT* 160).

¹⁵⁶ “>>>Schau nur hinein, mein Sohn. Von dort her kommen wir. Und wenn du schön brav bist, dürfen wir für ein Stündchen oder länger zurück und die dort wartende Gesellschaft besuchen” (*BT* 458).

grandmother Koljaiczek, in the grandmotherly butter tub, as I liked to call it” (*TD* 349).¹⁵⁷ If retreating under the skirts and therefore symbolically returning into the womb of his grandmother represents safety and warmth – an escape into the familiar – then being turned over to the black cook represents being thrust into the outside world, into the unknown, the uncanny, and confronted with the Other face to face, not just through music and performance.

When the children’s rhyme of the black cook is mentioned at the very end of the novel it refers to the point in the game when all the children except one are on the side of the black cook. The sole child remaining is, in this case, Oskar. Now the community points its finger at Oskar. Suspected of murdering a nurse, Oskar flees to Paris¹⁵⁸ and he is haunted by the black cook from the moment he boards the train. In a Paris Metro Station, he takes the elevator to the street where he intends to get a taxi to the airport. Because of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain, he is unable to flee East to the safety of his grandmother’s skirts. Therefore, Oskar opts for the next best destination, America, to where his grandfather allegedly fled. On the escalator he is followed by an old woman who resembles the black cook. Like a ladder or a stairwell, in this scene the escalator serves as a metaphor for a journey or progression. In Oskar’s case it is the path from childhood to adulthood (from a flight from guilt to acceptance of punishment). Oskar reflects about the experience: “An escalator ride is a good time to reconsider, to reconsider everything: Where are you from? Where are you going? Who are you? What is your real name? What are you after? (*TD* 584).¹⁵⁹ Oskar must decide between youth and maturity, flight and acceptance of punishment. But this is not solely about accepting punishment for the crime of killing a nurse, for which he is not guilty. It is about accepting his legacy; his cultural inheritance. Throughout the entire book, Oskar ran from his legacy, first by doubting his true paternity and finally by killing both his suspected fathers. He can establish a new life in America like his grandfather or he considers: “... I could give in and let them nail me to the Cross. Just because I happen to be thirty, I go out and play the Messiah they see in me” (*TD* 585).¹⁶⁰ Surrendering to who he is and where he is from means accepting his cultural legacy. Equating himself to Jesus, by surrendering Oskar would be accepting punishment for the collective sins of the Germans.

The “black cook” Oskar sees in the face of the old woman behind him on the escalator is revealed to be an agent of the international police. The world, in the form of the international police and the black cook, is pointing its collective finger at Oskar, who stands in for the German people whom the black cook judges to be guilty. Germans are therefore ostracized from the larger global community that condemned the Nazis’ crimes. Although Grass mocks the Mitscherlichs’ assesment that Germans were unable to mourn, Oskar’s feeling of victimhood in relation to his fear of the black cook relates to the Mitscherlichs’ arguments. The Mitscherlichs

¹⁵⁷ “Erst im Inneren meiner Großmutter Koljaiczek oder, wie ich es scherzhaft nannte, im großmütterlichen Butterfaß wäre es meinem damaligen Theorien nach zu einem wahren Familienleben gekommen” (*BT* 459).

¹⁵⁸ In yet another variation of the nursery rhyme, the children sing of traveling to Paris and taking the black cook with them. “Wir reisen durch die Stadt Paris, wer reist mit? Die Köchin mit dem langen Schwanz, sie reist mit.” (We travel through the city of Paris, who’s coming along? The cook with the long tail, she’s coming along.) Source: Deutsches Volksliedarchiv (A 114332), (1928). The reference to the cook having a tail is another example of the connection made between the cook and the devil.

¹⁵⁹ “Wenn man auf einer Rolltreppe steht, soll man noch einmal alles überlegen: Wo kommst du her? Wo gehst du hin? Wer bist du? Wie heißt du? Was willst du?” (*BT* 773).

¹⁶⁰ “Oder aber, ich gebe nach, lass mich festnageln, gehe hinaus, nur weil ich dreißig bin, und mime ihnen den Messias” (*BT* 774).

believed that appropriating the status of victim was one of the defenses West Germans used. They suggested:

...identification with the innocent victim is ... frequently substituted for mourning; this is above all a logical defense against guilt...The past then appears as follows: We made many sacrifices, suffered the war, and were discriminated against for a long time afterward; yet were innocent, since everything that is now held against us we did under orders. This strengthens the feeling of being oneself the victim of evil forces, first the evil Jews, then the evil Nazis, and finally the evil Russians. In each instance the evil is externalized. It is sought for on the outside, and it strikes one from the outside...¹⁶¹

Oskar's appropriation of Black popular culture in his drumming changes German culture by making Germans deal with the past publicly. However, their engagement never includes the victim, the Other, which is a necessary step in confronting the Nazis' crimes. The Onion Cellar might be a public place, but the mourning done there is done in the privacy of the German community and it posits the Germans as victims, mourning over their war-time experiences and loss. The fact that the novel ends with Oskar blaming the black cook for his bad deeds suggests that Oskar and Germans have not moved passed this narrative of victimhood.

The many versions of the rhyme which I encountered did not include Grass' infamous words "Du bist schuld ... und du am allermeisten" (You are guilty . . . and you most of all) (*TD* 588, *BT* 778). In a version of the song from the book *Tiroler Kinderleben in Reim und Spiel* editor Grete Horak claims while the black cook pointed to each girl in the circle she sang "Du bist schön und du bist bist schön und du die aller schönste!" (You are beautiful and you are beautiful and you the most beautiful!)¹⁶² This would go along with traditional fairy tales where the witch seeks to kidnap the most beautiful girl in the village, for example in *Sleeping Beauty*. Perhaps Grass's use of the phrase "Du bist schuld" (You are guilty) refers to the fact that the final child remaining typically covered her eyes and cowered before the cook which implies either guilty or fearful emotions. The game actually ends with the final child becoming the black cook for the next round. However, in *Die Blechtrommel* there is no next round. Oskar is the guilty outsider at whom the new community of Others points. Considering the game was traditionally played by girls, it seems even more unusual that Oskar would be included and this ending might not only be a critique of Oskar's relationship to racial Others, but to women as well.

¹⁶¹ Alexander and Margerete Mitscherlich quoted in Sander Gilman and Jack Zipes, eds., *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096-1996* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press), 737-8.

¹⁶² Grete Horak, *Tiroler Kinderleben in Reim und Spiel, Volksmusik in Tirol* (Innsbruck: Innsbruck Eigenverl. d. Inst. für Tiroler Musikforschung, 1986), 65. This version from Tirol has a slightly different text. "Ist die schwarze Köchin da? Nein, nein, nein. Dreimal muß sie rummarschieren, viermal den Kopf verlieren, fünftmal muß sagen: du bist schön, du bist schön, du die allerschönste! Sag mir eine Farbe an! (Grün) So hänge dich an meinen Schleier an. Oder (Grün) Dreh dich um, lach dich aus, such dir eine bessere aus." (Is the black cook there? No, no, no. You have to march around three times. The fourth time you lose your head, the fifth time say: you are beautiful, you are beautiful, you are most beautiful! Tell me a color! (Green) And so I put on my veil. Or (Green) Turn around, laugh, and look for a better one) (69). There are apparently also different rules to the game in the Tirolian version. The final child left, "is made fun of by everyone else and tries to catch one of the taunters. The taunter who is caught is the next black cook otherwise she has to be the black cook again" (67).

Chapter Two

Waiting for My Band

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the dialectic of desire for and repulsion towards Black popular culture relates to rebellion against German culture and history in *Die Blechtrommel*. Oskar rejects his father's plans for him partly by associating himself with Black popular culture because he conceives it as liberating, primitive and different from a "civilized" German culture. This civilized German culture, as Oskar experiences it in the adult world, is marked by adultery, deception and brutality. That is why Oskar desires to remain in the world of the child – a world of innocence. However, as is evident in the abuse Oskar faces at the hands of his peers, the child's world is not necessarily innocent. His peers' mistreatment of him could be seen as mimicking the behavior of adults. Rather than a space of innocence, childhood becomes a mere stage in their socialization and preparation for the adult world. Despite Oskar's ability to physically appear as a child, he too is implicated in society's crimes. Joining the circus troupe may have been an alternative to fighting in the war, but entertaining the troops and benefiting from Nazi Germany's exploitation of occupied countries still implicated him in the deadly regime.¹ Oskar's inability to reject *all* responsibility for the crimes of his father's generation is represented by his feelings of guilt and his fear of Black femininity, embodied in the figure of the black cook.

In this chapter, I will discuss another rebellious male character who also has an affinity for Black culture but whose age relieves him of Oskar's guilty feelings about the war. In Chapter One, we left Oskar in West Germany in the 1950s. Oskar was of an older generation; those who lived through Nazi Germany and World War II as young adults. Thomas Valentin's novel *Die Unberatenen* introduces us to the next generation of Germans born during or after the war. The novel was published in 1963, while Valentin was still a high school teacher. The novel's protagonist, Jochen Rull, is a teenager living in a West German city. Rull picks up where Oskar left off, listening to African American jazz, in particular Louis Armstrong.²

In 1966, Peter Zadek directed a theatrical version of *Die Unberatenen* for television. And in 1968, Zadek directed the film *Ich bin ein Elefant, Madame* which is loosely based on Valentin's novel. While jazz is a key component in the novel, in the play Zadek uses both jazz and rock music. By the time he filmed *Ich bin ein Elefant, Madame*, however, Jochen Rull no

¹ As I suggested in the last chapter, one could certainly see a parallel between Oskar and the Blacks who survived the Nazi regime's persecution by performing in colonial films and musical revues. Like these Black actors, Oskar's performance for the troops might have been less a choice and more a means of survival. After all, he left home around the time the local insane asylum kept pressing Alfred to commit him, what would have ultimately meant his death. Nevertheless, I find the manner in which Grass portrays Oskar's involvement with the circus troupe in the chapter "Mystisch, Barbarisch, Gelangweillt" rather condemning. Oskar is not depicted as a scared victim happy to narrowly escape Nazi persecution. Instead, he dons a Nazi uniform, indulges in delicacies and amuses himself, while innocent French citizens are massacred by the occupying Nazi troops. Despite his attempts to align himself with Others, Oskar shows little concern for the victims in this incident. And as Elisabeth Krimmer points out, many of the times Oskar resists participation in the regime has less to do with political resistance and more to do with personal benefit. Thus, despite the undeniable similarities between Oskar's position as an Other and the Blacks living under the Nazi Regime, Oskar's whiteness allows him more freedom and correspondingly a certain amount of collective guilt.

² Armstrong is one of several specific Black musicians whose music was banned under the Nazis. He will also play a prominent role in Chapter Four; for the main character of Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*s not only listens to "Satchmo" but likens his singing voice to his as well.

longer listens to African American jazz, but has an indirect engagement with Black popular culture via the Velvet Underground, an American rock band influenced by Black popular music. Despite this key difference between the novel and the film, in both, Rull rejects taking the path in life expected of him and tries to avoid inheriting his German legacy by way of his preference in music. This link between music and cultural legacy is downplayed in the play.

My analysis of *Die Unberatenen* will demonstrate how Black popular music in the form of jazz continues to play an important role as a means of resistance for German youth in the postwar period. In my analysis of *Ich bin ein Elefant, Madame*, which I will refer to as *Elefant*, we will see how the birth of rock 'n' roll changes the struggle between advocates of traditional German culture and young rebels who prefer foreign culture. Furthermore, I believe the techniques Zadek uses in his film adaptation of Valentin's novel help to better understand the identity crisis which Rull and his peers were experiencing.

Chapter One revealed how attitudes about Black popular culture from Weimar Germany and Nazi Germany carried over into the postwar era. Oskar's affinity for Black popular culture and his use thereof to resist an oppressive regime set the precedent for this chapter. Rull continues in Oskar's footsteps by looking to Black popular culture for a means to resist what he perceives as fascist tendencies lurking in the new democracy that is West Germany. Although Valentin's novel is set around the same time *Die Blechtrommel* was published, in the late 1950s, Zadek's adaptation transports the issues of postwar guilt, the German fascination with Black popular culture and youth's resistance to hegemonic culture, to the late 1960s. Rull becomes representative of the 1968 student movement whose members, like Oskar, tried to distance themselves from their parents' legacy and culture. However students' denunciation of their parent's generation and their indictment of the remnants of the country's Nazi past occurred on a larger and much more public scale than Oskar, as an individual, could have been capable of.

Zadek's college prep students introduce us to the 1968 German student movement, part of a larger global movement that brought the issues of oppressed people, including African Americans, to the conscience of German youth. In Chapter Three, we will see how the student movement's solidarity with international struggles against oppression and emerging interest in armed struggle and terrorism lead to a progression from a mere love of Black popular music to the glorification of the Black revolutionary subject. It is out of this student movement that a more radicalized wing developed and attempted to use violence and terror to change German society in the 1970s. However, rather than making a film with a protagonist akin to the Black idols of the German student movement, like Angela Davis or Eldridge Cleaver, Rainer Werner Fassbinder's film *Whity* is set in the 19th century and takes a Black slave as its protagonist. While this current chapter will focus primarily on the arguments and beliefs of the student movement as they are depicted in Zadek's film, Chapter Three picks up at a point where the movement starts to turn violent and German intellectuals like Fassbinder become more critical of the German fascination with Black rebellion. *Whity* demonstrates how the radicalization of youth rebellion sobers ideals about solidarity, liberation and revolution.

Americanization, 1950s Youth Rebellion, and Thomas Valentin's *Die Unberatenen*

The novel *Die Unberatenen* is based on Thomas Valentin's experience as a school teacher during the 1950s in West Germany. Germans had survived a difficult postwar period which entailed cleaning up the rubble left behind by the war, persecuting war criminals and enduring occupation by four foreign nations (the United States, France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union). The U.S. government referred to this rehabilitation period as a time of the four Ds: denazification, demilitarization, decartelization and democratization. However the success of these efforts was hindered by America's desire to get West Germany back on its feet so that it could be a viable alliance during the Cold War.³ Thanks to the Marshall Plan (1947-1951), by the mid 1950s Germany was experiencing an economic miracle. However, amidst this age of optimism, there was still tension brewing not only between opposing political factions, but also between generations.⁴

In particular, Germans were alarmed to see how American culture was influencing the youth. By 1955, rock n' roll had replaced jazz as the preferred popular music⁵ and instead of the Swing style that had been trendy among rebellious youth during the Nazi regime, many German boys began fashioning themselves after American idols like Marlon Brando, James Dean and Elvis Presley: wearing jeans, leather jackets and Texas shirts or T-shirts.

Something happens in 1955 in boring Germany that gives the, until then silent rebellion of disaffected sons towards their complacent post-war fathers, a signal to convene [. . .] As of now things are no longer as fathers would like to have it, only the fathers did not notice it yet. Tentatively the young people are just teenagers, ready for a proper beating.⁶

These male rock 'n' roll fans, primarily between age sixteen and twenty-three⁷, were often referred to as *Halbstarke* which can be translated as teenager or beatnik, but it literally means semi-strong. The derogative "semi-strong" referred to the youths' tough appearance and violent nature on the streets, but lack of masculinity according to the standards of patriarchal German society. "Both post-war Germanies embarked on processes of 'remasculinisation' beginning in the late 1940s and early 1950s."⁸ And when West Germany voted to make rearmament possible in 1954,⁹ both "the governing Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and the

³ "Initially OMGUS [the Office of Military Government of the United States] officials watched carefully that they appointed no former Nazis to positions in the new bureaucracies. With the worsening of the Cold War, however, and with increasing efforts to integrate West Germany into a Western alliance, it soon became expedient to employ former Nazis. This contributed to the cynicism many Germans felt toward reeducation." Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 37-8. "Konrad Adenauer (1933-1967), who headed the Christian Democratic government in West Germany from 1949 to 1963, called for an end to the trials and investigations as easily as 1946 and later issued an amnesty to convicted Nazis." Sieg, *Ethnic Drag: Performing Race, Nation, Sexuality in West Germany*, 9.

⁴ The film *Das Wunder von Bern* (2003) is an excellent example of the tension between the returning prisoners of war and the children they had left behind. In this film, the family's eldest son inevitably leaves for East Germany because he cannot reconcile his beliefs with his father's. The film also shows that while much of the country was reaping the benefits of the economic wonder (conveyed in color film), some working-class families were still struggling (conveyed in gray and brown tones).

⁵ Richard A. Peterson, "Why 1955? Explaining the Advent of Rock Music," *Popular Music* 9, no. 1 (1990).

⁶ Manfred Hobsch, *Liebe, Tanz Und 1000 Schlagerfilme* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 1998), 21.

⁷ Erik H. Erikson, "The Problem of Ego Identity," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 4 (1956).

⁸ Mark Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs and Rock 'N' Roll: Teenage Rebels in Cold-War East Germany* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn, 2009), 44.

⁹ Western Allies were interested in getting West Germany's help during the Korean War.

opposition Social Democrats (SPD) could agree that the new democracy required a new male citizen and soldier who would undertake the military tasks with ‘sobriety’ and reliability.’”¹⁰ The Nazis’ defeat in 1945 had simultaneously meant a defeat for German manhood. Due to the over 3 million German soldiers killed in the war and the seven million prisoners of war, in 1945 there were seven million more women than men in Germany.¹¹ Therefore, the country relied heavily on the labor of women in the immediate postwar period. So-called *Trümmerfrauen* (rubble women) cleared the cities’ streets of debris and ran the households. Furthermore, the nation’s defeat was often referred to in terms of gender. Germany was feminized and the actual rape of German women by occupying soldiers became symbolic for the “rape” of the nation by the occupying forces.¹²

Embedded in politicians’ argument that the new West German democracy demanded a new masculinity was an effort to resurrect German masculinity, “...resurrect a positive German tradition of brave and obedient soldiers” who were needed for the Cold War.¹³ Although postwar Germany was initially marked by images of weak men and strong women, as POWs began returning in large numbers, many working women were replaced by them at the workplace. The state believed POWs could be reintegrated into society through work and building a family. “After a period of crisis and adjustment, husbands and wives were united in their shared experience of overcoming hardship and suffering during the war and the immediate postwar period”¹⁴ and they resorted back into the gender roles prescribed by a patriarchal model. By the mid-1950s, rather than a weak victim, “Instead, the returned POW now appeared as a powerful symbol for an ideal West German citizen who was firmly anticommunist yet also kept a skeptical distance from the ‘American way of life.’”¹⁵ In contrast to this ideal German male, the *Halbstarke* were perceived as effeminate because they actively embraced American culture and an African American influenced dancing style.¹⁶ The generational conflict between West German hegemonic masculinity and the deviant masculinity of the youth would become even greater when the *Halbstarke* youth culture gave way to the student activists of the 1960s. While the *Halbstarke* happily consumed American culture, they were not necessarily political. The students of the 1960s counterculture; however, embraced both American culture and the leftist political systems they had been raised to hate.

¹⁰ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels : Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 73.

¹¹ Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins: The American-German Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 57.

¹² See Annette Brauerhoch, *Fräuleins und GIs : Geschichte und Filmgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld/Nexus, 2006).

¹³ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels : Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 73.

¹⁴ Frank Biess, “Survivors of Totalitarianism: Returning P.O.W.S and the Reconstruction of Masculine Citizenship in West Germany, 1945-1955,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1959-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 72.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 89 and 172-5. Poiger quotes the West German youth magazine *Bravo* as describing rock ‘n’ roll as being “rooted in the ritual music of ‘Africa’s Negroes’” and referring to rioting British rock fans as “white Negroes.” Poiger also discusses how, for example, rock ‘n’ roll icon Elvis Presley was portrayed with African American features in the German press. Germans felt his effeminate, oversexualized hip swinging and his thick lips suggested he had “Black blood.” Rock ‘n’ roll which had previously been associated with Black popular culture and overaggression was now seen as too feminine. This paradox makes complete sense, however, when one contextualizes it in racist discourses which described Black men in the same ways: at once the oversexed violent brute and the submissive effeminate servant. In *Bravo Amerika*, Kasper Maase describes how the negative association between Black popular culture and rock ‘n’ roll was just a continuation of earlier prejudices towards Black culture. “The culture shock since the end of the 19th century which had been caused by the ‘American tempo’, skyscrapers, impulse arousing dances and ‘Nigger-Jazz’ appeared to not yet be overcome.” Maase, *Bravo Amerika*, 11.

Paradoxically, while their parents viewed the *Halbstarke* as emasculate and semi-strong, these youth were actually wreaking havoc in the streets. Parents felt teenage violence was worsened by the screening of certain American films. “The arrival of movies such as *The Wild One* with Marlon Brando, *Rebel Without a Cause* with James Dean, and *Blackboard Jungle* with Sidney Poitier, along with the rock ‘n’ roll flick *Rock Around the Clock*, exacerbated parents’ and officials’ worries about American cultural influences.”¹⁷ Several of these film screenings and rock concerts resulted in riots, like a performance by Bill Haley and the Comets in Hamburg in 1958.¹⁸ *Halbstarke* were strictly opposed to West Germany’s rearmament and the new male citizen and soldier. Aside from the conflict which mandatory military service and the disciplined life of a “citizen in uniform”¹⁹ would pose to their leisure time, postwar youth were generally critical of militarism. “Many felt a deep, instinctive rejection of anything associated with militarism or ideology. Their attitudes to post-war attempts at re-education and re-indoctrination were often describes as ‘*ohne mich*’ (‘count me out’).”²⁰

Valentin’s novel addresses this controversial issue of the generational conflict in West Germany, particularly between former Nazis and collaborators turned civil servants and their teenage students. In *Die Unberatenen*, sixteen-year old students of a *Gymnasium* (college-prep school) try to confront the persisting fascism in West Germany and look for possible alternative father figures who are either foreign or do not believe in the traditional patriarchal society. R.C. Andrews offers a concise summary of the conflict at the center to the story:

Most of them [the students] are dissatisfied with the education they are receiving, which seems to them to be divorced from all positive values [...] Only two or three of the masters seem to have any real interest in their subject and in the boys and to have more than minimal out-of-school contacts with them. A series of interior monologues reveals most of the others to be time-servers dreaming of retirement or ex-Nazis longing to ‘bring back the birch’ and the discipline of the ‘Arbeitsdienst.’ Their common terms of abuse are ‘Jew,’ ‘Prole’ and ‘Slav.’²¹

The novel was so critical of German schools, that according to Zadek, Valentin – a fifteen-year veteran school teacher and university lecturer²² – was fired from his school for writing it.²³

In *Die Unberatenen*, protagonist Jochen Rull is expelled from school merely weeks before graduation. His expulsion is decided by the faculty committee after Rull is falsely accused

¹⁷ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels : Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 71-2.

¹⁸ At the concert, on October 27th, 1958: “The youth swung chair legs, iron rods, bars and many other things. The students of the student union defended themselves with fists, then one hundred policemen appeared, and a wild chase across the chairs set in. The police vacated the hall. Rock ‘n’ Roll is an epidemic, which one can denote as dance anger.” Maase, *Bravo Amerika*, 197.

¹⁹ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels : Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 74. Poiger stresses that during this “remasculinization” campaign in West Germany, the new male that politicians promoted was “not a resurrected soldier of the Third Reich”, but one who would “relate to his state in a different way”, p.74. Fenemore, however, believes that the ideal of the emotive soldier who works hard on the front and is still actively involved in the family was already present in Nazi propaganda. Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs and Rock ‘N’ Roll: Teenage Rebels in Cold-War East Germany*, 44.

²⁰ Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs and Rock ‘N’ Roll: Teenage Rebels in Cold-War East Germany*, 45.

²¹ R.C. Andrews, “The German School-Story: Some Observations on Paul Schalluck and Thomas Valentin,” *German Life and Letters* 23 (1970): 107-8.

²² *Ibid.*: 110.

²³ See Peter Zadek, *My Way: Eine Autobiographie 1926-1969* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1998), 407.

of painting a swastika on the school's urinal. The graffiti is meant to imply that Nazism still lurks in the school in the form of its teachers. Rull is mistaken for committing this offense because the school janitor sees him urinating near the graffiti. On the morning the graffiti is found, Rull intends to apologize to the school director for an incident he committed earlier that week: hanging up thought-provoking quotes throughout the school. But the director falsely understands his confession as pertaining to the swastika. During his interrogation, Rull maintains his innocence and uses the opportunity to honestly tell his teachers his frustrations about the educational system. Rull is inevitably expelled not because he drew the graffiti, but because the teachers feel his troubling critique of the school and his desire for change pose a threat to the system.

The swastika graffiti is not the only direct reference to the persistence of Germany's Nazi past; the title of the novel itself is associated with Adolf Hitler. After an argument with his father regarding Rull's Communist sympathies and his condemnation of his father's and teachers' Nazi past, Rull reflects alone in his room: "If he [Hitler] had had another father and just two or three other teachers, maybe our history would have gone differently. Unadvised, poor, wild sow from the Bohemian forest."²⁴ Yet, the novel is entitled *Die Unberatenen* (plural) not *Der Unberatene* (singular), suggesting Hitler is not the only unadvised one. In fact, when the school's director rants about the many new terms used to refer to Rull's generation, like teenager and beatnik, Rull suggests they be called "Die Unberatenen." R.C. Andrews claims the title of the novel was taken from a remark in one of Franz Kafka's letters regarding his upbringing.²⁵ By using this title, Valentin suggests that the miseducation or misguidance Hitler received has not changed since then. According to Frank Biess, "as a result of the delayed return of the POWs, West German society was compelled to cope with the direct social, moral, and psychological consequences of the racial war of destruction on the Eastern front well into the second half of the 1950s."²⁶ And Heide Fehrenbach describes this period in the following terms, "In the wake of defeat and occupation, German men lost their status as protectors, providers, and even (or so it seemed for a short time) as procreators: the three 'P's that had traditionally defined and justified their masculinity."²⁷

For many of the children coming of age in the postwar era, their fathers missed the formative years of their lives and this absence was not necessarily filled when the POWs returned home, for they were needed to rebuild the country and provide for their families:

This absence from home due to work added to the distance created by the time they had spent away from home during early, formative years of their children's upbringing and education, which had left their sons feeling alienated and abandoned. Many boys felt ambivalent about their fathers' return. Years of separation had made them strangers to one another and the father's position as head of household could only be restored by

²⁴ "Wenn der [Hitler] 'nen anderen Vadder gehabt hätte und nur zwei, drei andere Lehrer, vielleicht wäre unsere Geschichte dann anders gelaufen. Unberatene, arme Wildsau aus dem Böhmerwald." Thomas Valentin, *Die Unberatenen* (Hamburg und Düsseldorf: Claassen Verlag, 1968), 78.

²⁵ Andrews, "The German School-Story: Some Observations on Paul Schalluck and Thomas Valentin," 107.

²⁶ Biess, "Survivors of Totalitarianism: Returning P.O.W.S and the Reconstruction of Masculine Citizenship in West Germany, 1945-1955," 57.

²⁷ Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America*, 49.

reducing and downgrading the increased freedom and responsibility their sons had enjoyed in their absence.²⁸

Furthermore, returning POWs were incredibly effeminized in the national discourse. Initially seen as “victims of totalitarianism,” it was typical to ascribe them “the allegedly subhuman features of their former enemies on the Eastern front” and emphasize their lack of sexual desire which was symptomatic of dystrophy.²⁹ The suggestion that West Germany’s leading figures, many of whom were former Nazis, were incapable of guiding the younger generation was a major argument of the student protest in the 1960s. For example, the problem of being unadvised by one’s elders is addressed in Alexander Kluge’s *Abschied vom Gestern* (*Yesterday Girl*, 1966). When Anite, a heroine plagued by problems, seeks practical advice from her professor, his approach is to refrain from giving her advice at all. He responds, “No advice is better than bad advice.”³⁰ Rull’s feeling of being unadvised does not only suggest that there is a lack of role models for his generation, but that those adults who are present are too stuck in their old ways – holding on to belief systems that drove Germany to ruin in the first place. The ultimate celebration of POWs as “survivors of totalitarianism” who had endured their desperate circumstances with Christian preservernce, along with the fact that those POWs who returned after May 8, 1947 no longer had to undergo the process of denazification, likely contributed to the younger generation’s feeling that their parents had not really confronted their fascist past.³¹

In Valentin’s novel, Rull’s parents and most teachers at the school view him as an outsider because of his interest in East Germany, his sympathy for Communism and his constant questioning of the status quo. They are also troubled by Rull’s taste in music. He often listens to Louis Armstrong and teachers accuse him of being a *Halbstarke* because they conflate jazz and rock as a single negative American influence.³² In the novel, the teachers’ comments about jazz reveal the same kind of racism evident in Germans early condemnations of the music discussed in Chapter One. One teacher remarks, “No, that jazz! When I was your age, every civilized European would have been ashamed if he had listened to these jungle classics!”³³ The teachers also complain about the youths’ new American idols in the novel and in Zadek’s 1966 theatrical rendition, the teachers criticize an essay by a student entitled “Mein Gott heißt Elvis” (Elvis in my God).

In the play, music is only used in three scenes: when Edith Piaf’s song “Non, je ne regrette rien” is played in French class, while the students dance erratically to jazz music at a party and later in the café when the Beatles’ “You Can’t Do That” is played. Rull’s interest in

²⁸ Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs and Rock 'N' Roll: Teenage Rebels in Cold-War East Germany*, 43. This scenario is portrayed in *Das Wunder von Bern*, but also in then timely films such as *Die Halbstarcken* (1957). In *Die Halbstarcken* the leader of a teenage gang, Freddy, refuses to recognize his father as the head of the family. He accuses his father of being a weak role model who is indebted to his in-laws and cannot properly provide for his family. Furthermore, a 1946 poll showed that the ratio of German men to women was 100:126, *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁹ Biess, “Survivors of Totalitarianism: Returning P.O.W.S and the Reconstruction of Masculine Citizenship in West Germany, 1945-1955,” 59-61.

³⁰ “keinen Rat ist besser als ein schlechter Rat.” Alexander Kluge, *Abschied vom Gestern* (1966).

³¹ Biess, “Survivors of Totalitarianism: Returning P.O.W.S and the Reconstruction of Masculine Citizenship in West Germany, 1945-1955,” 63.

³² It is also possible that Valentin uses the term “Halbstarke” because it was common at the time he wrote the novel. The fact that Rull listens to jazz and not rock ‘n’ roll actually makes him seem a little old-fashioned compared to other rebellious young people at the time.

³³ “Nein, dieser Jazz! Als ich so alt war wie du, hätte sich jeder zivilisierte Europäer geschämt, diese Urwaldklassiker anzuhören!” Valentin, *Die Unberatenen*, 187.

Louis Armstrong, which is a key component in the novel, is completely absent in the play *and* the film. In the novel, besides a preference for Louis Armstrong, Rull's interest in Black culture is articulated through a further use of music. During a discussion about Kafka when one of the more religious students argues that *The Trial* be read as a religious tragedy, Rull interrupts the other students by singing the following song:

John Brown's body
lies a – mouldering
in the grave
but his soul
goes marching on.
glory, glory, hallelujah
glory, glory, hallelujah!
but his soul goes marching on.³⁴

These lyrics stem from the “John Brown Song,” a marching song used during the Civil War about the abolitionist who led bloody revolts at the Pottawatomie Massacre (1856) and the raid at Harpers Ferry (1859) after which he was hung. It is unclear why Rull would reference a song about American slavery in a discussion about German culture and religion. Brown was a religious man who believed one had to use violent means to end slavery. Does Rull sing this ironically, suggesting that if God existed he would have spared Brown's life? Or is it perhaps a comment on the fact that throughout history people have murdered in God's name? Regardless of his intentions, his knowledge of the song shows a deep interest in American history and Black oppression.³⁵ Yet as opposed to Oskar, who immediately drew a connection between his feel for rhythm and an association with Black popular culture, Rull makes no such statements. Rull never suggests that he has any inclination for understanding the struggles of Blacks or other oppressed peoples for that matter. It is possible that for Rull, listening to jazz and Louis Armstrong is not necessarily in opposition to German culture, but an attempt to draw an alliance between himself and a more open German culture like that practiced by jazz fans of the Weimar Republic.

While Rull never articulates an affinity for Black popular culture in the novel, in the theatrical version an equivalence is made between Rull and a longing for Black popular culture during an argument with his father. In this scene, set at the family home, Rull sits at the dining room table while his parents watch television. Rull desperately tries to explain to his parents why he does not want to become a machinist, but a teacher. Like in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's films *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* and *Die Dritte Generation*, in this scene the television's distracting noise is used to lend historical context and critique West German culture. Rull's parents' typical bourgeois attitudes are conveyed in their preference for watching television after dinner rather than having a conversation with their son. It is hard for Rull to speak over the television's volume and hard for the audience to hear the play's dialogue as well. Cutting through the noise and distraction of postwar society is just as difficult as it is for Rull to counter his father's

³⁴ Ibid., 140.

³⁵ The “John Brown Song” was actually also recorded by Paul Robeson, whose spirituals were quite popular in both Germanies.

conservative arguments. Like the other common workers in the novel and the play, Rull's father is suspicious of all civil servants because they align themselves with the state regardless of the current regime and therefore he adamantly rejects his son's aspirations of teaching. Meanwhile on the television, one hears a young boy threatening to run away because he is unhappy at home. The boy suggests Alaska or Africa as possible goals for a new home. Rull's feelings are equated with this young boy's frustration and desire to engage with the distant and exotic, like the young boy in Alfred Andersch's novel *Sansibar oder der letzte Grund* (1957).

Feeling largely alienated from most authority figures, Rull confides in his history teacher, Herr Groenewold, a Jew who fled the Nazis and recently returned to West Germany but wishes to immigrate to France. Associating himself with Groenewald, who is an outsider because of his religion and his status as a victim and not a perpetrator of Nazi violence, makes Rull even stranger. Groenewald, too, is critical of the school's teaching philosophy. He accuses the school of teaching German idealism as if the crimes of the 20th century had never happened – or at least as if these crimes had nothing to do with Germany. In the novel, during a visit to Groenewald's house – an example of Groenewald's more open relationship to students – Rull brings a record of Louis Armstrong's "Go down, Moses" which he asks Groenewald to put on. Then Rull asks Groenewald to tell him something good about West Germany. Later on in the same scene, Rull tries to convince Groenewald that poor countries like Greece or Ireland are better alternatives to West Germany.³⁶ He then asks if he can listen to the record again and this time he sings along. After singing, he proceeds to write a list of everything that is wrong with West Germany. And in a later scene, as Rull is walking to the school bathroom where the swastika graffiti has been drawn, he whistles the same tune. Due to how often this particular song is mentioned in the novel, I would like to determine its significance for Rull.

In the novel, one of the main questions preoccupying Rull seems to be: whose children are we and can we choose to be someone else's children? He intentionally looks to Groenewald, a Jew, as an alternative father figure. The song "Go Down Moses" is a Negro spiritual that depicts Moses saving the Jews from Egyptian slavery. In the song, Black slaves identified with the Jews. The song first gained popularity in Europe when the Fisk Jubilee Singers, whom I mentioned in the introduction and Chapter One, toured Europe in 1873 and 1874. Although Paul Gilroy says the group only toured Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, according to both Rainer Lotz and Michael J. Budds, the Fisk Jubilee Singers as well as some minstrel shows did stop in German cities.³⁷ Gilroy suggests that "The Fisk Singers have a profound historical importance because they were the first group to perform spirituals on a public platform, offering this form of Black music as popular culture."³⁸ Until then, Europeans were mostly familiar with blackface minstrel performances and for those who saw the Fisk Singers perform, this was considered the first encounter with authentic Negro performers.³⁹ Of their private performance for Queen Victoria, Gilroy suggests "that seeing and hearing the Fisk Jubilee Singers presented

³⁶ Rull's suggestion that economic wealth has added to the corrupt state of West German society might echo the Mitscherlichs' claims mentioned in the last chapter.

³⁷ Budds, ed., *Jazz & the Germans: Essays on the Influence Of "Hot American Idioms on 20th-Century German Music*, 9. Lotz, "Black Music Prior to the First World War: American Origins and German Perspectives," 66.

³⁸ Gilroy, *Small Acts*, 88.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 88-9.

liberal British patrons an ‘opportunity to feel closer to God and to redemption.’”⁴⁰ Louis Armstrong recorded his rendition of the song in 1958.

The use of this song in Valentin’s novel recalls Linda Williams’ discussion of *The Jazz Singer* (1927) in *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson*. In the *Jazz Singer*, Al Jolson, a Jewish American singer and comedian, famously performs the song “My Mammy” in blackface. This performance articulates the protagonist Jakie Rabinowitz’s trials as a Jewish immigrant in America at odds with his parents’ generation and their more traditional expectations for their son.⁴¹ By performing in blackface and singing Black popular songs, Williams argues that Jolson and other white characters like him “acquire virtue by musically expressing a suffering that is recognizable as ‘Black.’ ... ‘singing Black, feeling Black’ became a testament of white virtue.”⁴² Similarly, by way of his preference for “Go Down Moses,” in contrast to his forefathers, Rull acquires virtue as the German who condemns the Nazi past and seeks redemption. It is fitting that Rull is associated with this song, for in the novel he is the melodramatic hero whose virtue is misidentified and as a result he suffers and is expelled from school. By associating with African American slaves Rull simultaneously associates with Jews and his chosen father Groenewald.

Criticizing national identity through an alignment with victims is a phenomenon that continued on through the student movement of the 1960s when students identified with oppressed victims in the Third World.⁴³ Even though Rull may attempt to break with the German past through an interest in African American jazz, his choice of Louis Armstrong still alludes to the German legacy of Weimar counterculture. As I suggested earlier, Armstrong’s established popularity in Germany, he had five hit songs there between 1956 and 1968,⁴⁴ might explain why Rull feels no need to express an interest in Black popular culture when he listens to him. Even when Rull seeks to define his identity through foreign culture, there is an ever present link to German countercultures that attempted the same.

Peter Zadek’s *Ich bin ein Elefant, Madame*

Peter Zadek’s filmic adaptation of *Die Unberatenen* maintains the novel’s themes of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), generational conflict, and identity issues, but these themes are updated to portray the German counterculture of the late 1960s. Besides updating the story, Zadek also makes several plot changes. Valentin’s novel features a school which reflected the masculine hegemony of West Germany – all the students and teachers

⁴⁰ Gilroy quoted in Paul Allen Anderson, *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 21.

⁴¹ In *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*, Michael Rogin argues that Jewish immigrants’ performance of blackface was a way for them to assimilate. They became white by participating in America’s age old past time of representing Black popular culture on the stage. Michael Paul Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

⁴² Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 137.

⁴³ Richard Langston, “Roll over Beethoven! Chuck Berry! Mick Jagger!,” in *Sound Matters: Essays on the Acoustics of Modern German Culture*, ed. Nora M. Alter and Lutz Koepnick (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), 183.

⁴⁴ Nigel Whiteley, “Throw-Away Culture. Consumerism, ‘Style Obsolescence’ and Cultural Theory in the 1950s and 1960s,” *Oxford Art Journal* 10, no. 2 (1987): 18.

are male except for a female secretary whom everyone disrespects and has sexual fantasies about. In Zadek's film, the school is now integrated with female students and teachers. In the film, Rull is no longer a contemplative young man who tries to provoke a conversation with teachers by hanging quotes of Brecht and Nietzsche in the school. This newer Rull is a wild, unpredictable and childish character who pulls an array of antics including actually drawing the swastika on a school wall. In the play version of *Die Unberatenen*, Zadek does not use Armstrong's "Go Down Moses," but Rull still listens to jazz. In the film, however, all the jazz has been replaced with rock music. A further aspect that is cut in *Elefant* is the character of Herr Groenewald, thus providing no one to offer Rull's character balance and an opportunity to clearly articulate his frustrations. Finally, the fate of the new Rull is not decided by the teachers, but by his peers during a school meeting and instead of being expelled as in the novel, the film's ending remains open and unclear.

In one of the few reviews I could find of *Elefant*, published in the journal *Reformatio: Evangelische Zeitschrift für Kultur und Politik*, the reviewer, Esther Fischer-Homburger, praises the film for its refusal to pick sides in the conflict between students and authoritative figures as opposed to Lindsay Anderson's *If* (1969) in which a group of rebellious students who are referred to as "Crusaders" lead a bloody revolt at a British boarding school. Ironically, writer Peter Hamm disliked *Elefant* for the very same reason. Hamm felt Zadek portrayed both teachers and students as "programmed" and the only individual among them is Rull.⁴⁵

Although she offers some praise, Fischer-Homburger is also not entirely happy with the film either. She begins her review with these negative words: "In general one doesn't like to criticize German films [. . .] Zadek's film is an exception."⁴⁶ Fischer-Homburger describes Rull as the following: "A student [Rull] serves as a reflector, a young man who doesn't feel right in the institution of school, but refuses to give his discomfort one of the usual names."⁴⁷ Instead of a critique of fascism, Fischer-Homburger interprets Rull's swastika graffiti and his other antics as him being interested in "the power and effect of slogans."⁴⁸ For Fischer-Homburger, the main point of Valentin's novel – to criticize persisting Nazi tendencies in West Germany – seems to have been lost when viewing *Elefant*. Perhaps this point was lost on some viewers because Zadek forgoes much of the dialogue in Valentin's novel which is still present in his earlier theatrical adaptation.

Despite the limited dialogue, Zadek still engages with the issue of Germany's fascist past in several sequences of the film, only they were not originally in the novel. In the film, during a dinner party with the teachers, the school director confesses a discriminating act he committed towards a Jewish woman during the war. No one responds. Instead we see close ups of the male party guests staring straight at the camera while the women merely smile. The guests continue to chat and we see the school director in a close up staring catatonically down at his plate. He is clearly disturbed by his fascist past, but no one else at the dinner table seems phased by it.

⁴⁵ Zadek, *My Way: Eine Autobiographie 1926-1969*, 522.

⁴⁶ "In allgemeinen kritisiert man deutsche Filme nicht gerne [. . .] Zadeks Film bildet hier eine Ausnahme." Esther Fischer-Homburger, "Ich Bin ein Elefant, Madame," *Reformatio* 19, no. 2 (1970): 145.

⁴⁷ "Als Reflektor dient dabei ein Gymnasiast (Rull), ein junger Mann, der sich in der Institution der Schule nicht wohl fühlt, der sich aber weigert, seinem Unbehagen einen der geläufigen Namen zu geben." Ibid.

⁴⁸ "die Macht und Wirkungen von Schlagworten." Ibid.

In a later scene, after a swastika is painted on the school wall and Zadek cuts to Black and white grainy tones that suggest documentary style footage to supposedly capture real bystanders' reactions, a young woman is asked for her opinion of the scene and she has no idea what the symbol is or with which party it is associated. In these sequences, Zadek successfully uses the aesthetics offered by film to visualize Valentin's argument that there is a (sub)conscious denial of Nazism among West Germans. Although the film's audience cannot be sure the interviews on the street are not staged, Zadek's use of grainy film and an unsteady camera suggests that these are authentic reactions from which one can assume that either German youth have learned nothing from the country's past or they feel uncomfortable discussing this past in public. In both *Die Unberatenen* and *Elefant* Rull wishes to break with Germany's legacy and construct his own identity comprised of foreign influences. Rull's desire for different cultural origins and his resulting identity crisis are uniquely conveyed in Zadek's film adaptation, not only in his filmic aesthetics but also through his use of music.

The Structure of the Film and the Problem of Identity

Aside from the changes Zadek makes to the *sujet*, some of the most drastic differences in the film are the Brechtian estrangement techniques Zadek uses to limit identification with the characters. In the novel and the play, the audience has an insight into the characters' feelings and thoughts. In the novel the characters' thoughts are revealed through stream of consciousness narration. In Zadek's stage version the students' and teachers' thoughts are announced with a bell and then scrolled across an electronic screen above the stage. In the film, however, Zadek uses Brechtian estrangement techniques that make it difficult to identify with any of the characters. For example, he generally uses a frontal camera angle that flattens the characters' facial features, making them seem two-dimensional. We only hear the "inner thoughts" of a student once: while Ulrike sits quietly in class, off-screen her disembodied voice tells us that she must stay in school for the break because of the numerous "dangers" lurking outside the school. Her voice has a mocking, ironic tone, thus the only treatment of a student's thoughts is done in an ironic tongue-in-cheek manner.

Because he primarily abstains from presenting the characters' feelings in the film, I believe Zadek uses alternative techniques to convey Rull's crisis. In the film, all of the scenes during which Rull was able to voice his frustrations to authority figures, for example his conversations with Herr Groenewald, with his father and with other teachers, have been eliminated. Instead, Zadek uses the structure of the film, as well as music, to convey Rull's state of mind and expand on a breakdown that is merely hinted at in the novel and in the play.

Initially, Zadek's Rull just appears to be a rebel and class clown. Towards the end of the film, however, his identity begins to unravel and so do the reliable conventions in the film: the film seems to progress out of order, scenes from earlier are repeated (sometimes from a different camera angle), scenes of different classes become shorter and the cuts faster, titles can no longer be believed, rock music which was previously associated with the students seeps into the world of the school/teachers, causality is no longer clear and the film digresses into different genres: an educational film, a documentary and even an aerobics program. I believe by toying with the conventions of the film Zadek suggests that Rull is suffering from an identity crisis because this

disorder occurs after the school director asks about Rull: “Can a person tolerate it when he constantly distances himself from all the roles he is expected to take on?”⁴⁹ The film is suffering from the same problem: it uses so many estrangement techniques that it ends in an identity crisis of its own.

In the late 1950s, psychoanalyst Erik H. Erikson argued that in late adolescence, individuals may suffer from a psychosocial crisis. According to Erikson, this psychosocial crisis is caused when the individual faces “such imminent adult tasks as getting a job and becoming a citizen, the individual is required to synthesize childhood identifications in such a way that he can both establish a reciprocal relationship with his society and maintain a feeling of continuity within himself.”⁵⁰ The polar outcomes of this crisis are ego identity and identity diffusion. Ego identity is offered as the positive outcome: a young person is able to synthesize their earlier experiences and “be ready for the tasks of adulthood.”⁵¹ As the negative outcome, identity diffusion occurs when a young person’s ego is unable to establish a clear identity:

A state of acute identity diffusion usually becomes manifest at a time when the young individual finds himself exposed to a combination of experiences which demand his simultaneous commitment to physical intimacy [. . .] to decisive occupational choice, to energetic competition, and to psychosocial self-definition.⁵²

In the novel, Rull’s detachment from reality and strange behavior is portrayed in his sudden and inexplicable performance of “John Brown’s Song.” In Zadek’s stage adaptation, there is an indication of Rull’s identity diffusion during a scene at a party where Rull has an emotional breakdown. At the start of the party, the atmosphere is reminiscent of the Beats – students sit around listening to jazz, snapping and constructing collective poetry. Once everyone else at the party has fallen asleep, Rull’s girlfriend complains to him that all the students do is talk about politics but they never really get anything done. After she leaves in anger, the other students awake one by one and complain about the music playing. Their concern about the music rather than her critique exemplifies their preoccupation with style over politics. As each student asks Rull questions, he just responds with “blah, blah, blah” repeatedly. Eventually he takes off his shirt and kneels down on the ground where he jumps around on his knees – apparently “flipping out” in the tradition of the Beats.⁵³

In *Elefant*, these brief examples of Rull’s disengagement with reality are given more background as we witness Rull’s inability to deal with life-changing commitments on several occasions. For example, when he and his classmates are asked to report their future professional plans, he simply responds “weiss ich nicht” (I don’t know).⁵⁴ And during Rull’s first sexual encounter with his girlfriend Billa – an experience that often marks the transition into adulthood

⁴⁹ “kann der Mensch es vertragen, dass er sich ständig und von allen Rollen, die er zu übernehmen hat, distanziert?” All dialogue excerpts are based on the German-language dialogue as it is heard in the DVD release of the film (based on subtitles and the author’s translation).

⁵⁰ James E. Marcia, “Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3, no. 5 (1966): 551.

⁵¹ Erikson, “The Problem of Ego Identity,” 56.

⁵² *Ibid.*: 79.

⁵³ Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 87.

⁵⁴ In both the novel and the play, Rull responds that he would like to be a teacher. Thus, the Rull in Valentin’s novel is not as lost when it comes to his future and identity as his counterpart in Zadek’s film.

– the intimate scene is plagued by what Billa labels adolescent behavior such as Rull’s screaming to party guests from a balcony that he has taken her virginity immediately after the act.⁵⁵ Rull’s difficulty with intimacy during Billa’s deflowering is further marked by the intentional absence of any sound in the scene, including ambient sound.

According to Erikson, “the loss of a sense of identity often is expressed in scornful and snobbish hostility toward the roles offered as proper and desirable in one’s family or immediate community.”⁵⁶ In American families this “easily becomes a general dislike for everything American, and an irrational overestimation of everything foreign.”⁵⁷ Thus, in a German context youth would reject everything German and choose a foreign identity, possibly even a “negative identity, i.e. an identity perversely based on all those identifications and roles which, at critical stages of development, had been presented to the individual as most undesirable or dangerous.”⁵⁸ From Erikson’s description, it appears Oskar in *Die Blechtrommel* expresses his loss of identity by stunting his growth and refusing to physically become an adult in order not to inherit his parents’ store. As I suggested earlier, the unique difference between Oskar’s identity crisis and Rull’s is their age difference. Rull is a teenager, a new phenomenon for the postwar era.⁵⁹ In the novel, the school director expresses his frustration with the recognition of this new developmental stage:

Again, something new? One has a lot of difficulty keeping up: existentialists, skeptical generation, angry young men, teenagers, Beatniks etcetera. In my day it was easier. It was just called: the generation who will soon take over the responsibility!⁶⁰

The teenage years were conceived as a time when young people were not yet ready for professional life, not yet ready to “take over responsibility” as the director phrases it. Instead, teenagers were eager to experiment and define their own identity. Consumption played a large role in this process. Teenagers’ consumer power allowed them to construct an identity based on things, like jeans, records and T-shirts. Thus, while in Nazi Germany Oskar’s rebellion (his small

⁵⁵ This scene is neither in the novel nor the play, as all of the students are male and the character Billa does not exist.

⁵⁶ Erikson, “The Problem of Ego Identity,” 85.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: 87.

⁵⁹ In *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture*, journalist Jon Savage traces not only the emergence of the “teenager” but the youth movements which preceded it. Although the term “‘Teenage’ had been freely used [in the U.S.] after the mid-1930s,” (453) only in 1945 did the term “teenager” become an accepted designation for young people who were “‘successfully avoiding the twin pitfalls of childishness and sophistication’” (462). In the US, World War II had created new opportunities not only for ethnic minorities but also for youth. During the war years, young people roughly between the ages of fourteen and seventeen were more visible in public life and had new spending power from their wartime jobs. These teenagers included not only young women but also young men too young for conscription. “In addition, many of these young working women . . . had their traditional route to adulthood – usually defined by marriage – blocked” (445). The advertising market soon recognized teenagers’ buying potential and with the launch of *Seventeen* magazine in 1945 and the publication of “A Teen-Age Bill of Rights” in the *New York Times* that same year, adults and young people alike championed the embracement and support of teenagers as the embodiment of American democratic ideals. Following the end of the war, American occupation in Europe enabled America’s latest brand, teenage culture, to “sweep through Europe in the vacuum left by the collapse of Nazism” (461). Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (New York: Viking, 2007).

⁶⁰ “Schon wieder was Neues? Man hat Mühe, da mitzukommen: Existentialisten, skeptische Generation, Halbstarke, zornige junge Männer, teenager, Beatniks etceterapepe. Zu unserer Zeit war das etwas einfacher, da hieß nur: Die Generation, die bald die Verantwortung übernehmen wird!” Valentin, *Die Unberatenen*, 250.

stature) is pathologized as an illness; in the postwar era Rull's rebellion is understood in psychological terms.

Considering the existing animosities towards America and England which intensified during WWII, choosing an American or British identity in the postwar era would be an affective rebellious act by German youth. Young Germans' decision to reject their "paternal" culture for something foreign could have been further intensified in the 1960s by the German students who were intent on uncovering lingering relics of the country's Nazi past. In Germany, there was an important shift in identity politics between the 1950s and the 1960s. "In contrast to the 1950s, when the production of an affirmative Germanness flourished, identity politics in the 1960s shifted away from stabilizing a national sense of self and toward deconstructing this fledgling national discourse."⁶¹ In an essay entitled "Am I German?" from 1964, Hans Magnus Enzensberger poses the questions

To what end does 'das deutsche Volk,' as it is officially called, beat its breast, when so much soul-searching does not even induce officialdom to remove Nazis from positions in public life? [. . .] How far can our remorse for the persecution of Jews be believed, while the Bundesrepublik continues its absurd persecution of Communists?⁶²

The film's preoccupation with this discourse on identity is evident from the opening sequence with the introduction of the main characters. We see a shot of a plain white background, presumably the wall of a school classroom. The camera then pans from left to right and stops on a girl. The name "Barbara" is flashed on the screen over her face in red letters. A low camera angle shows us a close up of her from the shoulders up. The same thing is done for the next six students: Koch, Ulrike (who directly reacts to the camera opening her eyes when it stops on her), Haverkamp, Huje, Gisela and Rull. The use of titles to introduce the film's characters is unusual, but it also mirrors the beginning of Valentin's novel which introduces its characters as if it were a play. In my opinion, besides a mere adaptation from the book, this way of introducing characters signals the constructed nature of the narrative. We do not learn the characters names by entering their world, instead they are put on display and we are given their names.

By immediately referring to the constructed nature of the narrative, Zadek complicates and resists the audience's desire to simply identify with the characters. At this point in the film, we cannot know if these really are their names or some arbitrary titles given to the characters as was common in the street theater of the German student movement. In the Brechtian influenced street theater tradition, figures were nearly always portrayed as types like "professor," "worker" and "capitalist." "Even in the cases where they were individualized by names, only the type was important for the performance. In order to denote the types during the performance, the actors wore cardboard signs with the label around their necks."⁶³ The titles used in the film might

⁶¹ Langston, "Roll over Beethoven! Chuck Berry! Mick Jagger!," 183.

⁶² Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Am I German?," *Encounter* 22, no. 4 (1964): 18.

⁶³ "Selbst dort, wo sie – beispielweise durch Namen – individualisiert wurden, war für das Stück und die Aufführung allein der Typus wichtig. Um die Typen innerhalb der Aufführung zu kennzeichnen, trugen die Spieler oft Pappschilder mit der jeweiligen Aufschrift um den Hals."

function as such labels. This reference to Sixties street theater becomes even clearer during Rull's identity crisis when he sits in the back of the classroom wearing a cardboard sign with his name on it.

Rull's Identity Diffusion

In the film, Zadek expands on Rull's strange behavior in order to reveal his identity crisis through his actions. In math class, unprovoked, Rull repeats the same answer to the teacher's question three times, "Parallel, parallel, parallel," like a broken record. A similar incident occurs when Rull is at a café and although he has been told that desert will no longer be served he responds to the waitress three times with "Nusstorte" (nut cake). When Billa confronts him with concerns about their relationship, he continuously punches her in the knee and responds to her with "Gorilla." During a student protest, he shows up dressed like a Native American: topless, wearing a feather headdress, holding a spear, and with a painted face and a necklace of teeth like Mick in *If*. Rull speaks to his fellow students in a pseudo-pidgin form of German. Off-screen, the Velvet Underground's "The Gift" plays as non-diegetic music. The song consists of a rock instrumental set to a short story written by Lou Reed.⁶⁴ The story is about a young man named Waldo who misses his girlfriend Marsha, a student at a college in another state. Due to a lack of money for travel, Waldo decides to hide in a package and mail himself to his girlfriend. While opening the package, the unsuspecting Marsha and her roommate accidentally decapitate Waldo with a sheet metal cutter. When playing off-screen during Rull's Native American performance, the absurd lyrics of the song, as well as the deadpan way in which they are delivered by John Cale, intensify the juvenile nature of Rull's behavior.

During the protest scene, Zadek is clearly critical of the students' performance of rebellion. The audience gets a bird's eye view of students lined up confronting the policemen as if in a playful cat and mouse game. Rull's Native American costume suggests the silliness of the spectacle that is put on by policemen and students. The reason for their protest seems both unclear and arbitrary. The policemen lock arms and from an aerial camera angle we see a group of three students who continuously charge the policeman only to be thrown back, as if they were playing the game Red Rover. Rull's Native American costume might also be a reference to the Western genre, critiquing the tendency of both sides to view the conflict in a binary of good vs. bad. This reference to the Western genre resurfaces twice when Rohwedder, the head political agitator, is accompanied by a Western theme. At the protest, students repeatedly yell "Ho Chi Minh" as from an aerial view we see Rull dance around an encircled iron cross symbol on the ground. Framed by a frontal camera angle, Rull then shoots an arrow into the air towards the policemen and they tackle him.

After the protest, a further example of Rull's identity diffusion is his confusion of cause and effect. In one scene, he sits cross-legged on his desk wearing a Christmas wreath with four candles on his head. We presume his teacher has asked for an explanation, for Rull says to the

Dorothea Kraus, "Strassentheater als Politische Protestforum," in *1968: Handbuch zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2007), 93.

⁶⁴ Richard Witts, *The Velvet Underground* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 49.

camera “It’s my father’s birthday.”⁶⁵ Culturally, his link between the wreath/candles and his father’s birthday is illogical. Another example of his identity diffusion is in the repetition of earlier scenes from the film, like Billa and Rull’s discussion about their relationship and a scene from the beginning when a young girl who, during a field trip, responds to her teacher about the name of a flower. After these scenes are repeated, Zadek cuts to a shot of Rull sitting in a display case in school with a sign that says he is a kiwi. This discrepancy between signifier and signified calls into question the naming of the flower and all of the earlier titles in the film. Rull’s play with language, meaning, signified and signifier as well as his desire to make a scene are a reference to the 1960s Situationists who practiced *Zweckentfremdung* (purposeful estrangement). This scene might also be a transnational nod to avant-garde artist Bruce Conner’s *Vivian* (1964) where he turned “live people into artwork by inviting them to crawl into a display case.”⁶⁶ Rull’s confrontational attitude is also exemplified in one of the only scenes with a camera angle featuring characters from the side, when we witness a face off between Rull and his math teacher over homework.

The Importance of Music in the Film

I have already touched on the importance of music in Valentin’s novel in my discussion of Rull’s interest in jazz, Louis Armstrong and Black spirituals. Music is also used in the novel during French class when students must listen to an Edith Piaf record. In the play, this scene is expanded upon. The French teacher, Herr Violat, announces that the lesson will concern French chansons. He then puts on a record of Edith Piaf’s famous song “No Je ne regrette rien.” This song plays again in a scene in the café, where the students and teachers Herr Violat and Herr Groenewald are present. In the novel, Valentin did not specify the song which the class listened to, only that they listen to Piaf. Valentin’s choice of Piaf, and Zadek’s choice of this particular song in the play, could have intended to juxtapose the tastes of the bourgeois teachers’ with that of the students. When Piaf recorded the song in 1960, she sang it in solidarity with the French Foreign Legion during the Algerian War. Thus, the song’s popularity among the teachers stresses their conservative and militant viewpoint. The teachers’ incapability of sympathizing with oppressed minorities is depicted in the novel when they refer to the Germans’ colonization of Africa as having been superior to that of the French:

“We Germans are definitely loved in Africa.”

“Because we treated them like human beings!”

“And not like the French: zappzerapp, so that the Grande Nation could bask on the Riviera and play the strong man in Brussels.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ “Mein Vater hat Geburtstag.”

⁶⁶ John Zachary Ross, “Acoustic Graffiti: The Rock Soundtrack in Contemporary American Cinema,” (Diss. University of California Berkeley, 2003), 19.

⁶⁷ “Auf jeden Fall sind wir Deutschen in Afrika beliebt.”

“Weil wir sie wie Menschen behandelt haben!”

“Und nicht wie die Franzosen: zappzerapp, damit sich die Grande Nation an der Riviera allen und in Brüssel den starken Mann markieren kann!” Valentin, *Die Unberatenen*, 51.

The teachers' insistence that Germans treated Africans like human beings conveniently ignores the Germans' genocide of the Herero in German Southwest Africa from 1884-1915 before Germany lost its colonies in the Versailles Treaty following World War I.

This act of listening to a pop record in class is recreated in the film; however instead of French class the scene takes place during an English lesson. The scene in the film is only similar to the play in its staging: the students disinterestedly sit around the classroom; they pass the record between themselves and disregard the teacher's comments. In the film, the English teacher plays Donovan's "Universal Soldier," a critique of war. Zadek's decision to use an anti-war song by British artist Donovan as opposed to Piaf's conservative pro-war song not only points to the postwar generation's political views and preference for English language music but also suggests that Herr Violat is making an attempt to understand his students by playing their music. However, the fact that this lesson is followed by the title "Weighed and found to be too light" implies that despite the teacher's efforts, his failure to honestly engage with the song's content results in the song and its message not being taken seriously. This lack of honest discussion is exactly what frustrates Rull.

In general, compared to the novel and the play, I believe music plays a greater role in the film which features numerous songs and artists. First of all, the film's title, *Ich bin ein Elefant, Madame* refers to a song performed by the Comedian Harmonists, "Ich küsse ihre Hand, Madame" (I kiss your hand, madame). The Comedian Harmonists were a popular all-male vocal group who performed a cappella in Germany in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The group, which consisted of three Jewish and three non-Jewish members, was forced by the Nazis to disband in 1935. The band's founder, Harry Frommerman, was inspired to found his own band after listening to the Revellers, an African American quintet with a pianist.⁶⁸ The biopic *The Comedian Harmonists* (1997), directed by Klaus Richter, implies that by mimicking the Revellers' syncopated jazz style and invoking the same humor, the Comedian Harmonists are able to put a fresh spin on old German songs. For example, the Reveller's song "When Yuba Plays the Rumba on the Tuba" seems to be the inspiration for the Comedian Harmonists' "Der Onkel Bumba aus Kalumba tanzt nur Rumba" (Uncle Bumba From Kalumba Only Dances Rumba).

Aside from influencing the film's title, "Ich küsse ihre Hand, Madame" is played in the film when we first encounter the school's teachers which suggests the old-fashioned nature of their musical taste. In another scene, Rull sings a parody of the song while at the beach. Rull's rendition of the song contains such illogical lyrics as "Ich bin ein Elefant, Madame" and "Ich habe keinen Mund, Madame" (I have no mouth, madame). The music of this same song is repeated during an unusual animated sequence, during which an off-screen voice tells us about the lives of kiwis. The repetition of the song throughout the film and its ironic use take away from the song's sincerity. By referencing the Comedian Harmonists' hit, Zadek invokes the influence of African American culture on German popular music, while also drawing attention to

⁶⁸ Joseph Vilsmaier, *Comedian Harmonists: Eine Legende Kehrt Zurück: Der Film* (Leipzig: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1998), 23.

the German guilt caused by the Nazis' crimes and reaffirming that music is not immune from politics.⁶⁹

Music and Identity

Music has further importance in the film, because when Zadek updates Valentin's story, he still focuses on young Germans' desire to choose an alternative legacy to inherit, but he replaces Rull's connection to Louis Armstrong with the Velvet Underground. In the film, when Rull is confronted by a Jewish passer-by in the black and white documentary style footage following the swastika graffiti, Rull's response to the bystander's reproaches about the six million Jews killed during the Holocaust is "Did I do that?"⁷⁰ While Rull is anxious to draw attention to West Germany's lingering fascism, at the same time he does not wish to take responsibility for its past.

Although I believe the identity diffusion Rull suffers is the metanarrative of the film, within that Zadek's employment of music further complicates questions of identity. By using the music of the Velvet Underground, Zadek attempts to more accurately portray the similar state of mind shared by German and other youth around the world growing up in the postwar era. While jazz was once the preferred music for rebellious youth in the United States and Europe, by the 1960s rock 'n' roll had definitely taken its place and the rock 'n' roll fan community had reached a global scale.

For youth who wished to inherit an alternative to their German legacy, rock 'n' roll seemed the ultimate choice. In his article, "Roll Over Beethoven! Chuck Berry! Mick Jagger!: 1960s Rock, the Myth of Progress and the Burden of National Identity in West Germany," Richard Langston argues that in the 1960s German students used rock to "deconstruct dominant notions of West German identity."⁷¹ Rock had an "ability to demarcate the good from the bad, the genuine from the commercial imitations, and by extension, insiders from outsiders [. . .] Those who made a distinction between 'them' and 'us' according to musical alliances also delineated the German from the non-German."⁷² Delineating the German from the non-German inevitably meant separating foreign or Anglo-American popular music, mostly rock 'n' roll, from German *Schlager*. Leftists rejected *Schlager*, which can be described as German-language mainstream pop, "on the grounds that their songs disseminated reactionary ideologies inconsistent with the spirit of the revolts."⁷³ Aside from preferring foreign music, another part of the student movement's rejection of a German identity was their identification with oppressed peoples the world over. Considering that the German student movement was very sympathetic

⁶⁹ After 1933, the Comedian Harmonists were unable to perform in Germany because its Jewish members could not become members of the national organization for musicians, the *Reichsmusikkammer*. Because of this hindrance, the group split forming two new groups which continued to perform under the name Comedian Harmonists: one abroad and one in Germany. Due to increased xenophobia, the group that remained in Germany was forced to change its name to the *Meistersextett* and remove all songs from its repertoire written by Jewish composers. In 1941, the *Meistersextett* was also banned from performing because its music was judged unfit for supporting "den Wehrgedanken des deutschen Vokes" (the military ideas of the German people). *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁰ "Habe ich das denn gemacht?"

⁷¹ Langston, "Roll over Beethoven! Chuck Berry! Mick Jagger!," 184.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 188.

with the Civil Rights Movement, some of the pioneers in rock 'n' roll were Black musicians,⁷⁴ and the initial racist reaction German critics had towards rock 'n' roll, one could argue that Germans' fascination with this music was just as much a fascination with Black popular culture.

In order to better understand German youth's fascination with Black popular culture in the postwar era, I would first like to explore this issue in the American context. Norman Mailer famously addressed this phenomenon in 1957 in the essay *The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster*. In this essay, Mailer attempts to not only describe, but to explain the behavior of so-called hipsters: "cool," rebellious white youths who listened to jazz. Mailer stresses the effect that World War II and the Holocaust had on postwar youth. According to him, living with the knowledge that, despite the benefits of the Enlightenment and modernity, things like the Holocaust and nuclear war were still possible made young people consumed with death: "[. . .] if the fate of twentieth century man is to live with death from adolescence to premature senescence, why then the only life-giving answer is to accept the terms of death, to live death as immediate danger, to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots [. . .]."⁷⁵ In *Elefant*, Rull suggests it is futile to try and make sense of a world lacking order when he responds to a classmate who sees a trajectory between Cicero and Hitler: "It's embarrassing to compare Cicero with Hitler [. . .] there weren't any rules of the game in Auschwitz either."⁷⁶ And this preoccupation with death is also shared by the young British rebels in Anderson's *If*; they would rather die in an armed battle with authorities than continue conforming to the strict life of a British student.

Mailer refers to young hip white youth as "white negroes" because he believes they take their style from the "negro" who has always been accustomed to living every day with the threat of death from racial violence: "[. . .] he [the negro] kept for his survival the art of the primitive, he lived in the enormous present, he subsisted for his Saturday night kicks, relinquishing the pleasures of the mind for the more obligatory pleasures of the body, and in his music he gave voice to the character and quality of his existence."⁷⁷ Comparatively, in Lindsay's *If*, the head rebel, Mick, is especially interested in African or perceived "primitive" culture. Over his bed, Mick hangs a photo of a shirtless Black rebel fighter holding a rifle. Mick repeatedly listens to a recording of "Sanctus" sung by a Congolese children's choir and he wears a necklace of bloody teeth around his neck.

In the essay, "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," James Baldwin responded to Mailer's ideas in the *White Negro* which he reveals to be romantic and essentialist. Baldwin's essay recounts the first time he met Mailer and how Baldwin was afraid he would be a disappointment to the white author, because Baldwin did not live up to Mailer's fantasies about Black men:

⁷⁴ These pioneers are artists such as Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry and Little Richard. In the volume *Cross the Water Blues*, several essays discuss the influence of Blues on British rock 'n' roll bands of the 1960s.

⁷⁵ Norman Mailer, *The White Negro* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1957), 2.

⁷⁶ "Peinlich Cicero mit Hitler zu vergleichen [. . .] in Auschwitz gab es ja auch keine Spielregeln."

⁷⁷ Mailer, *The White Negro*, 4.

It is still true, alas, that to be an American Negro male is also to be a kind of walking phallic symbol: which means that one pays, in one's own personality, for the sexual insecurity of others. The relationship, therefore, of a black boy to a white boy is a very complex thing. There is a difference, though, between Norman and myself in that I think he still imagines that he has something to save, whereas I have never had anything to lose. Or, perhaps I ought to put it another way: the things that most white people imagine that they can salvage from the storm of life is really, in sum, their innocence. [...] It was this commodity precisely which I had to get rid of at once, literally, on pain of death. I am afraid that most of the white people I have ever known impressed me as being in the grip of a weird nostalgia, dreaming of a vanished state of security and order, against which dream, unflinching and unconsciously, they tested and very often lost their lives."⁷⁸

Baldwin suggests that white youths' engagement with Black popular culture is just a reaction to their loss of innocence. Through engaging with Black popular culture these white hipsters hope to get back some kind of primal virtue, but the engagement with Black culture itself is not a political act. According to Baldwin, white people have "white ambitions" (here he quotes Jack Kerouac) which are eventually shattered. Whites then assume that Black people are eternally innocent which is what makes them so appealing. Baldwin describes the white bohemian's loss as thin; it is not real loss, because it refers to a dream, a fantasy.⁷⁹ This recalls the example from *Onkel Toms Hütte*, which I mentioned in the introduction. In this film adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, the slave owner's son George is first seen listening to the singing in the slave cabins only to go up to his cushy estate house and express his pain for "his people" being sold off. George interprets his consumption of Black culture as participation therein making him feel an alliance between himself and the slaves. But George fails to recognize his difference – his white privilege. Regardless of the pain he feels, it is incomparable to that of the slaves and his sympathy does not have any effect on their fates.

Baldwin says the reality of the Black experience, real loss, is poverty and it is not romantic. "The really ghastly thing about trying to convey to a white man the reality of the Negro experience has nothing whatever to do with the fact of color, but has to do with this man's relationship to his own life. He will face in your life only what he is willing to face in his."⁸⁰ So if a white person is not willing to face the horrors of his own legacy, he will not face the horrors of the legacy of the Black experience either. Baldwin does, however, confirm one of Mailer's claims, that of the Black man living each day as if it is his last:

The world had prepared no place for you [the black man], and if the world had its way, no place would ever exist. Now, this is true for everyone, but, in the case of a Negro, this truth is absolutely naked: if he deludes himself about it, he will die. This is not the way this truth presents itself to white men, who believe the world is theirs and who, albeit

⁷⁸ James Baldwin, "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," in *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son* (New York: The Dial Press, 1961), 217-8.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 221.

unconsciously, expect the world to help them in the achievement of their identity. But the world does not do this—for anyone; the world is not interested in anyone’s identity. And, therefore, the anguish which can overtake a white man comes in the middle of his life, when he must make the almost inconceivable effort to divest himself of everything he has ever expected or believed, when he must take himself apart and put himself together again, walking out of the world, into limbo, or into what certainly looks like limbo. This cannot yet happen to any Negro of Norman’s age, for the reason that his delusions and defenses are either absolutely impenetrable by this time, or he has failed to survive them.⁸¹

Baldwin’s comments about the reality of poverty point to the fact that historically, Black musicians have marketed their coolness – a performance of Black culture – because it was the only way for them to have agency in the market place.⁸² White intellectuals, however; had the power to choose to reject “the straight world of steady jobs, material accumulation, mortgages, family life, insurance policies, and popular taste.”⁸³

If we return to Zadek’s interest in the Velvet Underground, when one considers the band members’ biographies, in the tradition of the white bohemians decades earlier, they also rejected the “straight world,” this time for a city-life of art, drugs, rock ‘n’ roll. All four members of the group stemmed from comfortable, privileged backgrounds. John Cale studied music at Goldsmiths’ College in London and was especially interested in electronic and avant-garde music. He was granted a scholarship to attend the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood in Lennox, Massachusetts, but he was eventually kicked out. Lou Reed came from a middle-class Jewish family from Long Island and attended Syracuse University in upstate New York, which then was known as an expensive private institution to which rich families sent their children with expectations that they would later take over the business.⁸⁴ At Syracuse University, Reed met Holmes Sterling Morrison, who also stemmed from a middle-class family from Long Island. Morrison said of their university experience: “College was a repressive place in the sixties, that’s why people were trying to burn them down in 1965. Like in that movie *If*.”⁸⁵

The final member of the group was Maureen Ann Tucker, who along with her brother, came from a middle-class Catholic family in New Jersey. Tucker, who knew Reed and Morrison by way of her brother – Morrison’s childhood friend – was the only non-student of the group who had previously worked; she was a computer operator.⁸⁶ Reed, Morrison and Tucker shared a love for Black R&B, something Cale – the classically trained musician – would develop while living in New York. The newly formed group was living the bohemian lifestyle in the city

⁸¹ Ibid., 231-32.

⁸² “It is often acknowledged that musicians – along with preachers, gamblers, hustlers, and athletes- have historically held a privileged social role in the Black community [...] From the post-emancipation years of the traveling musician/minstrel who escaped the necessity of working directly for a white employer, this special role was a result of the very limited freedom to be able to negotiate a contractual agreement, however exploitative, with the world of commerce” Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, 72-3.

⁸³ Ibid., 83.

⁸⁴ Albin Zak and Albin Zak III, *The Velvet Underground Companion: Four Decades of Commentary* (New York: Schirmer Trade Books, 2000), 184.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 186.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 179.

allowing Morrison to proudly claim: “ [...] I was hip, not like people living in Freeport, Long Island with their parents.”⁸⁷ Besides their preference for R&B and their covers of Chuck Berry songs, Tucker also admits specifically trying to express something “African” in her drumming style and even going to Harlem to seek inspiration.⁸⁸ Her desire to play drums like an African is reminiscent of the European avant-garde’s inclination towards African culture, whether Picasso’s cubist painting or the Dada poets’ drumming at performances.

If one were to read the Velvet Underground’s formation through the lense of Baldwin’s essay, the male musicians’ “loss of innocence” could have occurred during Cale, Reed and Morrison’s disappointing experiences with higher education – all three faced punishment for their non-conformity. Then the subsequent move to New York City could be read as an attempt to regain this primal innocence: going to R&B shows, Blues clubs and Black neighborhoods. The Velvet Underground’s song “I’m Waiting for the Man” embodies both this loss of innocence and equation between Black popular culture and freedom because the singer rejects a traditional bourgeois life, reveling instead in the experience of drug use. And in order to obtain these drugs he has to venture to the Black part of town, Lexington and 125th in Harlem. Yet, unlike George in *Onkel Toms Hütte* who speaks of his slave “brothers,” the lyrics of “I’m Waiting for the Man” reveal some self-reflection about the singer’s difference:

Hey, white boy, what you doin' uptown?
Hey, white boy, you chasin' our women around?
Oh pardon me sir, it's the furthest from my mind
I'm just lookin' for a dear, dear friend of mine
I'm waiting for my man

Whether the speaker suggests that he is in Harlem to buy drugs or seeking a homosexual encounter, he diffuses the racial tension by removing the threat of miscegenation. Lou Reed exhibits even more self-reflexivity about his own whiteness in regards to Blackophilia in a later song written during his solo career, “I Wanna Be Black” from the album *Street Hassle* (1979):

I don't wanna be a fucked up
Middle class college student anymore
I just wanna have a stable of
Foxy little whores
Yeah, yeah, I wanna be Black
Oh, oh, I wanna be Black
Yeah, yeah, I wanna be Black
I wanna be Black, wanna be like Martin Luther King
And get myself shot in the spring

⁸⁷ Ibid., 186.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 164.

Suzanne Moore discusses this song in her essay “Getting a bit of the Other,” which I discussed in the introduction. This song is an excellent example of how white men engage with or masquerade as the Other, in this case the Black man, in order to explore, reject or reconstruct their own identities. Kobena Mercer also reads the song as “a parody of a certain attitude in postwar youth culture in which the cultural signs of blackness – in music, clothes, and idioms of speech – were the mark of ‘cool’.”⁸⁹ The last two lines are a blatant critique of the kind of essentialization and mythologization of Black culture without considering the reality of Black experience which Baldwin addressed. If being Black means one has a greater appeal with women, then it also means one has to fear racial violence. Contextualizing the Velvet Underground in the history of white intellectuals engaging with Black culture and poverty in New York would designate the Beats as their predecessors and the punks as their successors.

The Velvet Underground’s Relevance for *Elefant*

If the Velvet Underground can be taken as one of many American (and British) rock bands who idolized Black popular music and culture at the time, what does Zadek’s use of their music say about Rull? The first time we hear the Velvet Underground’s “I’m Waiting for the Man” is at the very beginning of the film. While the song is playing, we first see a close up of a five-story apartment building in Bremen. Of the thirty windows displayed, only one window is lit up and in an extreme long shot Rull is framed within it. Even in this distant shot, one can see a bit of the red that Rull is painting on the walls. In the first full shot of Rull, he stands in the middle of a room that is covered in red blotches with newspaper covering the floor. Rull, shirtless and wearing goggles, is pointing a paint gun at us. Although he is “painting” in its direction, the camera lens does not turn red, thus rather than actively being present we are merely witnesses to the scene. Unlike the frontal camera angle used in the majority of the film, this opening scene consists of shots of Rull from multiple perspectives, from above, the back and from the front, reminiscent of the camera work in a music video. Shots of Rull painting are mixed together with shots from other locations with different characters.

I believe Rull’s haphazard painting technique aligns his character with the Dada artists of the early twentieth century. Dadaists used the principle of chance in order to destroy conventions and attack societal norms which is precisely what Rull enacts in his painting during the opening sequence.⁹⁰ Considering the year the film was made, Rull’s painting is also reminiscent of the action painting of Jackson Pollock. And the end result of Rull’s “art” – both Rull and his room are covered entirely in red – is suggestive of Barnett Newman’s monochromatic style. Both Pollock and Newman are examples of postwar avant-garde artists who wished to free themselves “from the obstacles of memory, association, nostalgia, legend, myth or, if you like, the devices of European art.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ Mercer, “Skin Head Sex Thing: Racial Difference and the Homoerotic Imaginary,” 197.

⁹⁰ Michael Langer, *Kunst am Nullpunkt: Eine Analyse der Avantgarde im 20. Jahrhundert* (Worms: Werner’sche Verlagsgesellschaft Worms, 1984), 112.

⁹¹ “von den Hindernissen des Gedächtnisses, der Assoziation, Nostalgie, Legende, des Mythos oder dem, was – so man will – die Devisen der europäischen Kunst gewesen sind.” Ibid., 82.

Rull's association with not only the Velvet Underground, but also Pollock and Newman further underlines the desired connection to American counterculture. By introducing the audience to the film's main character in this manner, Zadek positions him as an unpredictable rebellious force. Like James Dean in his red jacket in *Rebel Without a Cause*, Rull's color of choice clearly signifies defiance. In this opening sequence, Zadek also hints at the young generation's wishes to break with the legacy of German culture, while being unable to free itself from earlier countercultural German movements like the Dadaists. Although his generation is flirting with the idea of choosing new fathers, in this opening scene Rull still seems to hope for some kind of real guidance from his German father. Why else would Rull be waiting for his man, his father? Towards the end of the sequence we see a close up of Rull in the foreground, while in the background his father opens the door, sees what Rull is doing and closes the door again, shutting out both his son and his antics.

Near the end of the film when the teachers discuss whether or not to expel Rull, the art teacher, looking to her left and right to no avail, says, "The poor boy . . . by the way, does anyone know his father?"⁹² She then pleads to the camera, "Someone should have talked to the boy."⁹³ These statements acknowledge both the absence of a real father figure for Rull and the teachers' refusal to take on this role themselves. In the novel and the play, at the teacher's conference Herr Violat invokes psychoanalysis, specifically the Oedipus complex, to explain Rull's rebellious behavior. Herr Violat brings up the fact that Rull's father was absent for the first years of his life and did not return from war until the boy was five. Thus, like the *Halbstarke* I discussed earlier, Rull could never really build a relationship to his father. And because it is impossible for Rull to win his father's recognition, Herr Violat believes he rejects anything related to the *Vaterwelt* (world of the father) which includes discipline and order.

It is significant that Zadek would replace Rull's *leitmotif* of listening to jazz with the Velvet Underground. There are still references to Black culture present in the Velvet Underground's "I'm Waiting for the Man," such as Harlem, the "white negro" and possibly a Black drug dealer (the man for whom Lou Reed is waiting).⁹⁴ At the same time, by choosing the Velvet Underground Zadek shows that the Harlem of the 1960s is no longer the Harlem of the 1930s or 1950s. Instead of Armstrong singing about God, we have Lou Reed singing about drugs, racial tension and suggesting homosexuality.⁹⁵

The Velvet Underground's proximity to Harlem was not a prerequisite for the influence of Black culture on their music. As I briefly mentioned earlier, their British contemporaries, like the Rolling Stones, were also heavily influenced by Black musicians.⁹⁶ It has even been suggested that in his on-stage performance – his hip-swinging and protruding lips – Keith Richards is mimicking the performance style of Tina Turner. Richards and the Rolling Stones

⁹² "Der arme junge . . . kennt jemand eigentlich seinen Vater?"

⁹³ "irgend jemand hätte sich mit dem Jungen unterhalten sollen."

⁹⁴ The Black drug pusher has long been a mythological figure of cool for white Americans. See Eithne Quinn, "'Tryin' to Get Over': *Super Fly*, Black Politics, and Post-Civil Rights Film Enterprise," *Cinema Journal: The Journal of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies* 49, no. 2 (2010).

⁹⁵ Witts, *The Velvet Underground*, 46.

⁹⁶ See Rupert Till, "The Blues Blueprint: The Blues in the Music of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and Led Zeppelin," in *Cross the Water Blues: African American Music in Europe*, ed. Neil A. Wynn (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2007).

even traveled to Chicago early in their career in order to record at the legendary Chess Records so that they could imitate the sound of their Blues idols.⁹⁷

As a contemporary rock group, the Velvet Underground also better reflect the student movement's desire to use rock to break away from German history. But considering the rebellious nature and Black cultural influence of their British contemporaries, one could argue, that Zadek could have easily used another Anglo-American rock group to serve the same purpose. When the film was made, unlike the Rolling Stones, the Velvet Underground was not even very popular in America's mainstream music industry.⁹⁸ And it is unclear whether they ever toured Germany in the 1960s. Yet one significant difference about the Velvet Underground is their German connection through singer Nico, born Christa Päffgen in 1938 in Cologne. Nico left Germany at age sixteen to work as a model and actress in Paris and she left for America to further pursue her acting career in 1959.⁹⁹ After being introduced to Andy Warhol in 1965, Nico was invited to sing with the Velvet Underground, the house band for Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable show. Nico was well-known for lying about her past. She seemed desperate to create an identity for herself. "She lied so often about almost everything to do with her identity that she managed through it to turn herself into a mythic being."¹⁰⁰

Part of Nico's invented history seemed geared towards fashioning herself as a victim rather than the heir of a Nazi perpetrator; her father served and was killed in the war: "Nico told many stories about her father, reflecting her own conflicts. She told her son that her grandfather was a Turk who died in Belsen for helping Jews (ibid., p2). This is an embellishment of her most usual story which was simply that her father had died in Belsen. He didn't. Wilhelm Päffgen was killed in action in 1942."¹⁰¹ Nico's desire to fabricate a foreign past for herself recalls Erikson's theory of identity diffusion and negative identity. For his study, Erikson interviewed a girl of Middle-Eastern descent who, after making friends with Scottish immigrants, invented a fictional Scottish past for herself including a Scottish brogue. When asked what motivated her she responded, "I needed a past."¹⁰² Nico needed a past that would position her as a victim rather than a persecutor. For example, she also claimed to have been raped by a Black GI during the postwar years, for which no corroborating evidence has been found. Perhaps young Germans struggling with identity saw themselves reflected in Nico's troubled relationship to her past.

In the credits, Zadek claims that all the music in the film is provided by the Velvet Underground – a claim that is actually false. While "Waiting for the Man" and "The Gift" are indeed from the Velvet Underground, there are several other songs that are featured in the film from three British artists who go unacknowledged: Donovan, the Rolling Stones and the Nice. Perhaps Zadek intentionally misled his audience or he merely did not consider the other songs as important. Or Zadek could not afford the rights to play lengthy excerpts from the other, more famous, musicians. It is also possible that Zadek wanted to justify German counterculture by

⁹⁷ For more information on the British explosion and Black music see Rupert Till and Leighton Grist's essays in *Cross the Water Blues*.

⁹⁸ Clinton Heylin, ed., *All Yesterdays' Parties: The Velvet Underground in Print: 1966-1971* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2005), xiiiv-xvi.

⁹⁹ *Nico Icon* (1995).

¹⁰⁰ Witts, *The Velvet Underground*, 38.

¹⁰¹ Jon Stratton, "Jews, Punk and the Holocaust: From the Velvet Underground to the Ramones - the Jewish-American Story," *Popular Music* 24, no. 1 (2005): 96.

¹⁰² Erikson, "The Problem of Ego Identity," 86.

specifically drawing a link to American counterculture – considered the more authentic source as the birthplace of rock ‘n’ roll. I believe Zadek’s preference for the American Velvet Underground mirrors the underlying questions of *Die Unberatenen*: Whose culture must/can we inherit? Can we choose our own legacy? Whose children are we?

Although Zadek uses the Velvet Underground as a medium for discussion about counterculture, race and identity, as I mentioned earlier, he does not completely do away with the Weimar references tied to jazz in the novel. In his autobiography, Zadek denies the significance of using the song “Ich küsse ihre Hand, Madame” in the film or a parody of the song for the film’s title. He claims to have listened to Weimar jazz at the time of filming and found the title humorous.¹⁰³ And in the novel, Rull is referred to as the “Elefant im Porzellanladen” (Elephant in the china shop).¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, I believe one could make a legitimate connection between the themes of the Weimar-era film featuring Marlene Dietrich *Ich küsse ihre Hand, Madame* (1928) and *Elefant*. In the Weimar film, the main character, Count Lerski, is an exiled Russian aristocrat working as a waiter in Paris. He finds love with Dietrich’s character, Laurence, despite numerous misunderstandings about his true identity that make her suspicious of him. The film inevitably re-inscribes conventional understandings about class, for Laurence realizes how much she loves Lerski only after his wealthy past is revealed. But the title song is also instrumental in their reunification, for it provokes sentimental reactions from Laurence about Lerski. Apparently the film was created for the sheer purpose of promoting the song – Lerski lip-synchs to a recording of the original artist.¹⁰⁵

When Rull sings a parody of the Weimar hit on the beach, by changing the lyrics, he is able to criticize the previous generation, turning its cultural possessions into something incoherent and absurd. At the same time, the song serves as evidence of the continuation of pre-1945 sentiments. Furthermore, despite its re-inscription of traditional class boundaries, the Weimar film still deals with questions of identity: Who are you really? Does it depend on where you come from? Or what you currently are? Can you create a history for yourself?

Conclusion

In a 1970 article entitled “Reflections on the Dissent of Contemporary Youth,” Erikson claimed the large scale destruction at the end of WWII meant that young people afterwards were destined to challenge their fathers and had to find a new way to do so that was not simply borrowed from the modernist revolutionary forms that had failed.

The large scale utopias which were to initiate a new kind of history in the post-world war period [. . .] they have all been followed by holocausts as coldly planned as were the gas chambers and Hiroshima, [. . .] Thus also ended the unquestioned superiority of the fathers, whether they had obeyed and died, or survived and thrived. If then, as it

¹⁰³ Zadek, *My Way: Eine Autobiographie 1926-1969*, 473-74.

¹⁰⁴ Valentin, *Die Unberatenen*, 284.

¹⁰⁵ Gustav Ernst, *Sprache im Film* (Vienna: Wespennest, 1994), 41.

always must, rebellious youth borrows roles from past revolutions it must now avoid the temptation to settle for any previous consolidations.¹⁰⁶

In the same essay, Erikson describes young people as aligning themselves with other oppressed and repressed peoples forming a collective “Revolt of the Dependent.” Erikson claims the “Revolt of the Dependent” directly challenges “all those existing institutions which monopolize the admissions procedures to the main body of society [. . .] All this, too, dissenting youth now seeks to provide for itself in newly improvised and ritualized self-graduations, from musical happenings to communal experiment and to political revolt.”¹⁰⁷ If, in *Elefant*, all of the rebellious events leading up to the final exams are to be considered alternative, revolutionary self-graduations, the film’s concluding with a section titled *Reifeprüfung* - a reference to the traditional, state-authorized school exams - might suggest some kind of failure on the students’ parts to successfully break with the past. This seems to be the underlying argument in one of the last scenes of the film.

Rull is at a school assembly where his fellow students are to decide whether he should be expelled. One of the main student agitators, Klaus Rohwedder, wishes to give Rull a chance to explain why he chose the swastika to demonstrate the school’s fascist practices. Rull curiously turns the tables, taking on the role of interviewer himself, and begins asking Rohwedder whether he played soccer for Eimsbütteler. When Rohwedder denies this, Rull asks whether it was his father. At first, the impromptu sports report seems like yet another of Rull’s antics. Finally, Rull says “If I think about it more precisely, it must have been your grandfather, was he also named Rohwedder?”¹⁰⁸ Until now, this questioning has been filmed in the form of shot/reverse shot between Rull and Rohwedder. Yet, this final question is followed by a shot of Rohwedder’s room, covered in political posters, which is accompanied by off-screen booing and hooting. Through his seemingly meaningless questioning, Rull was actually reinstating a German legacy Rohwedder had attempted to escape. Otto Rohwedder (1909-1969) was an actual soccer player who played for the Nazis’ national team. It is unclear whether the Rohwedder in the film is implied to be Otto’s grandson. But Rull’s suggestion thereof brings back the point that despite Rohwedder’s self-fashioning to make himself the perfect revolutionary; he cannot deny his paternal past.

Perhaps that is why Zadek ends the film with, of all things, a counterrevolutionary *Schlager* song, Freddy Quinn’s “Wir” which was recorded in 1966. Even at the time, the song was known as a reactionary response to the student movement. In his lyrics, Quinn criticizes students for their reckless behavior and pointless desire for destruction of German traditions and values. Throughout the song, Quinn constructs a binary of “us” versus “them.” And ironically, despite these critiques, in the end Quinn attempts to highlight some similarities between himself and the rebellious students, insisting that he is not merely an old-fashioned square. Although the song attempts to draw a line between “us” and “them,” Zadek intentionally blurs this line as well as the line between “good” and “bad.” During the entire film, the juxtaposing song sequences

¹⁰⁶ Erik H. Erikson, “Reflections on the Dissent of Contemporary Youth,” *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 51, no. 11 (1970): 12.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.: 13.

¹⁰⁸ “wenn ich es mir genau überlege, muss es Ihr Grossvater gewesen sein, hiess er auch Rohwedder?”

have suggested that students seek comfort in rock music, the music of the foreigners, who are good, and they wish to escape German *Schlager*, which is bad. Yet, in Zadek's final montage, the foreigners are not always the "good" guys; we might see images of Allen Ginsberg, but we also see footage of the Klu Klux Klan. It is also unclear who "us" and "them" refers to in this music video. Does it refer to Quinn's lyrics concerning the obedient vs. the rebellious, or the old vs. the young or the Germans vs. the Americans? By blurring these boundaries, Zadek seems to suggest that students' denial of or resistance to their German legacy is too black and white. The references to Weimar in the film also argue that Germans can look outside national boundaries for role models, but they still have to deal with the legacy of their parents, because it is an imminent part of them. Zadek confirms this by ending the film with the titles, "Wir" then "Made in Germany." This German identity might not be an easy one to carry, but "To merely exercise the father signific[s] denying his internalization and thus the continuation of his reign."¹⁰⁹

In today's Germany, most would agree that the unquestioned superiority of fathers has ended. However, there is no clear consensus over what the role of men should be in contemporary German society. As philosopher Dieter Thomä phrased it, when the French Revolution struck down King Louis XVI and therewith the act of identifying with a single patriarch, Friedrich Schiller's prophecy that "All people will become brothers" did not answer the pressing question "But who will be their father?"¹¹⁰ Rull is representative of a generation of sons who either rejected the role of authoritative father in favor of being a "Softie" or reverted to the importance of collective parenting.¹¹¹ The more sensitive side of masculinity during the 1970s and 1980s was especially intensified by the feminist movement. Despite their having successfully broken down many boundaries between women and men and having achieved more gender equality in Germany, today the gender ideology of the '68 generation is often blamed for such national ills as the low birth rate,¹¹² and Georg Bollenbeck ironically summarizes as, "the lacking courage to parent, the dissolution of the family, youth ready to resort to violence, full trust in the state, selfhate and a lost of identity."¹¹³

Considering that Zadek's film deals with such a brief period in Rull's life, it is hard to say whether he would develop into a "Softie" or completely reject the idea of becoming a father. In *Elefant*, Rull's father is barely present. The very minor presence of his father in the film – as you recall, even his teachers cannot locate his father – demonstrates that Rull is one of the many postwar sons who "had been historically, intellectually, and emotionally orphaned."¹¹⁴ Just as

¹⁰⁹ Barbara Kosta, "Väterliteratur, Masculinity, and History: The Melancholic Texts of the 1980s," in *Conceptions of Postwar German Masculinity*, ed. Roy Jerome (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 225.

¹¹⁰ "Wer ist dann noch ihr Vater?" Maureen Linnartz, "Vaterunser; 'Alles Geht - und Nichts Funktioniert Wirklich.' Der Philosoph Dieter Thomä Über die Vielfalt der Vätermodelle zwischen Patriarch und Kumpel, das Kind im Mann und das Abenteuer Familie," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 8 September 2008.

¹¹¹ Thomä points out that the belief in collective parenting has its benefits. However, he found it naïve and morally questionable when the 68er took Anna Freud's findings that orphaned children in concentration camps were able to develop their own social competence as an argument for children's ability to be completely dependent on themselves.

¹¹² Linnartz, "Vaterunser; 'Alles Geht - und Nichts Funktioniert Wirklich.' Der Philosoph Dieter Thomä Über die Vielfalt der Vätermodelle zwischen Patriarch und Kumpel, das Kind im Mann und das Abenteuer Familie."

¹¹³ "...den fehlenden Mut zur Erziehung, die Auflösung der Familie, für die gewaltbereite Jugend, Staatsgläubigkeit, Selbsthass und Identitätsverlust." Georg Bollenbeck, *Lehrstück mit viel Publikum: 1968 ist ein unkämpfter Erinnerungsort. Deshalb wirken seine Erzählstoffe noch immer* (2008 [cited 20 February 2008]); available from <http://www.freitag.de/kultur/0824-schillernd>.

¹¹⁴ Kosta, "Väterliteratur, Masculinity, and History: The Melancholic Texts of the 1980s," 223.

“the postwar sons replaced their family father with symbolic fathers,”¹¹⁵ Rull does the same, only more explicitly in the novel when he turns to Herr Groenwald and Louis Armstrong.

But, to return to the theme of masculinity, how does a character like Rull respond to Black masculinity as it relates to his sympathy with the Black experience? While the “Softie” might have emerged in Germany in solidarity with the women’s movement and feminism, there was no such model for masculinity publicly promoted in the African American community. In fact, the male Black Panthers saw white feminists and any Black women who aligned themselves with them as counter-revolutionary.¹¹⁶ One might argue that by the time German men “expressed the need for a new [stronger] father figure,” in the 1980s, African American masculinity was already saturated with strong masculine types, which had been influenced by political icons like the Black Panthers but were also supported by popular culture, like the heroes of Blaxploitation films. In fact, bell hooks argues that a patriarchal, hypermasculine Black popular culture was pushed by mainstream American society in order to counter the feminist movement and create Black males willing to go to war: “The voice of Black male sexism and misogyny was not representative. And yet it was that voice that received ongoing national attention.”¹¹⁷

Thus, one wonders, how did these young German men reconcile their rebellion against authoritarian German masculinity with their identification with strong Black men? Perhaps German men streamlined the Black male experience, disregarding its patriarchal tendencies and focusing instead on its sexual freedom. After all, during the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, the 68er, heavily influenced by the writings of Wilhelm Reich, believed that sexual repression was patrially the cause of fascism. As Dagmar Herzog observes about this period:

...it was the postwar period, especially the mid- to late 1950s and early 1960s, that the 68ers had personally experienced as sexually repressive. This was an era of intensive rhetorical overevaluation of the family; of anxieties about the damage done to women by premarital sex; of worry about what the neighbors might say if a fiance spent the night; and of constant warnings about the delirious effect of masturbation. You will never win the battle against your own body, one prominent Protestant physician informed young men, if you lie around in a warm bed in the morning or listen to 'steamy Negro music' at night...*This* is what the 68ers were rebelling against.¹¹⁸

If young Germans embraced “steamy Negro music” to the disdain of their authority figures, then perhaps they were just as eager to embrace the myth of hypersexuality among their Black chosen father figures. According to Moritz Ege, “By the end of the seventies the feared yet desired Black male body had become as objectified as it was during slavery, only a seemingly positive twist had been added to the racist sexist objectification: the Black male body had become the site for the personification of everyone’s desire.”¹¹⁹ Thus, German males’ identification with Black

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Norbert Finzsch, “‘Gay Punk, White Lesbian, Black Bitch’ Zur Konstruktion des schwarz Männlichen Revolutionärs durch die Black Panther Party - 1966 bis 1982,” in *Lebendige Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Rainer Hering and Rainer Nicolaysen (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2003), 211.

¹¹⁷ hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, 53.

¹¹⁸ Herzog, “The Sexual Revolution and the Legacies of the Nazi Past,” 166.

¹¹⁹ hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, 78.

men in the 1970s was translated into sexual freedom. In the next chapter we will turn to a queer, hypersexual Black protagonist in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's film *Whity* who seems to speak to German men's engagement with Black male sexuality at this time and its potential for resistance against oppression.

Chapter Three

Lessons in Liberation

Between 1967 and 1972, several West German magazines published a series of texts and photos about interracial sex between Blacks and whites.¹ Having experienced centuries of sexual violence by white men against Black women and violence against Black men for alleged sexual relations with white women, it had been common for African Americans to discuss the logic of racism in relation to a sexual figuration. This discourse ultimately transferred to Germany as well, where young Germans anxiously followed the fight for civil rights in America. In 1969, parts of Eldrige Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* were published in the leftist magazine *Konkret*. Cleaver was an icon of the Black Panther Movement in Germany and his autobiography has become notorious for its argument that the Black man's political emancipation was tied to his sexual liberation. By advocating for sex between Black men and white women, a union he labeled as between a soul bride and soul groom, Cleaver broke a taboo that had been upheld both during American slavery and German colonialism. Furthermore, while in America "White men were attacking black men in the sixties for not fulfilling the patriarchal role when it came to work and family...black men were telling white men that sexuality was the only real site where manhood mattered and there the black male rules."²

While German men rejected the image of the strong patriarch represented by their fathers, they accepted the strong, sexual Black man as a symbol of liberation. As Moritz Ege observed:

the white-black sexual desire thematized in newspaper articles should be understood as a legitimization of, until then, 'repressed' desires that was typical of the time. The 'sex wave' that existed everywhere, the 'sexualization of public life' in the imagery of popular culture and the leftist sex pole-theory were all related despite their mutual aversion. In this way, the issue of racism was analytically as well as practically made subordinate to sexual liberation. In relation to this, the stereotype of the sexually extraordinary Black was reproduced.³

The combination of solidarity with Blacks and equation between sexual liberation and Black liberation led to not only an acceptance of the hypersexual Black man, but a desire to emulate him. Photo spreads of nude Black women and confessionals from Black women about their choice of a white lover allowed German men to feel as potent as Black men. But did this focus on the sexual liberation of Black sexuality and Black masculinity lead Germans to ignore

¹ Ege, *Schwarz Werden: >>Afroamerikanophilie<< in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren*, 80.

² hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, 13.

³ "...das in den Zeitschriftartikeln thematisierte weiß-schwarze sexuelle Begehren [ist] wiederum als zeittypische Legitimierung bislang 'verdrängter' Wünsche anzusehen: die allseits konstatierte 'Sexwelle,' die 'Sexualisierung des öffentlichen Lebens' in den Bilderwelten der populären Kultur und die linke Sexpol-Theorie gingen in dieser Hinsicht trotz ihrer gegenseitigen Abneigung durchaus miteinander einher. Die Problematik des Rassismus wird dabei analytisch wie praktisch der sexuellen Befreiung untergeordnet. Im Zuge dessen wird auch das Stereotyp von den sexuell besonders beschaffenen Schwarzen reproduziert." Ege, *Schwarz Werden: >>Afroamerikanophilie<< in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren*, 90.

problematic issues, such as patriarchy, sexism and homophobia, within the Black Power movement?

In this chapter, I turn to Rainer Werner Fassbinder's engagement with Black masculinity, sexuality and freedom in his film *Whity* (1970). In my analysis, I hope to show that Fassbinder's celebration of Black masculinity is not as uncritical as the kind of texts Ege describes; rather Fassbinder's Black protagonist is an ambivalent figure who participates in the very system that oppresses him. Due to the relative obscurity of the film,⁴ I will first refer to a short plot synopsis:

Somewhere in the American West in 1878 in a large house that is more like a mausoleum than a home, lives the Nicholson family. It includes Ben, the domineering patriarch; Katherine, his second wife, a nymphomaniac; and his sons by his first wife, Frank, a homosexual, and Davy, who is mentally retarded. Serving and being abused by the family is a young black man, Whity, Ben's illegitimate son who wants to belong.⁵

Although this description offers background to the story, Christian Braad Thompsen best sums up the plot that drives the film:

The head of the family, old Ben Nicholson, has a young wife, [K]atherine, whose lover passes himself off as a doctor. Ben has bribed him to tell the whole family that he, old Ben, is fatally ill. He wants to see how the family responds. Once the 'doctor' has made the false diagnosis, Ben shoots him down – without anyone prosecuting him for it. Ben claims that the 'doctor' boasted that he had raped [K]atherine. The whore Hanna corroborates this statement before the judge, because Ben bribed her. [...] The whole Nicholson family is waiting for old Ben's death, so as to be his heirs and get on with their own lives. Since he doesn't seem to be dying quickly enough, they urge Whity ever more impatiently to kill him. It's the only order that Whity is hesitant about.⁶

From the beginning of the film, there is clearly tension between the members of the Nicholson household. When we first encounter them, they are sitting around a dining room table. Instead of behaving like a doting mother, Katherine (Kate) looks at her stepson Davy and coldly

⁴ *Whity* was not only Fassbinder's least successful film, but also one of his lesser known films, partly because it was not broadcast on German television until the private channel Pro 7 picked it up in the 1980s – the state-run channels ARD and ZDF were not interested in its distribution. See Herbert Spaich, *Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Leben und Werk* (Beltz; Weinheim: Quadriga, 1992), 138.

⁵ Laurence Kardish in collaboration with Juliane Lorenz, ed., *Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (Berlin: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation, Berlin, 1997). A longer description in German is the following: "1878 irgendwo im Westen der Vereinigten Staaten. In einem Herrenhaus, das einem Mausoleum gleicht, residiert die Familie Nicholson: der Gutsbesitzer Ben Nicholson (Ron Randell), seine nymphoman veranlagte zweite Frau Katherine (Katrin Schaake), die beiden Söhne aus erster Ehe, der homosexuelle Frank (Ulli Lommel) und der geistesranke Davy (Harry Baer). Unterwürfiger Diener der Nicholsons ist der Neger Whity (Günther Kaufmann), ein illegitimer Sohn Bens. Selbstbewußtsein gewinnt er erst, als nacheinander mehrere Mitglieder der Familie ihn auffordern, andere Familienmitglieder zu töten. Whity vollstreckt das Urteil, das die Nicholsons längst über sich gesprochen haben." *Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Dichter, Schauspieler, Filmemacher: Werkschau 28.5 – 19.7.1992/Herausgegeben von Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation* (Berlin: Argon, 1992), 18.

⁶ Christian Braad Thomsen, *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, trans. Martin Chalmers (London; Boston: faber and faber, 1997), 75-6.

declares, “We should have him put to sleep.”⁷ This is the first indication that the Nicholsons would like to see each other dead. Ben responds to Kate’s cold remark with “He’s a Nicholson... You’ll learn how to get along with us,”⁸ referring to Kate’s status as a new addition to the family, which increases the possibility for conflict between the reluctant stepmother and her unusual step children: “one of the sons, Frank (Ulli Lommel), flaunts his homosexuality, his eyebrows shaved and redrawn, dressed sometimes in his stepmother’s black underwear and sometimes in a Spanish-style black velvet jacket. The other son, Davy (Harry Baer) is feeble-minded.”⁹ In contrast to his half-brothers, Whity, who is the mulatto son of his master Ben and the Black cook Marpessa, is a strong and dynamic character who seems like the more logical inheritor of his father’s fortune. Yet, his illegitimate status makes it impossible for him to legally inherit Ben Nicholson’s money. Furthermore, his Black heritage serves as a thorn in the side of white hegemony. Despite his illegitimate status and his African American heritage, Whity’s strong masculinity, in comparison to Davy and Frank, makes him more worthy in Ben’s eyes – a fact that is only stated at the very end of the film when Ben asks Whity to kill the other Nicholsons and step in as his heir. Even prior to Ben’s deadly request, the other relatives are aware of the threat Whity poses and that is why Kate calls him the “Kreuz der Familie” (curse of the family). For the majority of the film, Ben, Kate and Frank Nicholson use physical, verbal and psychological abuse to keep Whity in his subordinate place.

On several occasions, Hanna, a prostitute and Whity’s lover, tries to convince Whity that he should run away with her; go east to Chicago¹⁰ where she can work as a singer and he can be free of servitude. She eventually tells him that Ben murdered Garcia in order to show Whity what kind of awful deeds the Nicholson family is capable of. The film suggests that Hanna inspires Whity to finally rebel when he leaves her company and returns home to shoot the entire family, including the harmless Davy. Afterwards, he escapes into the desert with Hanna where they both die of thirst.

Critics tend to read Whity as focusing, in Thomas Elsaesser’s words, “on the group knit tightly by mutual hatred”¹¹ – a focus which would neatly situate the film among Fassbinder’s other works. Fassbinder himself described filming Whity as an experiment, an opportunity to allow his antitheater group to view itself from an outside perspective: “During the filming of Whity, the group came out of its Munich hotpot and for the first time they realized that they had never really been a group.”¹² Fassbinder even directed the film *Warnung vor einer heiligen Nutte* (Beware of a Holy Whore) in the fall of 1970 as a kind of catharsis to deal with the cast’s bitter experience on the set of Whity.¹³

⁷ “Wir sollten ihn einschläfern.” All dialogue excerpts are based on the German-language dialogue as it is heard in the DVD release of the film (based on subtitles and the author’s translation).

⁸ “Er ist ein Nicholson. . . Du wirst lernen, dich zu Recht zu finden bei uns.”

⁹ Wallace Steadman Watson, *Understanding Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Film as Private and Public Art* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 86.

¹⁰ Although this plantation melodrama is unusually set in the West, Hanna’s plea that they go East to Chicago could just as well be thought of as going North which is how slaves’ pursuit of freedom was typically articulated at the time. Fassbinder’s choice of juxtaposing West/East instead of South/North might be read as a critique of Western culture or, in a specifically German context, a condemnation of West German culture.

¹¹ Thomas Elsaesser, *Fassbinder’s Germany: History, Identity, Subject* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1993), 323.

¹² “Die Gruppe kam bei den Dreharbeiten zu >Whity< aus dem Münchener Eintopf heraus und begriff dann erst, daß sie nie eine Gruppe gewesen war.” Spaich, *Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Leben Und Werk*, 138.

¹³ *Ibid.*

While I agree with Thomas Elsaesser that the film's investigation of the group dynamic is one of its most interesting aspects, within this topic I find Fassbinder's choice of a mulatto as the protagonist and deliverer of justice most fascinating. In contrast to *Die Blechtrommel* and *Ich bin ein Elefant, Madame*, in *Whity* we do not have a white character engaging with Black popular culture in order to rebel and commit cultural patricide.¹⁴ Instead, we have a character of mixed race who rebels by literally killing off his oppressive white family. The idea of a Black male protagonist who fights back against oppression is unusual for portrayals of racial Others in German film at the time. Although Fassbinder is known for reinstating the role of ethnic minorities in German film, his portrayal of racial Others often coincided with the victim narrative. The racial others in three of his most popular films, *Katzelmacher* (1969), *Angst essen Seele auf* (Ali: Fear Eats the Soul, 1974) and *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (The Marriage of Maria Braun, 1979), are characteristically weak. In *Katzelmacher*, Jorgos the Greek guest worker is exploited by his German employer Elisabeth and beaten up by her white male friends. In *Fear Eats the Soul*, a romance between an older German widow and a Moroccan guest worker named Ali, Ali's bout with racial discrimination ends with hospitalization and a diagnosis of a stress-induced stomach ulcer. And in *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, Maria Braun has an affair with a Black GI named Bill while awaiting her husband's return from the front. Bill takes care of her, providing her with hard-to-come-by goods and teaching her English. But as soon as her husband Hermann returns, she kills Bill to reinstate Hermann's manhood. Bill is killed so easily by a light hit over the head that he perfectly embodies the stereotype of the emasculated Black man. *Whity*, on the other hand, appears quite vital compared to the other characters in the film. When one considers that *Whity* does not conform to stereotypical images of Blacks in films of its day as well as the fact that Fassbinder indulges a "revenge fantasy" depicting a Black man killing his white oppressors, there seems to be a link between *Whity* and the then burgeoning Blaxploitation genre.

But *Whity* is not a one-to-one equivalent to Blaxploitation heroes like Shaft or Superfly. What sets *Whity* apart from Blaxploitation protagonists is that he is part of the white family that oppresses him – a unique position that results from his status as a mulatto. Thus, *Whity*'s violence is not directed at an outside threat but directed within his family – it is violence against his own. In this chapter, I will first situate *Whity* in the history of German and Hollywood portrayals of Blacks in film in order to later show why *Whity* is such a unique character. I will also contextualize *Whity* in the West German film culture of the time and in regards to contemporary issues concerning Black popular culture and Otherness in West German society. Moreover, I will discuss the link between *Whity* and Blaxploitation by comparing him to another powerful, vengeful Black male protagonist – Sweetback of Melvin van Peeble's "ghetto Western" *Sweet Sweetback's Badaasssss Song* (1971). Both films were shot the same year and in both, Black popular culture and queer sexuality are closely intertwined – Sweetback performs in queer, interracial sex acts for a live audience; *Whity* has several intimate encounters with men and women. These queer black protagonists violently rebel against their white oppressors and must go on the run with flights ending in the desert. Furthermore, both Sweetback and *Whity*

¹⁴ "Patricide" is used here to mean rejecting anything relating to the father.

draw strength from their sexuality; a characteristic that places them in opposition to the “castrated” Black males typically depicted on the screen. Despite these connections, there is a notable difference between the films: Sweetback escapes, Whity perishes. I will conclude this chapter by explaining why Whity’s death is necessary for Fassbinder because the director uses the dilemma of the mulatto during American slavery to make a critique about German terrorism.

Black Stereotypes in German and American Film

The Black presence in German film reaches back as far as German film history. Just a few of the early German films that featured Black actors are Ernst Lubitsch’s *Die Austernprinzessin* (The Oyster Princess, 1919), Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927) and Josef von Bakys *Münchhausen* (1943). It is worth noting that in all three of these films, Black actors are cast in the role of exotic servants. Annette von Wagenheim’s documentary, *Pagen in der Traumfabrik* (Pages in the Dream Factory, 2002), documents the roles of Black actors in German films from 1919 until 1945. Von Wagenheim describes the cliché roles Black actors of the time were forced to play as ranging “vom unterwürfigen Diener bis zum privaten ‘Wilden’” (from submissive servant to private “savage”).¹⁵ In an investigation of actor Louis Brody, who came to Germany from Cameroon in 1915 at the age of 23, Tobias Nagl echoes these claims: “if they appeared in film, black actors were always forced to represent a longstanding stereotypical image. Their history in film is one of white fantasies and projections: page boys, bartenders, butlers, musicians, sailors, dancers, bell boys, porters, chauffeurs, and ‘wild’ native people. [...] These images proclaimed not only white superiority, but often also envy and contempt.”¹⁶

Following WWII, Germany’s changing ethnic landscape clearly had an effect on its films. Black GIs and the children of German women and Black GIs, degradingly called *Besatzungskinder* (occupation children) and *Mischlingskinder* (half-caste children), were portrayed in films as well. Despite the erasure of the term *Rasse* (race) from public discourse¹⁷ and the German constitution’s prohibition against discrimination based on race,¹⁸ postwar German film still upheld the notion of racial difference. Whether the innocent Afro-German orphan in Robert Stemmle’s *Toxi* (1952) or Maria Braun’s Black GI lover, Blacks young and old could temporarily find a subservient place helping to restore the German family, but inevitably they could only be happy with other Blacks and whites with other whites.¹⁹

It also seems there is a history of employing amateur Black actors in German film. Blacks were often cast not for their acting ability but for their ability to physically fit the role – something which Lothar Lambert pokes fun at in his film *I Berlin Harlem* (1974) in an ironic

¹⁵ <http://www.wdr.de/wdrprint/archiv/2002/03/page05.html>. Accessed 12 July 2010.

¹⁶ Tobias Nagl, “Louis Brody and the Black Presence in German Film before 1945,” in *Not so Plain as Black and White: Afro-German Culture and History, 1890-2000*, ed. Patricia Mazon and Reinhild Steingroever (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 109.

¹⁷ Tißberger, “The Project(Ions) of ‘Civilization’ and the Counter-Transferences of Whiteness: Freud, Psychoanalysis, ‘Gender’ and ‘Race’ (in Germany),” 92-3.

¹⁸ Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America*, 136.

¹⁹ In her investigation of interracial relationships between Black GIs and German women in the Rhineland-Palatinate, Maria Höhn found that even after rejecting anti-Semitism, many Germans believed the separation of Blacks from whites was a natural order appointed by God. See Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins*. This corresponds with older beliefs dating back to German colonialism that “half-caste” children inherited negative traits from each parent, ruining the integrity of both races. See Lusane, *Hitler’s Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era*.

scene where Fassbinder and actress Ingrid Caven approach a Black GI about appearing in a film. When the GI declines because of his lack of acting experience, Ingrid responds “We’re not looking for an actor. We’re looking for a black guy.”²⁰ Tobias Nagl states that in Weimar films for example, “black extras were thus not so much ‘acting’ but embodying ‘nature’ in a reproduced authenticity that the new film medium celebrated.”²¹ This treatment of Black actors essentialized them, denying them subjectivity and attempting to fuse the individual with the role.

In the history of American film, African Americans were also confined to the demeaning roles of servant and entertainer and violent roles such as thieves, rapists and murderers.²² Donald Bogle, a historian on Black cinema, describes the roles available for Black men in particular as obedient “toms”, comedic “coons”, “tragic mulattos” and violent “bucks.”²³ In *Playing the Race Card*, Linda Williams discusses how American melodramas about race have typically either sympathized with the Black slave as victim or the white woman as victim. Film adaptations of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) mobilized great sympathy for Blacks. However, Williams points out that while Stowe’s portrayal of Black femininity is heroic and independent, the kinds of Black masculinity offered in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* are both subservient to white supremacy. Uncle Tom, the title character, is a loyal servant and spiritual man who awaits his freedom in heaven. Sambo²⁴ is an overseer who works for the villain Simon Legree and he is so loyal to his white master that he takes part in the abuse of Black slaves. Stowe’s novel is thought of as having helped start the Civil War, igniting anti-slavery sentiment among Northerners. Yet, during Restoration, resentment about the war and the abolition of slavery (1865) fueled fears that free Blacks would endanger the safety of white Southerners. Melodramas that previously victimized the Black male slave switched to victimizing the white woman. “Anti-Tom” films, like D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* (1915), contrasted the loyal slaves of the South with “‘insolent’ free blacks” and murderous rapists.²⁵

Uncle Tom characters and their female equivalent, the Mammy, were key figures in Hollywood plantation melodramas, a genre that became especially popular during the Depression Era. The plantation melodrama romantically portrayed the antebellum South as a utopian fantasy to which white Americans wished to return. Films like *Jezebel* (1938) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939) presented opulent Southern plantation houses before the backdrop of happily singing slaves. Around World War II, there was a shift in the plantation melodrama. “Hollywood’s plantation mythology underwent a period of significant revision that softened some of the genre’s supremacist assumptions about slavery.”²⁶ Hollywood began paying more attention to

²⁰ “Wir suchen ja keinen Schauspieler. Wir suchen halt einen Schwarzen.”

²¹ Nagl, “Louis Brody and the Black Presence in German Film before 1945,” 111.

²² While I have already offered examples of German films which portray blacks in submissive roles, an example of the black man as sex-crazed rapist is Carl Boese’s *Die schwarze Schmach* (1921), a campaign warning against the African French soldiers occupying the Rheinland area after WWI. For an article which addresses the accusations of rape directed towards these soldiers and how their occupation was seen as penetrating the white German community see Fatima El-tayeb, “Dangerous Liaisons: Race, Nation, and German Identity,” in *Not so Plain as Black and White: Afro-German Culture and History, 1890-2000*, ed. Patricia Mazon and Reinhild Steingröver (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005).

²³ Donald Bogle quoted in Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*, 152.

²⁴ Several Black characters in American literature have been called Sambo. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word was used as early as the 18th century to refer to a person who, in terms of racial hierarchy, is between a mulatto and a Negro (OED).

²⁵ Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

Black protest against negative stereotypes in films because Blacks needed to be convinced of their important role in America and their duty to fight overseas.

Nevertheless, the roles offered to Black actors following WWII did not reflect the “double victory” Blacks hoped to achieve abroad and at home.²⁷ While postwar German film represented Blacks with the lovable Afro-German orphan and the naïve and friendly Black GI, a similar tendency can be found in postwar American film, where the most popular African American film star, Sidney Poitier, became known for his roles as the safe Black man. In the late 1960s, opposition to the caricature of the safe Black man gained momentum in the U.S. African Americans in the film industry began to more strongly resist the older images; whether that of Sambo and Uncle Tom or the model for integration, Poitier. This opposition came in the form of Blaxploitation films.

Ed Guerrero describes Blaxploitation films as a genre “which arises from the film industry’s targeting the Black audience with a specific product line of cheaply made, Black-cast films shaped with the ‘exploitation’ strategies Hollywood routinely uses to make the majority of its films.”²⁸ According to Guerrero, several factors contributed to the wave of Blaxploitation films created in the 1970s: the growing political consciousness in the Black community influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, Hollywood’s near bankruptcy due to a declining and fragmented audience and its subsequent desire to capitalize on Black audiences and the Black community’s backlash to the harmless/sexless Black males portrayed by Poitier. Critics of Poitier felt his characters were “castrated” and “completely devoid of mature characterization or of any political or social reality.”²⁹

Guerrero considers Melvin van Peeble’s *Sweet Sweetback*³⁰ and Gordon Park’s *Shaft* (1972) as part of Blaxploitation’s peak; films that set the formula for the Blaxploitation genre. Blaxploitation films allowed African Americans the fantasy that one could fight “the Man” and win. Burly, hypersexual and suave Black heroes gave Black men and women a feeling of confidence and power which Hollywood films prior to that could not have achieved. These films also allowed for many more African Americans to find work in the film industry, whether as directors and screenwriters or working on the set. The fact that there was not such a movement in Germany likely has to do with the relatively smaller Black community in Germany at the time. Additionally, in the 1960s, while the Civil Rights Movement was growing in the U.S., in Germany the integration of Afro-Germans had been deemed a success and Afro-Germans were therefore “rendered invisible” and lacked a strong public presence.³¹ Afro-Germans would not be

²⁷ In *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II*, Ronald Takaki discusses how part of what fueled the Civil Rights Movement was that African Americans who enjoyed respectful treatment abroad vowed to fight for the same freedom once they returned to the U.S. This is a sentiment often heard among Black GIs who served in Germany and were astonished to be treated better by Germans than by their fellow servicemen. Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2000). See also Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom*.

²⁸ Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*, 69.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁰ The film earned ten million dollars at the box office and became one of the highest grossing films of the year. Reid-Pharr, *Once You Go Black: Choice, Desire, and the Black American Intellectual*, 152.

³¹ Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America*, 185.

recognized as a community with shared experiences of racial prejudice for at least another decade.³²

Whity's Historical Moment

From the end of WWII until the early 1960s, postwar German film was dominated by genres that were meant to rehabilitate Germans and give them a positive view of the future such as the *Trümmerfilm* (rubble film) and the *Heimatfilm* (homeland film). The *Trümmerfilm* refers to films that were made immediately after World War II, set in Germany's bombed out cities, such as the first film released after the war, Wolfgang Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (The Murderers Are Among Us, 1946). *Trümmerfilme* directly addressed the damaged landscape and lives after the war. They were populated with women attempting to pick up the pieces at home and wounded soldiers returning from the front and prisoner of war camps. These rubble films helped Germans deal with the immediate task of rebuilding the nation and assured them that the real criminals of the Third Reich would be punished, while average citizens could build a new democracy. "The ruins attest[ed] to the desired erasure of the past and the promise of a new beginning captured in the myth of Zero Hour."³³

During the 1950s, the public began favoring films other than the *Trümmerfilm*.³⁴ The dark aesthetics and subject matter of the *Trümmerfilm* did not fit the new optimism emerging from the country's economic rehabilitation. The *Heimatfilm* attempted to restore what National Socialism had destroyed including the Nazis' misuse of words like *Heimat* (home) and "tradition."³⁵ *Heimatfilms* portrayed an idyllic Germany, characterized by its pristine nature. "The countryside milieu is romanticized and placed in contrast to the ruckus and hurry of the metropolis."³⁶ Not only is Germany's landscape idealized in the *Heimatfilm*, but the nuclear family as well, which had also been devastated by war. Postwar Germany was plagued with feelings of guilt and questions of culpability. Unlike the real world, in the world of the *Heimatfilme*, good and evil were clearly defined; there was no gray area for conspirators and conformists. The *Heimatfilm* "dealt with a private world and a bourgeois order and security guaranteed by property."³⁷ Furthermore, in the context of Germany's increasing diversity (foreign occupying soldiers, occupation children and guest workers) the *Heimatfilm* also responded "vigorously to threats to [Germany's] naturalized homogeneity"³⁸—an argument that will be discussed at length below.

³² Audre Lorde was key in helping Afro-Germans gain a sense of community in the 1980s. In 1984, Lorde taught a course on Black American female poets and led a poetry workshop in English at the *Freie Universität* (Free University) in Berlin, in which several Afro-German women participated. Lorde encouraged these women to document their experiences of living in Germany and this motivated several of the participants to publish the book *Farbe bekennen* (Showing Our Colors) in 1986. For personal accounts on the feeling of isolation many Afro-Germans experienced in the postwar era see Katharina Oguntoye, May Opitz, and Dagmar Schultz, eds., *Farbe bekennen: afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992). And Ika Hügel-Marshall, *Daheim unterwegs* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1998). This was published in English as *Invisible Woman*.

³³ Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 98. The thematics of the rubble film were also present in German literature, such as Wolfgang Brochert's play *Draußen vor der Tür* (The Man Outside, 1947).

³⁴ Hobsch, *Liebe, Tanz Und 1000 Schlagerfilme*, 18.

³⁵ Willi Höfig, *Der deutsche Heimatfilm* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1973), 71.

³⁶ "Das Landschaftsmilieu wird romantisiert und zu Unruhe und Gehetze der Großstadt in Kontrast gesetzt." *Ibid.*, 74.

³⁷ "Es handle sich um eine private Welt und um durch Besitz garantierte bürgerliche Ordnung und Sicherheit." *Ibid.*, 71.

³⁸ Mariatte C. Denman, "Visualizing the Nation: Madonnas and Mourning Mothers in Postwar Germany," in *Visualizing the Nation: Madonnas and Mourning Mothers in Postwar Germany*, ed. Patricia Herminghouse and Magda Mueller (Oxford; Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997), 205.

In 1962, a group of young German filmmakers published the Oberhausen Manifesto; a statement that rejected the idyllic films dominating the cinemas and called for more critical interventions. Filmmakers of New German Cinema like Fassbinder discarded older genres,³⁹ committing “cultural patricide”⁴⁰ similar to the rejection of *Schlager* for rock ‘n’ roll discussed in Chapter Two. The manifesto proudly proclaims “The old film is dead. We believe in the new one.”⁴¹ One of the ways Fassbinder revolutionized German cinema was by focusing on typically marginalized characters. He became known for making films that function as allegories for West German history, such as his so-called BRD trilogy “in which he rewrote the postwar years in allegorical terms of female melodrama”⁴² in *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, *Lola* (1981) and *Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss* (The Longing of Veronika Voss, 1982). Most of Fassbinder’s films are set in domestic locations in the postwar era. *Whity* was actually the first time Fassbinder ever directed a film outside of Munich – the film was shot in Almería, Spain.⁴³ And even when Fassbinder’s German characters go abroad, such as a visit to Morocco in *Faustrecht der Freiheit* (Fox and His Friends, 1975), the journey is primarily concerned with how the German subject experiences traveling abroad.⁴⁴ In *Whity*, however, the entire world of the film is set in the 19th century in the United States.

Considering the focus of his other films, one first wonders why Fassbinder would film a Western set in the 1800s. Although New German Cinema specifically rejected older forms of German cinema, it also responded to Hollywood, which had been dominating the European market for decades. In the early 20th century, European intellectuals initially saw in Hollywood cinema the potential for a world cinema of the masses that would destabilize the dichotomy of high and low culture. However, by the postwar period they recognized Hollywood as being:

[...] on the side of illusion and commodity culture, escapist fantasy and the repression of its own process of production. From this point of view, Hollywood cinema is a symptom of cultural, economic, and technical fetishism. [...] In the 60s, growing political consciousness leading up to the events of 1968, the American military build-up in Vietnam and awareness of the stifling indigenous Third World as well as European cinemas under American exports all combined to repoliticise intellectual attitudes to Hollywood.⁴⁵

See also Johannes von Moltke’s essay “Evergreens: The Heimat Genre” in *The German Cinema Book*, edited by Tim Bergfelder, Erika Carter and Deniz Göktürk.

³⁹ Appropriately, the movement’s motto was “Papas kino ist tot” (Daddy’s cinema is dead). “Originally a catchphrase of the French New Wave, [the journal] *Filmkritik* adopted the term as part of its call for a new German cinema that would break with the past, and the term quickly came to symbolize everything that was wrong with German film, historically and in the 1950s.” Hester Baer, *Dismantling the Dream Factory: Gender, German Cinema, and the Postwar Quest for a New Film Language* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 17 note 32.

⁴⁰ I read anything related to the father that gets rejected is read from a psychoanalytic perspective as patricide. I will explain this further later on.

⁴¹ Bodo et. al. Blüthner, *Oberhausener Manifest vom 28. Februar 1962* ([cited 20 August 2009]); available from http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/dokumente/KontinuitaetUndWandel_erklaerungOberhausenerManifest/.

⁴² Hake, *German National Cinema*, 67.

⁴³ Spaich, *Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Leben und Werk*, 138.

⁴⁴ In *Angst essen Seele auf*, the plot suggests that the main protagonists Emmi and Ali travel to his homeland to recover from the stress caused by their interracial relationship. There is no footage of this trip however; its main function is to show how and why their relationship is more positively received when they return. As for the footage of Morocco in *Fox and His Friends*, Christian Braad Thomsen claims that Fassbinder only included a scene of Morocco in the film so that he might see his former lover and star of *Fears Eats the Soul*, Eli Hedi ben Salem. Thomsen, *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, 19.

⁴⁵ Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 20-2.

Considering the contemporary attitudes towards Hollywood, Fassbinder's decision to film a Western can be read as his interest in engaging with and turning a critical eye towards popular Hollywood genres. Germans have been interested in the Western genre since the 19th century, as is most evident in Karl May's popular Winnetou novels. Much like these novels, early Western films functioned as an escape from modernity and a means to cushion the shock of modernity through dealing with the past.⁴⁶ In early German films, fears of modernity were often displaced to the American West.⁴⁷ The Western taught viewers to accept "a beneficial sacrifice of unrestrained masculine individualism in the interests of civilisation, law and culture."⁴⁸

Following WWII, Westerns continued to be popular in West Germany, demonstrated by the successful Technicolor film adaptations of May's novels shot in Yugoslavia. In the 1960s alone, over ten Winnetou films were made. The Karl May adaptations were so popular that in order to appease the demands for these Western European co-productions, East Germany also created several Socialist Westerns. Like the Afro-German orphan Toxi, the Native Americans of the Karl May films stood in for Jewish victims. Katrin Sieg argues that portraying the experience of Native Americans in the Karl May films "provided a forum for imagining 'restitution' for genocide, not in the sense of acknowledging responsibility for making reparations but restoring the goodness and honor of Germans."⁴⁹

Whity is by no means a classical Hollywood Western, rather Fassbinder plays with the genre and presents characters that are "caricatures of American Western types."⁵⁰ Some critics liken Whity to an Italian "Spaghetti" Western, not only because it was shot on the set of Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), but also because of its "emotive music and exaggeratedly slow pace."⁵¹ In the 1960s and 1970s, with the Western losing popularity in the U.S., European-made Westerns catered to the market. The most popular thereof were the Spaghetti Westerns which enjoyed much success in Germany. Spaghetti Westerns commonly broke genre conventions: filmmakers could ignore the censorship laws of the U.S., introduce morally ambiguous heroes, intensify violence and occasionally present explicit homoeroticism and masochism – both of which are featured in Whity.

An interesting trend in both European and American Westerns of the 1960s and 1970s was the focus on race and the criticism of hegemonic white culture. For example in Martin Ritt's film *Hombre* (1967), Paul Newman plays a white man who is raised by Apache Indians and is referred to by other whites as "Red Skin" because he has adopted the ways of Apache culture and rejected his own. Newman's character can be contextualized in the century old myth of the white man "going native" embodied by such fictional characters as Joseph Conrad's Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and real persons like Rimbaud.⁵² Here, one could draw a parallel to

⁴⁶ Nanna Verhoeff, *The West in Early Cinema: After the Beginning* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

⁴⁷ Göktürk, *Künstler, Cowboys, Ingenieure*.

⁴⁸ Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 40.

⁴⁹ Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 24.

⁵⁰ Watson, *Understanding Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Film as Private and Public Art*, 86.

⁵¹ Thomsen, *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, 77.

⁵² In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt argues that it is when whites were confronted with Africans' primitivity that made them turn to such barbaric methods in colonialism. She describes how the European gentleman can be corrupted by Africa's darkness. "The world of native savages was a perfect setting for men who had escaped the reality of civilization. Under a merciless sun, surrounded by an entirely hostile nature, they were confronted with human beings who, living without the future of a purpose and the past of an accomplishment, were as

Whity, whose nickname likely refers to his acceptance of white supremacy. According to Georg Seeßlen and Claudius Weil, the political Westerns of the 1960s:

... did not adhere to the optimism of integration, like the films of the 50s, rather they adhered to the optimism of change and solidarity with other racial minorities, whose idealism and humanity could break the brutality of the greedy Yankee hegemony ... the hero is the bi-racial one, the voluntary "Indian," the Mexican and the negro who recognizes possible allies in the fight for emancipation.⁵³

An important influence on this trend in the Western was the global student movement of the 1960s. For young people critical of capitalism, imperialism and individualism, the loner hero of the Western was less appealing than collective heroes. And when there was an outcast, he or she could no longer believably be integrated into society as was common for the classical Western. When one considers these new trends in the Western as well as Fassbinder's interest in genre and marginal characters, it is understandable that he would choose an African American protagonist for his first attempt at a Western. One must, however, consider what images of African Americans existed in Germany at the time that might have influenced Fassbinder's portrayal of an African American on the screen.

Aside from the typical Black roles in German film which I discussed earlier and the postwar depictions of Black GIs and Afro-Germans, Germans' ideas of Blacks were also informed by knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Panther Party – a topic I will explore in greater detail in Chapter Five. Black culture such as Soul music and the Afro-look were popular with students who sympathized with minorities' struggles around the world. These youth were commonly not only interested in Black culture but a variety of foreign cultural products, such as Spaghetti Westerns⁵⁴ and the rock 'n' roll discussed in the previous chapter. Some students even saw themselves as the "Negroes" of German society because they were discriminated against based on their countercultural appearance. A few students attempted to organize with Black students and GIs in Germany. When the *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (SDS)⁵⁵ fragmented, its more radical wing viewed the Black Panthers and the concept of the urban guerilla as a model to follow. The German student movement's investment in the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Panther Party is a further reason why filmmakers like Fassbinder who were looking for new revolutionary subjects might have been interested in an African American protagonist.

incomprehensible as the inmates of a madhouse." Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego; NY; London: Harcourt Inc., 1976), 190.

⁵³ "Alle diese Filme verfolgten nicht den Optimismus der Integration, wie die Filme der fünfziger Jahre, sondern den Optimismus der Veränderung und der Solidarität der rassischen Minderheiten, deren Idealismus und Menschlichkeit die Brutalität der geldgierigen Yankee-Herrschaft bezwingen konnten. [...] Der Held ist der halbe, der >>freiwillige<< Indianer oder Mexikaner, der Neger, der seine möglichen Verbündeten im Kampf um die Emanzipation erkennt." Georg Seeßlen and Claudius Weil, *Western-Kino* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1979), 175.

⁵⁴ Ege, *Schwarz Werden: >>Afroamerikanophilie<< in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren*, 116-17.

⁵⁵ The SDS was the main group of students that led the extra-parliamentary movement – an opposition to the *große Koalition* (grand coalition) in parliament which was an alliance between the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats.

Afro-Germans and Black GIs were not the only population that counted as “Others” in West Germany. Since the early 1960s, guest workers, whose social standing led journalist Ernst Klee to characterize them as the “niggers of Europe,” came from Greece, Portugal, Italy, Yugoslavia and Turkey.⁵⁶ Germans initially assumed guest workers would stay temporarily and animosity towards them grew as increasing numbers opted to remain in Germany with their families. I will return to the history of guest workers in postwar Germany in my discussion of German hip hop and Turkish German author Feridun Zaimoğlu in Chapter Six.

Slavery in the German Imagination

In Fassbinder’s more canonical films that address race – *Katzelmacher*, *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, *Angst essen Seele auf* – the director rejected Germany’s race politics by affirming the presence of non-white characters in German films. People of color were no longer just servants and brutes who confirmed racial and social difference. Their roles, whether central or marginal to the film, revealed West German society’s exploitative relationship to the Other and continuations between racism in Nazi Germany and the postwar period. As I mentioned earlier, *Whity* is unique compared to the other three films because it does not explicitly address racism in West Germany, rather it engages with the construction of race in a uniquely American context – the Hollywood plantation melodrama. Why, after making an excellent point about contemporary capitalism and racism in *Katzelmacher* a year earlier, would Fassbinder then turn his focus to America?

By filming a plantation melodrama, Fassbinder addresses Germany’s age-old fascination with the life of the Black slave. Despite Germans’ implications in slavery,⁵⁷ most Germans consider slavery an American institution known only from books and films. Before the radically different depiction of slavery in the TV miniseries *Roots*,⁵⁸ which premiered in West Germany in 1978, for over a century Germans were most familiar with American slavery as it was depicted in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* – as I mentioned in Chapter One, even Günter Grass read it. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel had a dramatic effect on how African Americans were viewed in Europe. Prior to the book’s publication, former slaves like Frederick Douglass had already been traveling through Europe and telling their life stories. Upon its publication, Stowe’s novel replaced earlier accounts of modern free Blacks in the North with a simplified image of the obedient, child-like Black slave.⁵⁹ Ambassadors for the Black American experience found it difficult to stress their

⁵⁶ Ernst Klee, *Die Nigger Europas. Zur Lage der Gastarbeiter* (Mannheim: Patmos Verlag, 1984).

⁵⁷ See Sabine Broeck, “Travelling Memory: The Middle Passage in German Representation.” *The Massachusetts Review* 44, no. 1/2 (2003): 157-66.

⁵⁸ At the time of its premiere, *Roots* (1977) heralded a new stage in the American racial melodrama because of its more vividly brutal portrayal of slavery. Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*, 10. The television series, which is the most watched program in American history, was bought by German station Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) for 1.5 million DM in 1977. The series was, however, not as popular with German critics who accused it of being a poor adaptation of Alex Haley’s book, a collection of stereotypes and clichés and for portraying a utopian fantasy of Africa. Ironically, German critics had deemed Haley’s book a new *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. See Werner Sollors, “Wurzeln: *Roots* in West Germany,” *American Studies International* 17, no. 3 (1979).

⁵⁹ However, even Heinrich von Kleist’s essay, “Über den Zustand der Schwarzen von Amerika” (On the Condition of Blacks in America) from 1810 relays British author Henri Bolingbroke’s account of American slavery which paints the life of a slave as plentiful and happy compared to the poor in the UK and Ireland.

reality compared to Stowe's portrayal of Blacks as "dependent, long-suffering, and in need of paternalism."⁶⁰

Heike Paul summarizes the effect of Stowe's novel in Germany as the following: "The cultural mobility of Stowe's novel in the mid-nineteenth century thus – instead of adding complexity and flexibility to the German perception of African Americans – reduces the popular image of black people in America to a single, highly generalized and – above all – static stereotype."⁶¹ Although it did address the brutality slaves faced, Stowe's novel also presented slavery as an idyllic and pastoral experience. Before he is sold to the evil slave dealer Simon Legree, Uncle Tom lives at the residence of Arthur Shelby, his owner and childhood friend. Life on Shelby's plantation is portrayed as secure and joyful. According to Paul, this depiction of slavery aligned well with the German empire's paternal relationship to its citizens. Stowe's novel taught Germans that slaves could be completely happy in the care of kind masters; it was the practice of splitting up slave families that she found particularly un-Christian. The fact that the slaves who escape the abuse of Legree in the novel flee to Africa shows that Stowe did not believe there was a future for free Blacks in the U.S. The extent to which Stowe's idyllic depiction of Tom's slave cabin influenced German culture is evident in the many places which later bore its name. At the beginning of the 1900s, in Berlin alone there was a beer garden named Onkel Toms Hütte which would later lend its name to the subway station built in 1929 along with an Onkel Toms Straße.⁶² In 1965, Austro-Hungarian director Géza von Radványi filmed an adaptation of Stowe's novel which maintains the novel's simplified portrayals of race.

More recently, on June 5, 2008, in response to Barack Obama's candidacy for U.S. president in 2008, the left-wing German newspaper Die Tageszeitung printed a picture of the white house on the front page with the title "Onkel Baracks Hütte." After readers criticized the title for being offensive and racist, the newspaper attempted to defend its actions. Journalist Bernd Pickert justified the title by insisting that: "The author [Stowe] was a fervent opponent of slavery, whose novel was recognized worldwide as an indictment of slavery's crimes – not as a book about the stupidity of Blacks."⁶³ And Pickert suggests that only in the 1960s did the term "Uncle Tom" become a bad word, particularly among Blacks. Pickert suggests that until the 1960s, being like "Uncle Tom" would have been something honorable and just because African Americans began using the term negatively does not mean that Germans use it in the same context. Despite Germans' engagement with the Civil Rights and Black Power movements and documentation of "Uncle Tom" being used negatively by Blacks in Germany,⁶⁴ Pickert seems to think that Germans can use the term as if in a vacuum, ignoring Blacks' critique of the novel.

⁶⁰ Jackson, "Introduction: Travelling While Black," 1-3.

⁶¹ Heike Paul, "Cultural Mobility between Boston and Berlin: How Germans Have Read and Reread Narratives of American Slavery," 135.

⁶² Ibid., 138.

⁶³ "Die Autorin war eine glühende Gegnerin der Sklaverei, ihr Roman wurde weltweit als Anklage der Verbrechen der Sklaverei gesehen - nicht als Buch über die Blödheit der Schwarzen." <http://www.taz.de/1/leben/medien/artikel/1/ist-dieser-witz-rassistisch/>. Accessed 8 September 2010.

⁶⁴ Ege, *Schwarz Werden: >>Afroamerikanophilie<< in Den 1960er Und 1970er Jahren*, 108 and 14.

Hollywood and Fassbinder's "Deep South Melodrama"

One might expect that Fassbinder's motivation for tackling the issue of slavery would be to challenge the false representation of the Black subject and his or her experience of oppression as it had been popularized by Stowe's novels and adaptations thereof. Yet, Fassbinder does not cite Stowe's novel or von Radványi's film as an influence. Fassbinder claims his inspiration for filming *Whity* was Raoul Walsh's *Band of Angels* (1957) which he referred to as "one of the loveliest films I've ever seen."⁶⁵ *Band of Angels*'s main protagonist is Amantha Starr, daughter of a plantation owner. When Amantha's father passes away, she discovers that her deceased mother was one of his Black slaves and she is therefore not a legitimate heir to her father's inheritance, but one of his slaves. Amantha is forcefully brought to Louisiana to be sold. At a slave auction she is bought by Hamish Bond, played by Clark Gable. Although Amantha initially shuns Hamish, when he saves her from a deadly thunderstorm she falls in love with him. Like Amantha's deceased father, Hamish is kind to his slaves. Hamish's mulatto housekeeper Michelle insists that the bars on the estate's windows are there to keep the outside world out, and not her in. And Hamish's Black servant Dollie refers to his plantation as a paradise retreat from the city – "the land of honey."⁶⁶

Although *Band of Angels* belongs to the second wave of plantation melodramas, when Hollywood was more sensitive to the portrayal of Blacks, the film is still guilty of reproducing racial stereotypes from older films. If the *Winnetou* films sought to restore the good German, *Band of Angels* seeks to redeem the good white American man. This is evident in the romance between Hamish and Amantha, and in the story of Sidney Poitier's character Rau-Rau. In contrast to most of Hamish's adoring slaves, Rau-Rau despises Hamish because he recognizes that it is precisely Hamish's kindness that keeps the slaves in their bonds. After the Civil War starts and Rau-Rau joins the Union soldiers, he encounters Hamish on the run and intends to turn him in. However, when Hamish reveals the story of how he saved Rau-Rau from a brutal African king while he was a baby, Rau-Rau forgives his slave trading past. The Africa Hamish describes is in stark contrast to the Afro-centric utopia that would be promoted by *Roots* twenty years later.⁶⁷ Rau-Rau eventually helps Hamish escape and be reunited with Amantha. Hamish remarks about Rau-Rau's actions, "I guess he thought he couldn't be free until I was," thus reversing Hegel's *Herr/Knecht Dialektik* (master/slave or lord/bondsman dialectic); instead of the master having to acknowledge his slave's freedom in order to be free, the slave must ensure his master's freedom in order to be free.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Thomsen, *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, 82.

⁶⁶ All dialogue excerpts are based on the DVD release of the film.

⁶⁷ Hamish's description of the inhumanity he witnessed in Africa suggests that he should be forgiven for his awful slave trading past because it was his encounter with the darkness of Africa that made him into the monster he was. He is also a victim of "going native." This recalls Hannah Arendt's arguments in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

⁶⁸ "The lord relates himself mediately to the bondsman through a being [a thing] that is independent, for it is just this which holds the bondsman in bondage; it is his chain from which he could not break free in the struggle, thus proving himself to be dependent, to possess his independence in thinghood. But the lord is the power over this thing ... since he is the power over this thing and this again is the power over the other [the bondsman], it follows that he holds the other in subjection ... the lord, who has interposed the bondsman between it and himself, takes to himself only the dependent aspect of the thing and has the pure enjoyment of it. The aspect of its independence he leaves to the bondsman, who works on it ... for recognition proper the moment is lacking, that what the lord does to the other he also does to himself, and what the bondsman does to himself he should also do to the other ... just as lordship showed that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, so too servitude in its

When Fassbinder expresses his adoration for Walsh's film, in the same interview he describes his own films as stories about people who are oppressed and unhappy but do not have the courage to live differently. In contrast, *Band of Angels* shows oppressed people who are happy and are incapable of living better. Just like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and later *Toxi*, *Band of Angels* implies that inequality and segregation are not necessarily wrong as opposed to an extremist kind of racism. Both Amantha's father and Hamish Bond are portrayed as the good white master. The film's underlying argument is that freedom will only make the slaves lazy, while under the paternal care of kind whites they had structure and a good life, even if they were denied subjectivity; like the female slaves who enjoy sexual relations, what historically was most often rape,⁶⁹ with their white masters.

Fassbinder's relocation of Walsh's plantation melodrama to the West is unusual but not inaccurate. There were small numbers of slaves, especially domestic servants, in the Western frontier.⁷⁰ In fact, setting *Whity* in the West challenges Hollywood's misleading portrayal of racism as existing solely in the South.⁷¹ Yet the film's time frame, 1878, is thirteen years after slavery was abolished. Just like the film's hyperreal setting which conflates the South with the American frontier, its timeline contributes to the film's artifice and inauthenticity.

Although Fassbinder speaks fondly of *Band of Angels*, he turns much of Walsh's film on its head. First of all, Walsh's film opens with establishing shots that help the audience locate the film's setting in the South, in Kentucky's flourishing bluegrass fields. Such idyllic scenes of pastoral prosperity would not fit in a Western. In fact, one of the historical obstacles against the Western expansion of slavery was the environment – cotton crops could not survive in the conditions.⁷² *Whity* does not even begin with an establishing shot of the West, rather it begins with a green screen followed by the credits appearing over a medium close-up of *Whity* laying seemingly lifeless faced-down in the dirt. This opening adds to the film's artificiality. *Whity*'s disembodied voice is heard singing lyrics that foretell the film's violent ending. Rather than affirming racial oppression with a joyful slave spiritual, here music is used to break the connection between the devoted slave and the white master. This opening and *Whity*'s Western setting convey a pessimistic tone. The film's Western setting suggests that the protagonists' relationships and futures are as dead and dried out as the landscape – a dire message compared to the optimism reflected in the decadent plantation estates of Hollywood films.

What is also missing from *Whity* are panning shots of happily waving slaves or even slaves working in fields. Most of the action is limited to constraining, interior spaces like the Nicholson estate, Hanna's room and the saloon. Because Fassbinder forgoes establishing shots of the Nicholson plantation, he goes against the classic Western's tradition of conveying freedom in

consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is...Through work...the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is...he becomes aware that being for-self belongs to *him*, that he himself exists essentially and actually in his own right." The bondsman's/slave's power comes from his ability to work on the object. The lord/master is therefore dependent on the slave's labor and he must recognize this in order to free himself from this dependency. Stephen Houlgate, ed., *The Hegel Reader* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 95-6.

⁶⁹ See Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁷⁰ Sherman W. Savage, "Slavery in the West," in *African Americans on the Western Frontier*, ed. Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway (Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1998).

⁷¹ Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*, 18.

⁷² Savage, "Slavery in the West."

its wide open spaces. Instead, Fassbinder stresses the feeling of being trapped which is accentuated by the many times Whity is framed within the frame by a window or a door as he longingly looks in on the other characters.⁷³

Despite its similar Technicolor and Cinemascope grandeur, compared to *Band of Angels*, Whity is shrouded in grotesque images. According to Herbert Spaich, “Fassbinder takes the rituals [of the Western] and the sentiment implied in the genre and exaggerates them into the realm of the grotesque: the protagonists, caricatures of human existence, are made up like clowns. Günther Kaufmann is at times reminiscent of Al Jolson.”⁷⁴ Spaich’s comparison of the film’s characters to clowns refers to their makeup. The Black cook Marpessa is played by the actress Elaine Baker in blackface. The Nicholsons also wear makeup that is white with a green tint, making them appear undead, which recalls Fassbinder’s comparison of their estate to a mausoleum. Due to their unusual complexion, the Nicholsons’ whiteness seems just as constructed as Marpessa’s Black identity. Their green tint and unnaturally white eyebrows and eyelashes, which Fassbinder had bleached, challenge the belief that there is such a thing as a pure white complexion.

One of the Black stereotypes in *Band of Angels* is the mammy – a jovial, round woman with a grinning face who likens the iconic Aunt Jemima. In contrast, Marpessa does not convey the same warm feelings of maternal, domestic security. She typically has her eyes and mouth open wide, in a look of grotesque surprise. Her black makeup is much darker compared to Kaufmann’s natural complexion. When we first encounter Marpessa, artificial light from behind and above causes her face to appear so dark, that when her head is down while working, the shadow of her large afro adds an additional layer of black completely erasing her facial features, further eliminating her subjectivity. She is not wearing the quintessential mammy’s headscarf, perhaps so that her large afro is even more exaggerated. When Marpessa leans to the right, the large collar of her dress reveals a small spot on her body where the dark makeup was not applied evenly and one sees that her skin color is merely a disguise. Part of her makeup is also rubbed off during a struggle with Frank Nicholson. The acknowledgment that Elaine Baker is in blackface not only foregrounds the constructed nature of race, but allows for the possibility that as a character, Marpessa is not inherently subservient and may also be acting – and even undermining – a certain stereotype of Black popular culture. Blackface is also useful for the diegesis because it is important that Marpessa is darker than Whity in order to exaggerate his dilemma as a “tragic mulatto.”

In this opening scene, Marpessa is in the kitchen preparing food, cutting off the head of a fish. Traditionally the kitchen should be a space of domestic innocence, but Marpessa’s appearance and her work are far from comforting. The camera frames her from the waist to the neck, focusing on her hands and cutting off her head. This medium close-up of her hands has several functions; it focuses on her labor (something one rarely sees in *Band of Angels*) and devalues her individuality suggesting that for the family she is merely a pair of laboring hands. Furthermore, by cutting off her head, equivalence is made between Marpessa and the fish she is butchering. This equivalence between the confined Marpessa and the animals she prepares for

⁷³ Fassbinder also uses this technique when portraying Emmi and Ali’s isolation in *Angst essen Seele auf*.

⁷⁴ Spaich, *Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Leben und Werk*, 146.

the family continues, when the camera pans left and tilts up to reveal a chicken hanging in a cage. With this visual language, Fassbinder addresses the inhumanity of racist living and working conditions.⁷⁵ By substituting the more common figure of the happy smiling mammy with a grotesque Black cook who is clearly distressed by her situation, Fassbinder never tries to suggest that there was anything pleasant about slavery. One imagines that this Black cook is as frightening as the one haunting Oskar in *Die Blechtrommel*. The on-screen sound, what appears to be the buzzing of a fly, supports the scene's dark tone. The presence of flies in the kitchen helps negate any warm feeling of domesticity. The sound of flies also suggests that both the meat and the inhabitants of the house are decaying.

While working, Marpessa starts singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." In plantation melodramas, performances of slave spirituals, especially by Black actors rather than white actors in blackface, were meant to give the films more authenticity. These songs were portrayed as entertainment for whites and a way to make the slaves' labor more enjoyable. Although Marpessa begins singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic", she ends with the song "When the Saints Go Marching In" set to the same melody. It is possible that Fassbinder was not aware that these were two different songs. However, by using blackface, he clearly invokes the tradition of blackface minstrelsy and therefore combining the two songs can be a further attempt at artificiality; another opportunity to reveal the constructed nature of race.

Spaich's comparison of Afro-German actor Günther Kaufmann's performance to that of Al Jolson in *The Jazz Singer* is a comment on Whity's exaggeratedly submissive behavior which appears more like a caricature of Black popular culture. This points to another difference from *Band of Angels*; while *Band of Angels* does not ask us to question the slaves' happiness, Whity does. In Whity, there is no pleasant white master and yet, Whity thanks his master for the whippings all the same. This adds an element of masochism to the film and exaggerates Whity's masquerade. Casting Kaufmann in the role of Whity presents the possibility that audiences might read his performance as natural – such as how Stemmlé fused actress Elfie Fiegert with the role of Toxi.⁷⁶ One of the reasons Fassbinder casts a Black man in the role of Whity might be that Whity's natural complexion stands out as vital compared to the other grotesque characters in the household. Furthermore, it is Whity's sadomasochist relationship with the Nicholsons which challenges a natural reading of Kaufmann's performance.

Dissecting Whity's Character

Throughout much of the film, Whity's behavior resonates with the stereotypical "Uncle Tom." He demonstrates his submissive nature and devotion to his white masters during the

⁷⁵ This comparison recalls a scene in *Onkel Toms Hütte* when during the slave revolt, the master's mulatto mistress burns down the house, but makes sure to free the caged birds first.

⁷⁶ Fiegert was seen as so convincingly embodying the role that her real person and the fictional character are subsumed in the eyes of the director and she is merely listed in the credits as "Toxi." According to Angelica Fenner, the director R.A. Stemmlé did not even tell Toxi she was acting in a film. He merely read her the lines to repeat and told her she was being photographed; Angelica Fenner, "Reterritorializing Enjoyment in the Adenauer Era: Robert A. Stemmlé's Toxi," in *Framing the Fifties: Cinema in a Divided Germany*, ed. John Davidson and Sabine Hake, *Film Europa* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 170.

opening scene, when he enters the kitchen to inform Marpessa that the Nicholsons are not happy with her food. The mother and son have the following exchange:

WHITY: They don't like it.
MARPESSA: There's a lot they don't like.
WHITY: I think you misunderstood me. I want them to like everything that we do for them.⁷⁷

After this brief exchange, Whity addresses his mother's singing with the reproach, "You shouldn't always sing these songs . . . Black songs,"⁷⁸ to which Marpessa responds by spitting in his face and cursing him with "Whity" – his degrading nickname (his real name is Samuel). Fassbinder perhaps chose the nickname "Whity" after having encountered its use, most often spelled "whitey," in leftist student circles. The word "whitey" had been suggested by William Van Deburg as a derogatory term Black revolutionaries could use against whites.⁷⁹

The nickname "Whity" might refer to the character's innocence, represented in a light suit he wears whenever he leaves the estate. His light suit could suggest innocence as merely the opposite of the Nicholsons' evil or innocence as naiveté. One might also interpret "Whity" as a reference to the character's internalized racism. At first, it appears that Whity's belief in the racist system that oppresses him explains his lack of resistance to his situation. Due to his devotion to the family, Whity seems to be what Laura Mulvey refers to as the typical melodramatic hero who does "not fully grasp the forces [he is] up against."⁸⁰ However, I would like to challenge Christian Braad Thomsen's reading of Whity as "the ideal slave type to such a degree that he hardly sees himself as oppressed."⁸¹ According to Thomsen, Whity "thinks his status is natural and just and makes it a point of honour to satisfy his masters."⁸² Perhaps Whity is not really the obedient servant he pretends to be. One must take into account, for example, that although he is a slave, Whity is able to leave the estate whenever he pleases. It is possible that when Whity insists he is content in his current state, this is not a case of the oppressed accepting his role in life as inevitable, but a case of someone who truly enjoys the performance of subservience. Fassbinder has said of oppressive relationships, "to enjoy pain is always cleverer than simply to suffer it. That goes for all minorities..."⁸³ I will come back to this point later in my discussion on sadomasochism in the film.

First, however, I would like to discuss another side of Whity's character that I find just as important as the "Uncle Tom" – the "tragic mulatto." In American literature and film, the mulatto was described as "tragic" because s/he was seen as being trapped between two worlds –

⁷⁷ WHITY: Sie sagen der Pudding schmeckt nicht.

MARPESSA: Denen schmeckt manches nicht.

WHITY: Ich glaube, du verstehst mich nicht. Ich möchte, das ihnen alles gefällt, was wir ihnen machen.

⁷⁸ "Du solltest nicht immer diese Lieder singen...schwarze Lieder."

⁷⁹ Ege, *Schwarz Werden: >>Afroamerikanophilie<< in Den 1960er Und 1970er Jahren*, 104 & 23. Ege describes a flyer written by the SDS in 1968 as an attempt to get black GIs to join their demonstration. German students express understanding if blacks are reluctant to go to demonstrations organized by "whities."

⁸⁰ Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 41.

⁸¹ Thomsen, *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, 76.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Christian Braad Thomsen, "Five Interviews with Fassbinder," in *Fassbinder*, ed. Tony Rayns (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1979), 94.

not entirely Black nor white. According to the “one-drop rule,” which has dominated American discussions about race since 1915, “a person is black if she has a black forebear, and that forebear was black if she had a black forebear, and so on.”⁸⁴ There are many fictional and non-fictional accounts of African Americans who attempted to “pass” as white. This was popular subject matter for Hollywood melodramas like *Band of Angels* and Douglas Sirk’s *Imitation of Life* (1959).⁸⁵ The resolution of this conflict of *Schein* vs. *Sein* (appearance vs. existence) can differ. In *Band of Angels*, Amantha and Hamish presumably leave the U.S. for a place where the former slave master and slave can be together irrespective of race. At the conclusion of *Imitation of Life*, the light-skinned Sarah Jane is finally accepted into the white community after her dark-skinned mother passes away. Just as in *Band of Angels*, the funeral is used as a setting for the mulatto’s confrontation with his/her racial identity; as if either the Black or white self were being buried.

Thus, the mulatto is considered tragic not only because s/he is “trapped” between two identities, but in order to successfully join the white community – a rare occurrence – s/he must kill the Black identity. Unlike Amantha and Sarah Jane, however, Whity makes no attempt to pass as white. Amantha believes her claim to the Starr family name should secure her status and keep her from being treated like other Blacks. In contrast, Whity denies himself the name Nicholson. Read negatively, his rejection of the Nicholson name could be a further expression of internalized racism and an act of submission: regardless of who his father is, he is Black. Read positively, Whity’s refusal to perform whiteness further stresses the performance aspect of his Black identity.

Whity’s position as an American mulatto is what makes him so different from the other ethnic minorities in Fassbinder’s films. The Othered characters in *Katzelmacher*, *Angst essen Seele auf* and *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* are Others-from-Without – a Greek and Moroccan guest worker and African American GIs respectively.⁸⁶ These Others are never really familiar to the Germans in the films nor are they accepted as belonging to the German community. Whity, however, is an Other-from-Within. He is the slave “... within the social system, and even the blood ... a native-born slave, the subject-other within the household itself.”⁸⁷ Whity’s mulatto identity is at the center of his melodramatic state. His presence is a constant reminder of Ben’s desire for the Black body, a desire which contradicts white superiority. Just as how, in *Imitation of Life*, Annie’s performance of the Black maid allows for Lora’s career to take off, Whity’s performance of the Black servant relieves the tension in the household by supporting the ruse of white superiority.

⁸⁴ Naomi Zack, *Race and Mixed Race* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 19.

⁸⁵ Sirk was a German émigré whose work Fassbinder also admired. See Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*.

⁸⁶ I am using the terms “Other-from-Within” and “Other-from-Without” as they are defined by Michelle M. Wright. An “Other-from-Within” is seen as different, but still belonging to the national community, while an “Other-from-Without” is completely foreign. Wright, “Others-from-within from Without: Afro-German Subject Formation and the Challenge of a Counter-Discourse.”

⁸⁷ Richard Middleton, *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music* (New York; London: Routledge, 2006), 71.

Destabilizing Racial Hierarchy with Sexuality and Sadomasochism

Whity may start out as obedient as Poitier's character Rau-Rau in *Band of Angels*, but he eventually carries out the rebellion Rau-Rau only considers. Fassbinder's resistance to Poitier's role as the submissive, harmless Black man is one of the links between Whity and the Blaxploitation genre. In particular, as I mentioned earlier, Whity resonates with Melvin Van Peebles' *Sweet Sweetback Badaasssss Song*. Both films were shot within a very close time span. Although the script for *Sweet Sweetback* was finished in March 1970, shooting did not take place until May and June of the same year. Fassbinder's Whity, on the other hand, was shot during April 1970, sandwiched in between the writing and shooting of *Sweet Sweetback*. It is entirely possible that Melvin van Peebles knew Fassbinder at the time or was at least familiar with his work. Van Peebles was married to the German actress Maria Marx prior to filming *Sweet Sweetback* and he had worked in Europe for a time. His film about racial discrimination in the US army, *The Story of a Three Day Pass* (1968), is considered one of the first Blaxploitation films and was shot in France. Van Peebles' familiarity with German *Sprachgesang* and his creation of a short film for German television suggest that he had experience working in Germany as a filmmaker as well.⁸⁸ As far as Fassbinder's familiarity with Blaxploitation films, at least one early Blaxploitation film premiered in West Germany before Whity was filmed – Gordon Flemyng's *The Split* screened in March 1969.

A strong link between Whity and *Sweetback*'s response to the subservient, "castrated" Black characters typically found on the screen is the importance both films place on sexuality. *Sweetback* is a sex worker in a brothel. Just as Whity begins with a kind of "naming ceremony," *Sweet Sweetback* opens with a troubling scene where young Sweetback, played by Van Peebles' son Mario, gets his nickname while being seduced, possibly raped, by a Black female prostitute. After the opening credits, one sees a now adult Sweetback performing in an interracial, queer sex show at the same brothel. When Sweetback is on the run from police, he often uses sex as a means for survival, for example when he uses sex to "battle" a white female biker. The purpose of Sweetback's hypersexualized nature is contended. Van Peebles admits attempting to cut production costs by marketing *Sweet Sweetback* as a pornographic film. This could partly explain the numerous sex scenes, which Van Peebles insists were not staged. However, critics have also suggested that Sweetback's sexuality was conceived to counter Poitier's "castrated" characters with a character for whom sex is power. At the time of the film's release, many young Black men identified with Sweetback positively and it became fashionable to refer to men who were especially successful with women as "Sweetbacks."⁸⁹

Actually, the term "sweetback" had already existed in the Black community prior to Van Peebles' film. Steven Knadler describes the sweetback as "a much more ambiguously gendered and sexualized hustler, whom the 'younger generation' of Bohemian artists fashioned into their own 'subcultural epistemology.'"⁹⁰ Knadler suggests that the sweetback character was used by

⁸⁸ Darius James, *That's Blaxploitation!: Roots of the Baadasssss 'Tude (Rated X by an All-Whyte Jury)* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 1,7.

⁸⁹ Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*, 105.

⁹⁰ Steven Knadler, "Sweetback Style: Wallace Thurman and a Queer Harlem Renaissance," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 48, no. 4 (2002): 900.

some male writers of the Harlem Renaissance who linked sexual deviance with race consciousness and wished to “counter white supremacist theories of the black man’s emasculation” not with hypersexualized characters but with a “queer black male body that is ... ‘politically volatile’ precisely because its desires are unpredictable and in excess of the normative discourses of race and heterosexuality.”⁹¹ By naming his protagonist Sweetback, Van Peebles might have also been drawing on this link between radical politics, race and queer sexuality in order to make his protagonist even more dynamic – the theme of queer sexuality will be discussed at length below.

Like Sweetback, Whity also draws power from his sexuality. As I mentioned earlier, compared to the other Nicholsons who all appear sickly, Whity is quite vital. One would expect that as a servant, Whity would wear a white or at least light colored uniform in the Nicholson estate – for white is associated with cleanliness and order. The fact that he wears his white suit in his leisure time and a red suit while in the estate stresses this vitality in contrast to the Nicholsons and his potential for rebellion. As a slave, Whity’s source of power is that the Nicholsons not only depend on his labor and his loyalty (confiding in him with their darkest secrets), but they are also unable to resist his sexual appeal; an appeal that can be attributed to his muscular physique, exoticness and submissive nature. Whity exemplifies the paradox of the Black male slave who generates, in the white imaginary, competing fantasies of power (because he is enslaved) and submission (because he is the hypersexual Other).

All four of the Nicholsons are both excited by Whity’s body and afraid of his potential to harm them. Whity’s behavior during his intimate encounters with the Nicholsons suggests a sadomasochist relationship between the Black slave and his white masters. Anne McClintock’s arguments about sadomasochism in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* are helpful for understanding Whity. McClintock describes the relationship between Arthur Munby, a middle-class businessman, and the domestic servant Hanna Cullwick in Victorian England.⁹² The important lesson I gather from McClintock’s reading of Cullwick and Munby’s love affair is that their sadomasochist (S/M) relationship was not about a powerful master dominating a weak servant. As McClintock states:

[...] with its exaggerated emphasis on costumery, script and scene, S/M reveals that social order is unnatural, scripted and invented [...] Since S/M is the theatrical exercise of social contradiction, it is self-consciously antinatural, not in the sense that it violates natural law, but in the sense that it denies the existence of natural law in the first place. S/M presents social power as sanctioned, neither by nature, fate nor God, but by artifice

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Cullwick was not Munby’s servant. The two mutually engaged in a variety of S/M role playing games. Cullwick cross-dressed as an upper-class lady, as a man and as a Black slave. She wore a chain around her neck and a leather slave-band to demonstrate her submission to Munby. McClintock points out, however, that Cullwick was not Munby’s play-thing whom he taught to fulfill his desires. McClintock argues that it is important to recognize Cullwick’s agency in their relationship. Munby was driven by a compulsion to relive his childhood intimacy with and value for female domestic labor. Cullwick was driven by a need to stress the value of her labor. In Victorian England, where female domestic labor was undervalued and made invisible, Cullwick’s compulsive counting of the boots she cleaned each year, her posing in dirty clothes and her insistence on wearing a dirty slave-band in plain view when serving her employers can be read as defiant actions. Furthermore, in her diaries Cullwick expresses the freedom she enjoyed from her cross-dressing: whether walking London’s streets as a maid or traveling with Munby dressed as a male driver, she could move more freely.

and convention and thus as radically open to historical change. S/M flouts social order with its provocative confession that the edicts of power are reversible.⁹³

Cullwick was adamant in the fact that she was not really Munby's slave; she chose to masquerade as his slave – an agreement that was meant to be privately shared between the two. When, for example, Munby expected Cullwick to pretend to be his maid in the presence of a third party, she obstinately refused. And when the two eventually did marry, Cullwick insisted on receiving wages for her labor. Thus, in a relationship that might be read as the male master oppressing the female subordinate, Cullwick was just as much if not more in control.

Whity's relationship to the Nicholsons can be read against Cullwick's relationship to Munby. Whity certainly performs the obedient servant. He calls Ben "Massa,"⁹⁴ he passively accepts the Nicholsons' abuse and on several occasions he verbally justifies their mistreatment of him by calling himself a "nigger," saying that he does not deserve better and that Blacks have no humanity. Nevertheless, especially in his sexual interactions with the Nicholsons, Whity expresses the capability and right to rebel. I believe the sadomasochist character of Whity's interactions with the Nicholsons suggests that Whity's overly obedient behavior is not a real reflection of his subservience; rather his exaggerated performance of the slave points to the construction of social inequalities and to their possible reversal.

In an interview with Norbert Sparrow in 1977, using women as an example, Fassbinder actually confirms his interest in strategies of resistance, what de Certeau might call "tactics,"⁹⁵ which oppressed people use to make their oppression more bearable. The ability of the oppressed to manipulate what takes place in their, albeit constricted, relations with their oppressors, complicates simple understandings of oppression that insist on binaries like strong oppressor/weak oppressed: "Because they [women] have long been oppressed, they've found means for coming to terms with their situation. And if you really portray these opportunities, that says more about oppression than a simple black-white/good-bad picture of the poor woman oppressed by a tyrannical man."⁹⁶

In Whity's case, he is aware of his sexual allure for the Nicholsons and his consent to/refusal of their advances lends him a degree of power. Contrary to the real experiences of slaves in America, Whity can choose whether or not he will engage his masters' sexual desires. Kate tries to flirt with him on several occasions, once while cleaning his wounds after he is whipped and on another occasion when she corners him in a room and attempts to kiss him. In both instances, Whity avoids her advances either by averting his eyes or leaving the scene.

⁹³ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Routledge: 1995), 143-4.

⁹⁴ Cullwick also called Munby "Massa."

⁹⁵ Michel de Certeau defines a tactic as "a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality... A tactic insinuates itself onto the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance... The 'proper' is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing.' Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities.'" Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1984), xix.

⁹⁶ "Weil sie lange Zeit unterdrückt wurden, haben sie Möglichkeiten gefunden, damit fertig zu werden, und wenn man genau diese Möglichkeiten vorführt, sagt das mehr über Unterdrückung als eine simple Schwarz-Weiß/Gut-Schlecht-Zeichnung der armen, von einem tyrannischen Mann unterdrückten Frau." Norbert Sparrow, "'Ich lasse die Zuschauer fühlen und denken': Rainer Werner Fassbinder über Douglas Sirk, Jerry Lewis und Jean-Luc Godard," in *Fassbinder über Fassbinder*, ed. Robert Fischer (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 2004), 409.

Whity seems more keen on the Nicholson men. During his sexual encounters with his brothers, he is clearly the more dominant one determining the rules. When Whity and the otherwise catatonic son Davy are alone in the horse stable, Whity brushes one of the horses and Davy takes the brush to do the same, giving Whity the opportunity to touch Davy's hand. By brushing the horse, Davy willingly puts himself in the position of servant, just as later in the film when he is also seen peeling potatoes. In Barbara Mennel's reading of *Angst essen Seele auf*, she argues that Fassbinder often uses masochist aesthetics to allow the liberal German to reject racism by sacrificing himself for the Other.⁹⁷ Aside from an act of sympathy by placing himself in the same rank as Whity, Davy's act of brushing the horse also symbolizes something erotic. The horse seems a substitute for Whity; a reference to the animalistic vitality he represents for Davy who is weak in comparison. Davy then submissively sinks to his knees and starts kissing Whity's hand. Whity coyly slaps him, as if to reject his advances, only so that he may initiate the encounter as he proceeds to caress Davy's hair and kiss him.

When Frank attempts to initiate a sexual encounter with Whity, Frank also adopts a submissive role. In one scene, Frank is in his bedroom dressed in his mother's lingerie. His clothes, makeup and shaved eyebrows align him with queer subculture which he makes no attempt to hide. His lingerie is actually similar to that worn by Hanna – a similarity that suggests Frank would like to win Whity's love by substituting himself for the prostitute. Frank sits on his bed with his legs open in an inviting posture. Frank's cross-dressing and his wearing of boots in bed clearly indicate that this is another staging and instance of S/M. Although Frank signals the encounter, how far it proceeds depends on Whity. Frank bids Whity, "Come here my little one and comb my hair. You're not allowed to hurt me, okay? Do I have soft hands, Whity?"⁹⁸ Here, Frank clearly places himself in the feminine role, asking Whity to comb his hair and admire his soft hands. Frank appeals to Whity's care-giving nature while simultaneously acknowledging Whity's strength and potential to harm him which both frightens and arouses him.

While Whity combs his hair, Frank once again requests that Whity kill his father. In a previous scene, in which Frank and Whity were in the horse stable, Frank sets up the proposition – promising Whity financial gain for the deed. It is when Whity walks away from Frank while in his bedroom, refusing Frank's request to kill his father, that Frank tries to slip out of his submissive role and invoke dominance via racial superiority, cursing him with "Bleib stehen dreckiger Neger!" (Stay put, you dirty nigger). If Whity were merely an obedient servant, he might have begged for Frank's forgiveness. However, a defiant Whity merely leaves the room. Later, Whity even ignores Kate's reproaches for his having offended Frank. Frank's association with queer subculture and his mistreatment of Whity complicate assumptions that there is a necessary alliance between sexual and ethnic minorities.

By far the most suggestive sexual scene does not take place between Whity and his lover Hanna, towards whom he is surprisingly passive, but between Whity and his father Ben. In a scene I would like to examine more closely, Ben initially whips Davy for spying on his parents during sex. Whity interrupts the beating, offering himself up to be whipped in Davy's place. Ben

⁹⁷ Barbara Mennel, "Masochistic Fantasy and Racialized Fetish in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*," in *One Hundred Years of Masochism*, ed. Michael C. and Carl Niekerk Finke (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 192.

⁹⁸ "Komm her mein Kleiner und kämm mir die Haare. Du darfst mir nicht weh tun, ja? Hab ich zarte Hände, Whity?"

agrees to Whity's request and tells him to get undressed, after which Whity takes off his shirt. This is one of several times Whity's naked torso is displayed. In a later scene in Hanna's room, he lies on her bed in an open shirt and holds out a handful of money, propositioning her for sex. Instead of focusing in on the money or the female at whom desire is typically directed, the camera pans 180 degrees revealing a medium-close up of Whity's face and naked torso. The fact that this is shot without cuts makes the pace of the scene especially slow and draws attention to the voyeur's desire to consume the Black male. The cover for Von Radványi's *Onkel Toms Hütte* also exemplifies this desire to see the naked abused body of the slave. It features the backside of a Black man's nude muscular body as he stands with his hands chained behind his back. Depicted from behind, the Black man becomes a faceless sexual object.

As Whity gets undressed, Ben plays with the whip – a phallic symbol and a sadomasochist prop which is also carried by one of the cowboys, played by Fassbinder. During the whipping scene, the camera frames Ben and Whity from a low frontal angle. Because of this camera angle, Ben appears behind Whity and off to the left and only their torsos are visible. The fact that Whity is topless and one cannot see his lower body makes this appear to be a sexual act. When Ben whips Whity in Davy's place, the whipping stands in for the sexual intercourse that the impotent Ben is unable to perform in bed. While his wife fails to arouse him, Ben clearly gets pleasure from beating Whity. During the beating he yells, "Schrei, Whity, schrei" (Scream Whity, scream) and he only stops once Whity lets out one final scream suggestive of a climax. Ben concludes the act with a patronizing comment about his performance which likens pillow talk between two lovers: "Das war doch schon ganz gut Whity" (That was pretty good, huh Whity).

Although Whity is beaten in this scene, he still exhibits a certain amount of strength. Like Cullwick's orchestration of her obedience, Whity chooses when and where he is beaten. And similar to Cullwick's counting of the boots she cleaned over time, Whity proudly exhibits his strength. He can take the blows without being tied down like Davy was. Just as in the scene where Whity lays on Hanna's bed, during the whipping Whity allows Ben to receive pleasure from this exhibition of his body. His awareness and control of his sexual allure is a large part of his power for it counters white supremacist ideology. During American slavery, sexual control was typically used to reproduce enslavement and racial subordination.⁹⁹ As an erotic act, whipping Whity allows Ben to enact his sexual attraction to the Black body, while also beating Black male sexuality into submission and therefore stifling the castration threat.¹⁰⁰ The flipside of white men's idolization of Black masculinity is fear. As Kobena Mercer suggests: "the big black phallus is a threat not only to the white master (who shrinks in importance from the thought that the subordinate Black male is more potent and sexually powerful than he), but also to civilization

⁹⁹ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, 84.

¹⁰⁰ It seems that the castration threat posed by the Black male body is actually realized in Fassbinder's last film, *Querelle* (1982) which is based on a novel of the same name by Jean Genet. In *Querelle*, Kaufmann plays Nono, a Black owner of a brothel with whom men must play dice if they would like to sleep with his wife. If Nono wins, he is allowed to rape the men. Nono, a professed homophobe, claims it is not he who is gay, but the men who allow him to rape them. According to Nono, he participates in this ritual so that he can say all of the men his wife sleeps with are assholes. Upon learning that Querelle had intercourse with Nono, Querelle's brother Robert beats him and declares, "You let a nigger fuck you." Although Querelle has other sexual relations with men, it appears to trouble his brother more that Nono is Black than that he is a man. In *Whity* the white man is able to calm his fears of Black sexuality through physical and verbal abuse; in *Querelle* the Black man is able to turn the tables.

itself, since the ‘bad object’ represents a danger to white womanhood and therefore miscegenation and racial degeneration.”¹⁰¹ The threat Whity poses to white female chastity is demonstrated by Kate’s attraction to him. During the whipping, Kate spies on the scene from the balcony and exclaims, “Er läßt sich für Davy schlagen, Wahnsinn!” (He’s letting himself be beaten for Davy, crazy!). This “Wahnsinn”, which seems like more appropriate language for a teenage girl admiring her idol, seems to be a trademark for Hanna’s attraction to racial Others – she also yells it during a sexual encounter with Garcia, during which the Mexican “doctor” hits her. It appears that both Ben and Kate can only reach sexual climax with a racial Other and not with each other.

While Black male audiences derived a sense of empowerment and positive identification from Sweetback’s many sex scenes, what kind of enjoyment would a white German audience derive from these scenes of submission and subjection? Because slaves in America were considered property, they were unable to consent to or resist (sexual) violence.¹⁰² Their lack of agency combined with the myth of the hypersexual Black meant that slaves were considered “always willing.” According to Saidiya Hartman, the “simulation of agency and the enactment of willful submission” was a typical occurrence.¹⁰³ However, Whity does not just consent to the whipping, he requests it. If Whity’s willful submission was meant to relieve white viewers of the guilt of objectifying the Black body that would have merely justified racial oppression and such a catharsis would be contrary to Fassbinder’s intentions. Instead, Whity’s willful submission could have something to do with Fassbinder’s desire for Kaufmann.

Fassbinder’s Troubled Relationship to Günther Kaufmann

While Van Peebles portrays a queer Black male, a sweetback, in order to empower Black masculinity, this action is complicated when the creator of the queer Black rebel is a queer, white director. Several scholars have addressed the ambivalence in queer white portrayals of hypersexual Others.¹⁰⁴ Reflecting about the tendency for gay authors to fantasize about gay Black men, Wolfgang Popp draws a comparison between the Black man and the sailor.¹⁰⁵

The images of masculinity that sailors and dark-skinned men have in common are that both concern themselves with societal outsiders: the sailor is phantasmatically located on the ship, in a society of men that is relatively secluded from the external and everyday world; the dark skinned man, merely because of his ‘being different’ and most of the time also because of corresponding discrimination, is an outsider, and in Europe, a member of a minority, By bringing themselves phantasmatically in (sexual) relation to these outsiders, through solidarity with them, as it were, homosexual readers may console and

¹⁰¹ Mercer, “Skin Head Sex Thing: Racial Difference and the Homoerotic Imaginary,” 191.

¹⁰² Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, 81.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰⁴ See the discussion of Robert Mapplethorpe in Mercer, “Skin Head Sex Thing: Racial Difference and the Homoerotic Imaginary.” And Sieg’s discussion of Hubert Fichte and Ulrike Ottinger in *Ethnic Drag*.

¹⁰⁵ It is no coincidence that these two marginal figures, the queer Black man and the sailor, encounter each other in *Querelle*.

fatasize themselves over and beyond their own experiences of discrimination as sexual outsiders in the social reality of life.¹⁰⁶

Kobena Mercer's analysis of Robert Maplethorpe's photos of Black male nudes sheds some additional light on the nexus between the desire for Black bodies and homosexuality. Mercer explains it as the following: thanks to Laura Mulvey's contribution to feminist film theory, we now understand that:

The image of the female nude can thus be understood not so much as a representation of (hetero)sexual desire, but as a form of objectification which articulates masculine hegemony and dominance over the very apparatus of representation itself...The fetishistic logic of mimetic representation, which makes present for the subject what is absent in the real, can thus be characterized in terms of a masculine fantasy of mastery and control over the 'objects' depicted and represented in the visual field...This frisson of (homo)sexual sameness transfers erotic investment in the fantasy of mastery from gender to racial difference.¹⁰⁷

For the white homosexual, the fantasy of mastery cannot be made possible via gender difference but racial difference:

Maplethorpe appropriates elements of commonplace racial stereotypes in order to regulate, organize, prop up and fix the process of erotic aesthetic objectification in which the black man's flesh becomes burdened with the task of symbolizing the transgressive fantasies and desires of the white gay male subject. The glossy, shining, fetishized surface of black skin thus serves and services a white male desire to look and to enjoy the fantasy of mastery precisely through the scopic intensity that the pictures solicit.¹⁰⁸

An example of this phenomenon in German Studies can be found in the works of Hubert Fichte.¹⁰⁹

If the white German homosexual's fetishization of Black men has to do with a "fantasy of mastery," it is not surprising that this fantasy is often staged in the form of sadomasochism. In S/M, the skin of the Black man actually serves as one of the fetish objects. "According to [Homi] Bhabha, unlike the sexual fetish per se, whose meanings are usually hidden as a hermeneutic secret, skin color functions as 'the most visible of fetishes.'"¹¹⁰ Mercer notes, for example, that the clothes of fetishism are invariably black which "suggests a desire to simulate or imitate black skin." If, as McClintock argues, sadomasochist play pretends to the absence of social mores,

¹⁰⁶ Wolfgang Popp, "Homosexual Images of Masculinity," in *Conceptions of Postwar German Masculinity*, ed. Jerome Roy (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 253.

¹⁰⁷ Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Postions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), 176.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Katrin Sieg does an analysis of sadomasochism and representations of gay racial Others in Fichte's radio plays in *Ethnic Drag*.

¹¹⁰ Bhabha quoted in Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Postions in Black Cultural Studies*, 183.

perhaps simulating Black identities helps these efforts; for as I mentioned in Chapter One, Black sexuality is viewed as less restrained than normative sexuality.

Mercer later revised some of his earlier arguments about Maplethorpe's work. In his reconsideration, he concluded that the ambivalence found in white gay representations of ethnic difference does not occur "'inside' the text....but as a complex 'structure of feeling' experienced across the relations between authors, texts and readers – in relations that are always contingent, context-bound and historically specific."¹¹¹ Thus, in some of these ambivalent representations, it is possible to find political solidarity. For an example thereof, Mercer refers to Jean Genet's only film *Un Chant D'Amour* (1950). In one scene, a Black man engages in what Mercer describes as a "masturbatory dance through the scopophilic gaze of the [white] prison guard."¹¹² In an earlier essay, Mercer read this scene as the Black man functioning as "'a stereotype in the fetishistic axis of the look...subjected to a pornographic exercise of colonial power."¹¹³ Revising this argument he adds:

the ambivalence of ethnicity has a central role to play in the way that Genet uses race to figure the desire for freedom beyond the prisonhouse of marginality. Once located in relation to the anticolonial subtext of his plays of this period, such as *The Balcony* and *The Blacks*, Genet's textual practice must be seen as his mode of participation in the liberation struggles of the postwar era.¹¹⁴

Fassbinder's vague relationship with Kaufmann reveals a similar ambivalence in his portrayal of Whity. In his autobiography *Günther Kaufmann: Der weiße Neger vom Hasenberg* (Günther Kaufmann: The White Negro¹¹⁵ from Hasenberg), Kaufmann claims Fassbinder was attracted to him early on in their professional relationship and that Fassbinder gave him privileged treatment compared to the other actors in the antitheater. Kaufmann recalls that during the shooting of Whity, Fassbinder planned that the two would share a hotel room, which could provide him with an opportunity to make advances at Kaufmann.¹¹⁶ Kaufmann speaks candidly of several instances when Fassbinder forced him into intimate scenarios with the threat that he would otherwise replace the actor with someone else. Kaufmann suggests he was fully aware of Fassbinder's desire for him, which he exploited in order to get more roles – perhaps the way

¹¹¹ Ibid., 189.

¹¹² Ibid., 217. A similar instance of interracial sadomasochism takes place in Hubert Fichte's radio play *Pedro Claver* (1982). Through a reversal of colonial roles – the Spanish priest Claver asks the African Manuel to whip him – the Christian promise of elevation through suffering is fulfilled as the normally oppressed Black slave gets his turn at being the oppressor.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Genet was very politically active and a vocal advocate for the Black Panther Party. In 1970, he travelled to the U.S. and on several occasions, spoke on the behalf of Panthers facing prosecution. Genet was generally shocked by the racial discrimination and violence he witnessed in the US. He also voiced disappointment over whites' lack of commitment to the BPP's guerilla fight. During one speech, Genet even claimed "I am a black whose skin happens to be white, but I am definitely a black," Robert Sandarg, "Jean Genet and the Black Panther Party," *Journal of Black Studies* 16, no. 3 (1986): 270.

¹¹⁵ The "White Negro" in Kaufmann's title refers to his biracial heritage – his mother was a white German, his father a Black GI.

¹¹⁶ Watson refers to Kaufmann as Fassbinder's lover at the time of shooting. According to Watson, Kaufmann then ended his relationship with Fassbinder and became involved with Peer Raben. See Watson, *Understanding Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Film as Private and Public Art*, 85; 94. Thomsen also claims that Kaufman was Fassbinder's lover and that *Die bitteren Tränen der Petra van Kant* (The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant, 1972), a story about a lesbian couple, drew on Fassbinder's relationship to Kaufmann. Thomsen, *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, 20.

Whity exploits the Nicholsons. Simultaneously, Fassbinder exploited Kaufmann, someone with no acting experience prior to his involvement in the antitheater. Fassbinder was aware that, if Kaufmann did not give in to his romantic advances, he could just as easily hinder Kaufmann's rising star as he helped propel it. And this was not the first time a man had been attracted to Kaufmann, nor was it the first time he used his sexual appeal in order to get favors from men. When he was a sailor, one of his navy superiors agreed to pay for his driver's license in return for some time alone together during private driving lessons.

Fassbinder's complicated relationship with Kaufmann is not the only instance when the director sought out a romance with a dark-skinned actor. He was also involved with El Hedi ben Salem, a Moroccan who was first Fassbinder's production assistant and then played the lead in *Angst essen Seele auf*.¹¹⁷ El Hedi ben Salem also played a small role in Fassbinder's *Faustrecht der Freiheit* when the gay protagonists travel to Morocco and solicit a male prostitute – a scene which addresses the homosexual Western man's desire for the exotic Other.¹¹⁸ It is worth asking, in both the case of his collaboration with Kaufmann and with El Hedi ben Salem, what motivated Fassbinder to work with such inexperienced actors? Was there perhaps an underlying desire for the dark-skinned Other which Fassbinder could appease by employing such actors in his films? Or is his employment of these actors merely linked to his greater interest in marginal characters? If a director gives a role to an unknown actor, it gives the director more power because he can make him and just as well unmake him. In fact, Kaufmann's slighted teenage ambitions of becoming an entertainer likely made him more vulnerable to Fassbinder's promises of stardom.¹¹⁹ Thomsen claims Fassbinder thought "he could atone for society's abuse of these outsiders and in his films pull them from the edge of society and into the limelight and turn them into film stars."¹²⁰ The suggestion that Fassbinder had a particular fascination with Black popular culture is taken up in Eva Demski's novel *Afra* (1992).¹²¹

What are most interesting about Kaufmann's autobiography are its omissions. He brags about his allure for both men and women and alludes to romantic encounters with Fassbinder, but insists that he is strictly heterosexual. At times, he expresses anger over Fassbinder's often racist behavior in his presence; for example Fassbinder called him his "Bavarian Negro" and once during the shooting of an especially difficult scene in the film *Querelle*, Fassbinder tried to distract Kaufmann by playing the German pop song "I am the German Negro."¹²² Yet, while

¹¹⁷ Thomsen, *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, 18.

¹¹⁸ In *Fox and His Friends*, Fox (played by Fassbinder) goes to Morocco with his boyfriend Eugen. A Moroccan man (played by ben Salem) catches Fox's eye. He and Eugen evaluate his physical attributes, much like white buyers at a slave auction, and decide to take him back to their room. However, their plans are disappointed when a hotel employee informs them that Moroccans are not allowed in the hotel. Ironically, Fox and Eugen, who had just been treating the Moroccan like an exotic sexual object, then become upset by the hotel's racist policies.

¹¹⁹ Kaufmann had wanted to become a trumpet player as a young man and his music teacher felt he had a promising future in music. His step-father, however, did not agree that being a musician was a respected enough occupation and insisted that Kaufmann become a printer's apprentice. Gabriele Droste, *Günther Kaufmann: Der Weiße Neger vom Hasenberg* (Munich: Diana Verlag, 2004), 42-3.

¹²⁰ Thomsen, *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, 20-1.

¹²¹ *Afra*, an Afro-German child of a black GI, escapes the provincialism of her small Bavarian village by moving to Munich. There, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, she encounters several outrageous avant-garde artists in a parody of the antitheater. *Afra* muses at how while in her village she was excluded because of her skin color, in the Munich theater scene she is included for the same reason. Eva Demski, *Afra: Roman in fünf Bildern* (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt, 1992).

¹²² The song, by Joachim Witt, is from the album *Edelweiß* (1982). The lyrics are: Hast Du Lust, Guten Tag zu sagen/ Hast Du Lust, einen Tanz zu wagen/ Hast Du Lust, mir den Arm zu geben/ Hast Du Lust, mich mal hochzuheben? / Hast Du Lust, mir den Kopf zu kraulen/ Hast Du Lust, mir in's G'sicht zu schauen/ Hast Du Mut, mit mir den Takt zu schlagen/ Ich möchte Dich jetzt durch die Menge tragen/ Ich bin der Deutsche Neger, Ah – Uh/ Gib' mir den Stoß, den ich zum Leben brauche/ Laß mich verliebt Dir meine Liebe hauchen/ Ich brauch den Ruck-Zuck um

Kaufmann does share painful stories from childhood taunting, this son of a Black GI whom he never met does not really reflect on what it was like working as one of the few Afro-German actors of the time period, let alone being typecast as the Black GI in Fassbinder's films. His lack of reflection about his experiences growing up an Afro-German in the postwar era is perhaps a result of the lack of community for and dialogue about Black Germans prior to the 1980s.

In the sexual scenes I discussed, Whity's sexuality is often emphasized in a way that reproduces negative stereotypes about Black men. For example, in two scenes in the horse stable, his brothers touch the horse in the *mise-en-scène* either as a substitute for or an initiation to touching Whity, suggesting something animalistic about him. This recalls an observation Frantz Fanon makes in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon remarks, "I have always been struck by the speed with which 'handsome young Negro' turns into 'young colt' or 'stallion.'"¹²³ Fassbinder's attempt to portray sexuality during slavery with a critique of racism might have been underwritten with his personal desire for Kaufmann. It was radical of Fassbinder to diverge from portrayals of the willing Black woman and the violent Black male rapist in classical Hollywood films by foregoing heterosexual sex scenes and instead implying sex between the master and the male slave. Queering the white master undermines the power of the dominant patriarchal and heteronormative narrative. Yet, the voyeuristic scenes of Whity's half-naked body and his consent to his subjection seem to fulfill white fantasies about the "always willing" Black Other. Perhaps this is the kind of ambiguity which Mercer finds in his analysis of Robert Mapplethorpe's and Jean Genet's work. Mercer asks, "Under what conditions does eroticism mingle with political solidarity? When does it produce an effect of empowerment? And when does it produce an effect of disempowerment?"¹²⁴ He concludes that "the struggle for democratic agency and subjectivity always entails the negotiation of ambivalence."¹²⁵

Oppressed Victim or Blaxploitation Anti-Hero?

While Herbert Spaich compares Whity's obedient behavior to minstrelsy, I argue that Whity's character is more complicated and resonates with the strong protagonists in Blaxploitation films. Hollywood films like *Band of Angels* offered the kind slave master as an explanation for the slaves' complacent behavior. Blaxploitation films, however, made it explicit that the Black man allows himself to be used by whites because he has been conditioned to accept this exploitation and knows no other way to survive. For example, Eithne Quinn describes a scene in *Superfly* (1972) which exemplifies the same "self-conscious internalization of racial inequality" that we see in Whity: "'That honky's using me,' he [Eddie] says of their white drug wholesaler. 'So what? You know, I'm glad he's using me . . . People been using me all my life.'"¹²⁶

meinen Trieb zu lenken/ Das Huhn macht Tuck-T-uck, um uns ein Ei zu schenken/ Ich bin der Deutsche Neger, Ah – Uh/ Sassa – Ah Lyrics from . <http://www.magistrix.de/lyrics/Joachim%20Witt/Ich-Bin-Der-Deutsche-Neger-153128.html>. Accessed 1 May 2011.

¹²³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 167.

¹²⁴ Mercer, "Skin Head Sex Thing: Racial Difference and the Homoerotic Imaginary," 199.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Quinn, "'Tryin' to Get Over': *Super Fly*, Black Politics, and Post-Civil Rights Film Enterprise," 97.

In an interview with Christian Braad Thomsen, Fassbinder stated “relationships between people are always sado-masochistic as a direct result of their upbringing.”¹²⁷ Fassbinder portrays Whity as someone who has turned his subservient situation into a game. He can take pleasure in his oppression while knowing that he has the strength to switch the power dynamics. Compared to *Band of Angels*, with *Whity* we progress from the Black subject in Hollywood films who is happy yet unaware of his/her oppression (Amantha) to a Black subject who is aware of his oppression and has learned how to use his position to his advantage (Whity). While Whity does draw on common Black stereotypes from American literature and film, such as the “Uncle Tom” and the “tragic mulatto,” at some point the film departs from the tradition of containing Black masculinity, to liberating it as in Blaxploitation films.

Before I examine Whity’s rebellion, I would like to return briefly to *Sweet Sweetback*. Sweetback’s rebellion transpires one night, when the owner of the brothel lends him out to a pair of white LA police officers. The policemen intend to feign their attempts to counter Black on Black crime by bringing in Sweetback as a “captured perpetrator.” On the way to the station, the police pick up a Black Panther, Mu-Mu, whom they beat up in an alley. While the policemen are beating Mu-Mu, Sweetback suddenly intervenes, saving Mu-Mu’s life and beating the policemen.

Like Sweetback, Whity exhibits a similar sudden change in behavior – a spark of violent resistance. Prior to his execution of the Nicholsons, Whity is in Hanna’s room, where she tries one last time to convince him to run away with her. She tells Whity about Ben’s murder of Garcia and then gives him the bribe money as proof. During this scene, Whity stands timidly in the corner with his hands folded and his eyes cast down. Hanna then grabs him and kisses him forcefully, demanding that he “Kill them. Kill all of them. You have to free yourself from them. You’re a human being, too.”¹²⁸ The sound of a clock ticking in the background suggests that time is running out for Whity to act and for the Nicholsons’ lives. Hanna’s appeal to Whity’s humanity appears to have a direct affect on his behavior. Immediately following this scene, Whity enters the saloon by descending the stairs from Hanna room. Previously, Whity always entered Hanna’s room from the outside, scaling the side of the building. Now Whity has the confidence to not only be open about his relationship with Hanna, but confront the cowboy played by Fassbinder who beat him up earlier.

When Whity descends from Hanna’s room into the bar, it is as if the money and his knowledge about Ben’s murder have given him an additional source of strength and masculinity. When Whity first entered the saloon towards the beginning of the film, he was not only beaten up and thrown out of the bar, but he did not put up any resistance during the struggle and the scene ends with him lying face-down in front of the saloon in his light suit. In contrast to the weakness he exhibited during that beating, when Whity enters the saloon from Hanna’s room, he stops on the stairs and defiantly returns the patrons’ glances. He then walks to the bar and drinks half a bottle of whisky. Like the earlier shot of Whity lying half-naked on Hanna’s bed, this was also filmed without any cuts, exaggeratedly slowing down the action and embellishing his feat. As soon as Whity pulls out his money and demonstrates his masculinity by drinking the whiskey,

¹²⁷ Thomsen, “Five Interviews with Fassbinder,” 93.

¹²⁸ “Bring sie um. Bring sie alle um. Du musst dich frei machen von ihnen. Du bist doch auch ein Mensch.”

he is accepted at once. With his money and newly exhibited strength, the white cowboys who denied him access to their group earlier are now happy to include Whity in their card game.

The acceptance Whity gets in the saloon is not, however, based on real change, but based on money and the performance of masculinity. Just because the cowboys invite Whity to join their game does not mean their racist views have changed. Whity's contentment with the group shows he is only concerned with his own integration and not a revolution—a parallel to Jorgos in *Katzelmacher* who is eventually accepted by the German group of friends only to leave town because he does not want to work with a Turk.

According to Linda Williams, the American melodrama “offers hope...that it may not be too late, that there may still be an original locus of virtue, and that this virtue and truth can be achieved in private individuals and individual acts.”¹²⁹ In such a traditional melodrama, Whity's violence and subsequent death in the desert could be read as Hegel's slave choosing death over servitude – making him a martyr.¹³⁰ However, Fassbinder's message is that neither Whity's sole integration nor his rebellion and subsequent death can really change anything. Whity's killing of his family is a personal act of revenge rather than a challenge to racism in the larger society. This might explain why Whity only wears his red suit in the Nicholson estate – his potential for rebellion is confined to the domestic realm.

In his analysis of *Sweet Sweetback*, Robert Reid-Pharr accuses Sweetback of this same individualism. Reid-Pharr refers to the scene when Sweetback saves Mu-Mu. Afterward Mu-Mu asks, “Where are we going?” to which Sweetback merely responds “Where you get that we shit?” Reid-Pharr argues that Sweetback not only runs from white violence,

what Sweetback also runs from, what he also fears, is the equally real, equally palpable reality of the black American's culpability, his lack of innocence. As this brief sketch of Van Peebles's own filmography is meant to suggest, the difficulty faced by the midcentury black American intellectual was the recognition that, the power of the erotic being what it is, supposed black and white combatants might indeed have become so intimate by the early 1970s that it was difficult, if not impossible, to see where black innocence began and white guilt ended.¹³¹

Sweetback's sudden act of resistance might have helped Mu-Mu at that moment, but it does not erase the fact that Sweetback had never had a problem with catering to the “Man” before. As the “Negro in revolt,” Sweetback is not free from scrutiny. For example, by committing acts of violence against Black women during his flight, he upholds the master narrative of patriarchy. As

¹²⁹ Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson*, 35.

¹³⁰ “...the relation of the two self-conscious individuals is such that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle. They must engage in this struggle, for they must raise their certainty of being *for themselves* to truth, both in the case of the other and in their own case. And it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won...The individual who has not risked his life may well be recognized as a *person*, but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness. Similarly, just as each stakes his own life, so each must seek the other's death, for it values the other no more than itself; its essential being is present to it in the form of an ‘other’, it is outside of itself and must rid itself of its self-externality...one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is lord [*Herr*], the other is bondsman [*Knecht*]. Houlgate, ed., *The Hegel Reader*, 94-5.

¹³¹ Reid-Pharr, *Once You Go Black: Choice, Desire, and the Black American Intellectual*, 165.

Reid-Pharr suggests, rather than just the oppressed Black man, he is revealed to be a culpable agent of oppression: "...the hegemonic works in both directions, from top to bottom, bottom to top."¹³² Sweetback spends the rest of the film running from this truth, trying to reclaim his innocence.

A similar argument could be made for Whity. Prior to his rebellion Whity learns that Ben is guilty of an unjust murder. But it is not a sudden realization of Ben's false morality which leads to Whity's change in behavior. Rather, Whity's rebellion is motivated by the money Hanna gives him. This money enables him integration into the group of cowboys and like Sweetback, Whity is revealed to be not an innocent victim, but a part of the very system that oppresses him. Whity's rebellion is as individualist as Sweetback's flight. Whity not only does not seek out other oppressed people, according to Thomsen, the scenes deleted from the script "show Whity together with other slaves who are working in the fields. He despises their revolutionary songs when he rides over the fields with his white masters and uses his whip on members of his own race if they're not working fast enough. Over the oppressed, Whity can enjoy to the full the sweetness of power and experience his own worth."¹³³ Although Fassbinder never filmed these scenes, they reveal his intention to not simply portray Whity in a sympathetic light. In the interview with Norbert Sparrow, Fassbinder says, "The real awful thing is, you can't show oppression without showing the flaws of the oppressed person...I strongly believe; one must show the victim with his positive qualities and lacks, his strength and his weakness, his mistakes."¹³⁴ Whity's flaws are that he is happy to participate in the very system that oppresses him – demonstrated by the final bar scene – and when he does rebel it is confined to the personal, to within the family. As Fassbinder remarked, "if he had really thought about his actions, he would have showed solidarity with other oppressed peoples."¹³⁵

Conclusion

Despite previous critics' arguments, Whity's non-German setting does not take away from the film's engagement with West Germany. First of all, although it is set in the U.S., the film's deconstruction of race, class and gender power structures is just as relevant for West Germany. When Fassbinder debunks Hollywood's portrayal of Blacks and Harriet Beecher Stowe's childlike slaves, he asks Germans to rethink their understanding of race. The mistreatment of Whity and his mother Marpessa could be compared to the racist treatment of guest workers, Black GIs and Afro-Germans in the 1960s and 1970s and West Germans' denial of their subjectivity. Just as in *Katzelmacher* and later in *Angst essen Seele auf*, in *Whity* Fassbinder shows how racism is used to smooth over internal (family) tensions. After Frank is beaten by his stepmother Kate for calling her a *Negerhure* (nigger whore), the two reconcile by

¹³² Ibid., 151.

¹³³ Thomsen, *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, 77.

¹³⁴ "Das wirklich Schlimme ist, dass man Unterdrückung nicht zeigen kann, ohne auch die unterdrückte Person zu zeigen, die auch ihre Fehler hat...Ich vertrete strikt den Standpunkt: Man muss das Opfer mit seinen Qualitäten und mit seinen Mängeln zeigen, seine Kraft und seine Schwäche, seine Fehler." Sparrow, "'Ich Lasse die Zuschauer Fühlen und Denken': Rainer Werner Fassbinder Über Douglas Sirk, Jerry Lewis und Jean-Luc Godard," 409-10.

¹³⁵ Robert Fischer, ed., *Fassbinder über Fassbinder: Die ungekürzten Interviews* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 2004), 223.

mocking Whity and rehabilitating their sense of power in each other's eyes. The Nicholson family can only be forcibly united by a common foreign threat. In this way, their family serves as a kind of metaphor for the German nation whose imagined foreign threat has changed from the Jews during the Nazi regime to the guest workers in the 1960s and 1970s.

Furthermore, the issue of patricide seems relevant for a postwar generation desperate to condemn the crimes of their fathers. Whity only pulls the trigger, executing Ben, after Ben asks Whity to kill the others and Ben finally acknowledges his paternity, referring to Whity as his son. Fassbinder uses the American mulatto's struggle (the psychological struggle of being both the child of the oppressed and the oppressor) in order to articulate his generation's struggle – that of being the offspring of the perpetrators, while simultaneously sympathizing with the world's victims and wanting to kill off a legacy in which they were already complicit. Because of the personal motives of his rebellion and its futile end, Christian Braad Thomsen reads Whity as a condemnation of terrorism. Thomsen believes Whity's act of rebellion leads to his death in the desert because:

As long as the oppressed unconsciously adopt the norms of the system that oppresses them, then their rebellion will only reproduce what they are rebelling against. Whity must be destroyed along with his masters because even in his ostensible rebellion he sticks with their perverted individualism. Expressed in contemporary terms, Whity's action ends in terrorism, and Fassbinder's critique of Whity points forward to the more concrete critique of terrorism in his later work.¹³⁶

If one reads Whity as a critique of terrorism, the most logical reference would be the homegrown terrorism which was then brewing in Germany's newly formed Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF).¹³⁷ In an interview with Thomsen in 1973, Fassbinder claimed Whity's act of violence “[was] in reality an attempt on the part of the oppressed to defend themselves. But that's not the right way and this is where education is needed. One has to show people how they can defend themselves without landing in the desert.”¹³⁸ Fassbinder's desire to teach his audience how to properly resist oppression without just landing in the desert sounds like a plea to not merely resort to violence without a plan for what will come next. By resorting to violence in the end, Whity not only obeys each of the Nicholson's commands but he also follows in his father's footsteps. Although nearly all the family members talk about murder, Ben and Whity are the only two who actually kill anyone. Thus in the end, Whity rebels against his father by resorting to his father's very methods.

Instead of making a film explicitly about German terrorism, which Fassbinder would later do in his collaboration with Volker Schlöndorff and Alexander Kluge in *Deutschland im Herbst* (Germany in Autumn, 1977) and in *Die Dritte Generation* (The Third Generation, 1979),

¹³⁶ Thomsen, *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, 77.

¹³⁷ Although the RAF did not form until 1970, already in 1968 several of its members, including Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin had set fires in Munich department stores to protest the Vietnam War.

¹³⁸ “[war] in Wirklichkeit der Versuch der Unterdrückten, sich zur Wehr zu setzen. Das ist nur nicht die richtige Art, und hier muss die Aufklärung einsetzen, man muss den Leuten zeigen, wie sie sich wehren können, ohne dabei in der Wüste zu landen.” Fischer, ed., *Fassbinder über Fassbinder: Die ungekürzten Interviews*, 258.

in *Whity* Fassbinder draws an equivalence. In a way, West Germany viewed its leftist student activists as Others-from-Within: Germans nevertheless, but Germans with “foreign” or unfamiliar ideas and desires to change the society into something unrecognizable – a fear that was articulated in Freddy Quinn’s reactionary song “Wir” in Chapter Two. In order to tell a story with the same resonance, in *Whity*, Fassbinder utilizes the trope of the “tragic mulatto.” Earlier, I touched on several reasons why the mulatto was considered tragic in American culture. A further reason for the mulatto’s “tragic” state was, despite being treated like a slave, the mulatto was seen as being closer to whites due to a unique sensibility about freedom. Henry Ward Beecher, abolitionist and husband of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin’s* author Harriet Beecher Stowe, “believed strongly that Africans did not have the same inborn love of freedom that whites did; mulattos, on the other hand, inherited some of that liberty-loving spirit through their European heritage – a transfusion of values, if you will, through a transfusion of blood.”¹³⁹ What inspired Fassbinder’s so-called “Deep South melodrama” might have been an indirect engagement with German homegrown terrorism. Fassbinder seems to question how a person can resist oppression without resorting to individualist acts of violence which do not result in real change. Can a son successfully rebel against a culture of which he is a part? And can one resort to the methods of one’s forefathers to build a better world? Aside from his interest in the genre films of Douglas Sirk and Raoul Walsh, Fassbinder chose the unusual time and setting for *Whity* because an engagement with American slavery and the stereotype of the tragic mulatto gave him room to explore the different kinds of relationships possible between the oppressed and their oppressors as well as the different ways of achieving freedom. Just like the German students’ relationship to their forefathers, the mulatto of slave narratives is related to the very oppressor against whom he or she fights.

One could argue that it is precisely the film’s defamiliarized setting which allowed Fassbinder to escape more common depictions of the Other in postwar Germany. Instead of depicting *Whity* as purely a victim and outsider (a common depiction of guest workers and Afro-Germans at the time), due to the historical and local context, *Whity* is neither completely an insider nor outsider. *Whity* is a member of the family and the household. However, he is considered strange or different enough, as a Black man, that he is mistreated. Nevertheless, his status as stranger also allows him to be entrusted with the family members’ secrets and therefore he has access to more knowledge than the other members of the family.¹⁴⁰ *Whity’s* ambiguous position is therefore both a weakness and a source of strength. Fassbinder uses the tragic mulatto’s struggle with his insider/outsider status in order to tell a story that indulges fantasies of patricide and condemns terrorism. The film challenges West German racism by presenting a strong Black protagonist who can both act the role of the servant and the master. In this way, *Whity* is an example of Germans articulating their own power struggles through the experience of the African American.

¹³⁹ Stephan Talty, *Mulatto America: At the Crossroads of Black and White Culture: A Social History* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 5.

¹⁴⁰ Georg Simmel describes the stranger as both near and far, simultaneously attached and detached. This position is what allows the stranger to view the community and local culture with objectivity. The stranger has the distance necessary to be able to call certain accepted notions of the group into question – which is also threatening. This quality makes the stranger a potential listener for the members of the group who also want to confront the group’s ideals. On the theory of the “stranger,” see Georg Simmel’s essay “Die Fremde” in Georg Simmel, *Soziologie : Untersuchungen Über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1922).

Finally, it is important that Fassbinder does not portray a Black hero lacking flaws. I believe that Fassbinder's choice of an ambivalent character like Whity – a mulatto slave who blurs the lines between Black and white/oppressed and oppressor – was his way of taking a critical stance against the non-reflective glorification of Black masculinity. In *We Real Cool*, bell hooks points out that many white leftists embraced Black male revolutionaries' often sexist and patriarchal ideas, such as those of Eldrige Cleaver's, without questioning their flaws. By openly confronting the flaws of the "Negro in revolt," Fassbinder's portrayal of Black masculinity is resultingly less essentialist than some of the more standard Blaxploitation heroes of the day.

A recent German film appears to have reignited these issues. In 2007, the film *Leroy* was released, directed by Armin Völckers and based on Völckers' short film *Leroy räumt auf* (Leroy Cleans Up, 2006). Leroy is a perfectly integrated Afro-German youth, raised in an interracial family in Berlin. Contrary to today's depictions of young Black men in popular media, Leroy listens to classical music and reads Goethe for fun. In fact, the only thing stereotypically "Black" about Leroy is his fashion style. Despite the film's contemporary setting, Leroy is marked by Blaxploitation tropes such as his enormous afro, Seventies style clothing, a fur coat and shades. The film's Blaxploitation flair leads one to believe he got his name from Sweetback. In *Leroy*, Völckers takes a humorous approach to the problem of postwall German racism by not only portraying a very atypical Afro-German teen, but also by having Leroy date a white girl named Eva Braun (the same name of Hitler's lover) who has a several, right-wing skinhead brothers. Leroy eventually resolves his problem with Eva's brothers by recording a song with them. He believes that by commercializing neo-Nazism he can ruin the skinhead subculture, in the same way previous subcultures have been co-opted by the music industry. Unlike his Blaxploitation predecessors, Leroy uses his wit instead of violence to battle racism.

Yet another eerie remnant from the past is the fact that Leroy's father is played by none other than Günther Kaufmann. Several years prior to filming *Leroy*, Kaufmann spent over two years in jail for falsely confessing to a murder in order to protect his wife. Aside from a single appearance on a television series in 2005, Kaufmann did not return to the big screen until he appeared in *Leroy* and in *Weisse Lillien* (White Lillies) directed by Christian Frosch the same year.¹⁴¹ One wonders whether Völckers, having set out to make a German Blaxploitation parody, decided to rehabilitate the career of Fassbinder's favorite exotic actor because he too saw a connection between Whity and the Blaxploitation genre.

¹⁴¹ Due to his false confession to protect his white wife, Page Laws has called Kaufmann the "Anti-OJ." Laws suggests that German whites' tendency to view dark-skinned Others as criminals interpellated Kaufmann into confessing. Laws comments that "Kaufmann voluntarily assumed, in effect, the status of Victim *Malgré Lui* (or in Whity's terms, the Whipping Boy), the very role Fassbinder had so often assigned to him." Page R. Laws, "Rainer and *Der Weiße Neger*: Fassbinder's and Kaufmann's on and Off Screen Affair as German Racial Allegory," in *From Black to Schwarz: Cultural Crossovers between African America and Germany*, ed. Maria I. Dietrich and Jürgen Heinrichs (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010), 247.

Chapter Four

Of Blues and Blue Jeans – American Dreams in the East

The first two chapters in particular focused on how normative i.e. white masculinity was constructed in West Germany. For Oskar in *Die Blechtrommel*, Black masculinity's flexibility made it a counter model to the types of rigid masculinity offered within German society. As a typical German male in the Third Reich, Oskar would have been forced to join the Hitler Youth and eventually the war effort and he likely would have died like many of his classmates. Instead of following the path of the strict, German patriarch and soldier, Oskar opted to remain an eternal child – presumably this is how Germans thought of Black men, which is why they would name an all-adult jazz revue “Chocolate Kiddies.”

Once the war ended and Oskar decided to grow again, he could not just slip back into mainstream German culture. Part of what ties his experience to that of Black men is that his difference – a physical difference which is at times racialized – makes it impossible for him to occupy the role of the patriarch. Due to his deformity and disability, he is excluded from possible suitors and future husbands and instead of starting his own family, he must be content with caring for his stepmother Maria and half-brother Kurt after his father Alfred is killed. Eventually, Oskar even tries to follow a “decent” career – a prospect he had been rebelling against since his third birthday. However, after years of living as a dwarf and feeling uncomfortable with German society, Oskar's feeling of alterity is too pronounced to be done away with so quickly. He inevitably abandons his attempt to live an average working-class life as an engraver for a cemetery, and instead he begins playing music again and earns money as a musician and as a model for art students. By choosing the deviant lifestyle of an artist, Oskar is never really able to be integrated into West German society. Part of the reason for his unusual behavior and the actions that put him in a mental hospital on trial for a murder he did not commit is his failure to win Kurt and Maria's recognition. His status as a musician and dwarf make him an unacceptable male role model in the immediate postwar.

In Chapter Two we were introduced to the German student movement and males who refuse to become “real” men. Instead of becoming a future producer, provider or protector, Rull “drops out” of German society and experiments with foreign identities, aligning himself with the oppressed and condemning the oppressors. In Chapter Three, we saw to what extent sexuality played a role in Germans' sympathy with and celebration of Black masculinity. Engaging with the topic of oppression and Black masculinity, Fassbinder provides German cinema with its first Blaxploitation anti-hero and uses the mulatto slave's struggle against his oppressive father to articulate Germans' frustrations with their parent's generation. But contrary to the non-critical celebration of the Black rebel in Chapters One and Two, Fassbinder does not glorify the Black man. Rather, Fassbinder's project is to disclose the inner workings of oppression and reveal it to be a complicated power matrix of performances where even the “whipping boy” might also be at fault for maintaining the system.

In this chapter, I turn my attention to how Black popular culture functions as a counter example for concepts of East German masculinity¹ and the importance of Black popular culture regarding the limited opportunities for rebellion available within East Germany's highly structured and monitored society. You will notice that the same stereotypes about Black popular culture we have encountered in the previous West German texts, e.g. Black popular culture as primitive, innocent and liberating, can also be found in texts written by East Germans or set in East Germany.

I believe one of the best examples of East Germans' ambivalent relationship towards African Americans is the following excerpt from Reiner Kunze's *Die Wunderbaren Jahre* (The Lovely Years, 1978) – a collection of sketches describing the contradictions of life in the German Democratic Republic (GDR):

Nine-year Olds

PASTOR: So let's say, a man comes from America...
 FIRST PUPIL: That can't be. He would be shot by tanks immediately. (Gestures using a machine gun) Bang – bang – bang – bang! (The other pupils laugh.
 PASTOR: But why?
 FIRST PUPIL: Because Americans are enemies.
 PASTOR: And Angela Davis? Didn't you make a wall newspaper for Angela Davis?
 FIRST PUPIL: She's not American. She's a Communist.
 SECOND PUPIL: Nope, she's a Negro.²

This brief sketch in particular demonstrates the East German government's dogmatic stance against the West: the East and Socialism were deemed good; the West and Capitalism were condemned as bad. Furthermore, this sketch shows how this binary is complicated by the existence of *American* Communists and the fact that not *all* Americans had the same power within American hegemony; African Americans had long been oppressed and discriminated against and had only gained Civil Rights fourteen years prior to Kunze's publication. Thus, East

¹ Although this chapter deals more specifically with Blues rather than jazz, East and West German responses to both genres of Black popular music reveal underlying prejudices about Black masculinity. "East and West German debates about jazz were also always debates about African Americans, their culture and their history. Certain assumptions about proper masculinity and proper femininity underlay the efforts to make jazz acceptable and also related to changing East and West German views of African Americans." Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 138.

²Neunjährige

PFARRER: Sagen wir, es käme ein Onkel aus Amerika...
 ERSTER SCHÜLER: Gibt's ja nicht. Der wird doch gleich von den Panzern erschossen. (Mit der Geste eines Maschinenpistolenschützen) Peng – peng – peng – peng! (Die anderen Schüler lachen.
 PFARRER: Aber wieso denn?
 ERSTER SCHÜLER: Amerikaner sind doch Feinde.
 PFARRER: Und Angela Davis? Habt ihr nicht für Angela Davis eine Wandzeitung gemacht?
 ERSTER SCHÜLER: Die ist ja keine Amerikanerin. Die ist ja Kommunistin.
 ZWEITER SCHÜLER: Gar nicht, die ist Neger.

Reiner Kunze, *Die Wunderbaren Jahre: Lyrik, Prosa, Dokumente*, ed. Karl Corino (Frankfurt am Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1978), 206.

German youth were faced with a conundrum: if all Americans were enemies, what about American Communists or the oppressed minorities in America? The state did its best to advocate for the culture of *good*, i.e. oppressed Americans by promoting anti-slavery literature, African American theater, and shooting their own DEFA-produced *Indianerfilme*.³ In these Socialist Westerns, the Native Americans were not the villains, rather they were portrayed sympathetically and allowed to triumph, defeating the whites who sought to exploit them.⁴

Considering the GDR's investment in stressing the failures of American democracy, especially in regards to racial discrimination, it is not surprising that African American activists, particularly those with ties to the Communist movement, were promoted in East Germany as allies.⁵ What Kunze's sketch also illustrates is a racist manner of thinking that was not native to East Germany; rather the attitude that Blacks are inherently a separate race and cannot be considered equal to Americans, Germans or any other "white" population had been popular in Nazi Germany and during the Wilhelmine era. Finally, this excerpt shows that despite the national rhetoric of Socialist solidarity in East Germany, racism did exist. There are many accounts of African students, workers and orphans, who might have been invited to the GDR to study and work, but they were segregated from the East German population and intermarriage was highly discouraged.⁶ Instead, the assumption prevailed that Africans in the GDR were there for a short time and would take their skills back to their respective countries to further the Socialist cause.⁷

The two texts, with which this chapter is concerned, are Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (The New Sufferings of Young W., 1972) and Michael Schorr's film *Schultze Gets the Blues* (2003). I chose to place these texts in dialogue with each other not *in spite of* but *because of* their time difference. In truth, the bulk of this dissertation looks at West German examples of how Black popular culture is equated with rebellion and the effect of this equivalence on German masculinity from the 1950s until the reunified Federal Republic of the 1990s. Instead of excluding East Germany altogether, I wanted to look at two texts that show us how Black popular culture or more specifically Black popular music and Black masculinity were discussed during the existence of the GDR and how these attitudes changed or persisted after reunification. Furthermore, despite the thirty-year gap, both texts are concerned with male protagonists who have grown up in and were socialized in the GDR, yet still feel strange in their communities. Both Edgar (of Plenzdorf's novel) and Schultze are faced with a crisis of

³ For the reception of Richard Hildreth's abolitionist novel *The White Slave* (1852) in East Germany see Paul, "Cultural Mobility between Boston and Berlin." For more information on African American theater in East Germany see Astrid Haas, "A Raisin in the East: African American Civil Rights Drama in GDR Scholarship and Theater Practice," in *Germans and African Americans: Two Centuries of Exchange*, ed. Larry Greene and Anke Ortlepp (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010).

⁴ For more information on the *Indianerfilme* see Gerd Gemünden, "Between Karl May and Karl Marx: The DEFA *Indianerfilme*," in *Germans and Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections*, ed. Gerd Gemünden, Colin G. Calloway, and Susanne Zantop (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

⁵ Among those African Americans who were championed in the GDR were Paul Robeson, W.E.B. Du Bois and Martin Luther King, Jr. and Angela Davis. The campaign on Angela Davis's behalf while she was still imprisoned in 1971 ranged from a rally of 700 students from Humboldt University and a celebration honoring her twenty-seventh birthday with 2,000 Berliners in attendance to having school children write solidarity postcards to her and protest letters to President Richard Nixon and Governor of California, Ronald Reagan. Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany*, 134-5.

⁶ See Göktürk, Gramling, and Kaes, eds., *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration, 1955-2005*

⁷ See for example the documentary about Namibian children who spent their childhoods in East German orphanages during Namibia's war with South Africa, *Omulaule heißt schwarz* directed by Beatrice Möller, Nicola Hens und Susanne Radelhof.

masculinity that is linked to their conflicts with modernity and they find comfort with their differences by listening to Black popular music. And finally, I find it is not a coincidence that the Blues – a genre that has a long and important history in East Germany’s countercultural scene – is an important motif in both texts. Before I discuss these texts in relation to each other, I would like to unpack them individually and contextualize them in their specific historical moments.

Cold War Masculinity: Military Service, Work and Family

In many ways, the masculinity promoted in East Germany is similar to that promoted in the West. In Chapter Two, I addressed West Germany’s rearmament in the 1950s and the need for a “citizen soldier” who could be present at home when needed but was prepared to defend his country against communism if necessary. The GDR promoted a similar “citizen soldier,” but the indoctrination of this role began much earlier. Several institutions existed which were meant to teach children Socialist values and the necessity of armed resistance. From the *Ernst Thälmann Jungpioniere* (Ernst Thälmann Young Pioneers)⁸ to the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (Free German Youth, FDJ), it was made clear to East German youth that their workers’ paradise was under constant threat from the West and it was their responsibility to protect the state.

The FDJ’s traditions were heavily based on the older *Wandervogel* youth movement which was no longer appealing to young people who preferred “street culture” to hiking. Young people increasingly preferred “dropping out” or solitude to group activities. In 1969 “As many as 85 per cent said that they found spontaneous, informal groups a more fulfilling source of leisure than the FDJ.”⁹ Furthermore, “The increasing accessibility of consumer items like transistor radios, TVs, bicycles and mopeds made the leisure opportunities provided by the FDJ appear unnecessary and redundant.”¹⁰ For both Schultze and Edgar, technology is key for their alternative means of leisure and communication. Edgar uses a tape recorder to record his messages and songs for the outside world. Schultze’s access to the outside world is facilitated by his radio which broadcasts Zydeco and Cajun cooking shows.

A year after the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, conscription was implemented and “all eighteen-year-old males had to submit to military training and discipline.”¹¹ The East German *Volksarmee* (people’s army) was run in the strict Prussian military tradition which was even reflected in the style of the uniforms.¹² Recruits lived regimented lives and had no privacy or freedom. The fact that East Germany felt no need to break with German military tradition reflects the country’s failure to deal with the legacy of Nazism as thoroughly as West Germany had. “By the early 1960s the regime had ceased to condemn older generations for their participation in the Third Reich to such an extent that, in 1963, Walter Ulbricht could describe

⁸ Ernst Thälmann was the leader of the German Communist Party from 1925 until he was arrested by the Nazi secret police in 1933. After serving eleven years in prison, his execution was ordered by Adolf Hitler in 1944. Thälmann, a.k.a. Teddy, was an important heroic symbol for East German youth.

⁹ Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs and Rock 'N' Roll: Teenage Rebels in Cold-War East Germany*, 100.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹² The GDR even boasted that its army uniform was based on Prussian tradition, while the *Bundeswehr* modeled its uniforms after “alien” American culture. *Ibid.*, 186.

the older generation as ‘those who liquidated fascism in the GDR.’”¹³ In fact, historian Mark Fenimore discovered many continuations between the construction of masculinity under the Nazis and the East Germans’ concept of masculinity. This is not only a result of East Germany’s denial of any implications in Nazism, but also a consequence of the country’s rhetoric of victimization and the importance it placed on violence.

Communist attempts to foster support and willingness to defend the GDR led them to foster the same masculine ideals and values as those cherished by previous German regimes, not least the Nazis. They sought to use masculinity to generate hegemony. Boys continued to learn that ‘traits such as strength, competitiveness, inexpressiveness and aggressiveness’ were expected of them as males. Literature and propaganda portrayed images of an idealized masculinity based on strength, courage and willingness to defend socialism.¹⁴

While this was the ideology supported by the state, Holger Brandes stresses that due to the “low acceptance of its own army and its military service...the military ideal of masculinity was only very ‘conditionally hegemonic.’”¹⁵

When it comes to rebellious masculinities in East Germany, the problem begins with the father. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, both West and East Germans believed that the separation of sons from their fathers (especially those fathers killed in action or POWs) made young men rebellious. Boys had more freedom living under the rule of their mothers and they did not want to relinquish this freedom when their fathers returned. Both protagonists in the texts I will discuss are lacking fatherly guidance. Plenzdorf’s protagonist Edgar, whose parents divorced early on, has not seen his father since age five. Schultze’s father is dead and one gets the feeling that rather than memories of a close relationship, the only tie that he has to his father is his accordion playing.

Although gender equality was an important part of Socialist philosophy, in reality many of the inequalities that existed in the West were also present in the East, e.g. “the highest executive committees of the GDR were almost exclusively composed of men.”¹⁶ East German girls did participate in youth organizations, but when it came to military service the most common scenario was that young men went to the military and the women remained at home awaiting their return. This practice is portrayed in Plenzdorf’s novel: Edgar’s love interest, Charlie, awaits her fiancé Dieter who is serving in the military. This scenario is also parodied in the comedy about the GDR, *Sonnenallee* (1999), where the heartthrob Miriam promises to wait for her active duty boyfriend, while crossing her fingers behind her back and smirking about her secret affair with a West German. Gender participation was more equal at the workplace. Studies have shown that a higher percentage of East German women worked as opposed to West

¹³ Ibid., 195.

¹⁴ Ibid., 127.

¹⁵ Holger Brandes, “Hegemonic Masculinities in East and West Germany (German Democratic Republic and Federal Republic of Germany,” *Men and Masculinities* 10, no. 2 (2007): 182.

¹⁶ Ibid.: 190.

German women.¹⁷ However, despite the state-run *Kinderkrippen* (nurseries), the responsibility of child care and domestic duties still weighed largely on the shoulders of women.

The male chauvinist side of East German society is thematized in numerous films. *Das Kaninchen bin ich* (The Rabbit is Me, 1965) and *Spur der Steine* (Trace of Stones, 1966), both of which were banned, depict the power imbalance in affairs between married men and their young mistresses. *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* (The Legend of Paul and Paula, 1973), which was also banned, depicts the difficulties for young East Germans seeking a fulfilling relationship in the face of familial and societal expectations. Needless to say, films that addressed male chauvinism and gender inequality were not celebrated by the regime. Following the workers' uprising in 1953, a cultural thaw emerged during which the government lobbied for a "new way" which would relax the political rhetoric in East German films and provide citizens with the more light-hearted entertainment and love stories they desired. Films like *Eine Berliner Romanze* (1956) and *Heisser Sommer* (1968) portrayed good, Socialist models for young love and healthy relations between the sexes. But as suggested by a later film, *Solo Sunny* (1980), problems between the sexes were still present despite the absence of capitalist exploitation of women. In this film, the female singer Sunny has a difficult time deflecting unwanted (violent) male attention, while she tries to establish a relationship with a seemingly sensitive man who is revealed to be a womanizer. Furthermore, as Brandes points out "Extremely high divorce rates during the GDR regime, particularly in the 1980s, not only express the social freedom of changing partners but also might suggest a syndrome of undocumented private problems and dramas like alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and sexual abuse against women and children."¹⁸

Finally, in East Germany, "The workplace and not the family was to be the key site for reconfiguring citizenship"¹⁹ and manual labor was respected more than intellectual and artistic careers. In this workers' state, intellectuals and artists were viewed as being in service to the workers. Artists' task was to present workers with a utopian image of their lives and the state in the style of Socialist Realism. According to Brandes:

In the GDR, a male habitude dominated, with clichés of the working-class hero, which originally was anchored in classic industrial work and its quality characteristic of bodily engagement, discipline and endurance... In [R.W.] Connell's sense, one can perhaps speak most appropriately in relation to this of a proletarian-petty bourgeois shaping of hegemonic masculinity in the GDR. At its core, the point was that the GDR not only unofficially defined itself as a *Arbeiter- und Bauernstaat* ("Worker and Peasant State") but was also shaped up to the most banal forms of daily life by a correspondingly habituality...²⁰

Because of Edgar's rejection of the workplace and Schultze's forced retirement, both lose their most important roles in society. Furthermore, due to the emphasis on manual labor in East

¹⁷ Heike Trappe, Rachel A. Rosenfeld and Janet C. Gornick, "Gender and Work in Germany: Before and after Reunification," *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004).

¹⁸ Brandes, "Hegemonic Masculinities in East and West Germany," 192.

¹⁹ Fenimore, *Sex, Thugs and Rock 'N' Roll: Teenage Rebels in Cold-War East Germany*, 45.

²⁰ Brandes, "Hegemonic Masculinities in East and West Germany," 188-9.

Germany, the fact that Edgar and Schultze are drawn to the arts makes them stand out as the opposite of the East German male ideal.

“Race Music,” Style and Masculinity

In Chapter Two, I briefly discussed why the *Halbstarke* subculture was perceived as a threat to hegemonic masculinity in both East and West Germany. Part of East Germany’s critique of this youth culture was its importation from the West. Western/American culture was deemed “non-culture” that could only criminalize youth. These views were not only part of anti-capitalist propaganda, but were also based on the kinds of American culture that found its way into the East. Mark Fenemore notes “From comic book characters like Tarzan and Superman to the inarticulate cowboys of Westerns and suave spies like James Bond, the West bombarded East German youth with its own visions of heroism;” all models not considered acceptable in the workers’ state.²¹

A further source for East Germans’ critique of rock ‘n’ roll culture was its roots in Black popular music. “In the regime’s attacks on youth subculture, the fans of bebop and their successors the rockers and the beat fan were made to function as racialised others.”²² In *Sex, Thugs and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, Fenemore reprinted a police poster in which portraits and profiles of *Halbstarke* are presented with explanations of their hairstyles in a manner reminiscent of Nazi-era eugenicist descriptions of non-Aryans: “...the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* published a selection of mugshots of male rockers under the heading ‘not a question of fashion, but politics.’ The photograph of ‘their haircuts’ was juxtaposed against record covers seized in house raids revealing ‘their culture’ (*ihre Kultur*).”²³ One can also see the racialized discourse surrounding the *Halbstarke* in the manner in which authorities described their clothing. Like the rebellious zoot suit craze headed by racial minorities in American cities during World War II, East German men wishing to rebel against a stiff, uniform, military-look, wore clothing that was flashy and stood out. The racialized terms used to describe their clothing were *Affenpalmen* (literally “ape palm trees” referring to a pattern printed on shirts) and *Niggerhemden* – likely a slang for “Negerhemden” (Negro shirts) and possibly the origin of the East German slang term for T-shirt, “Nicki.” Rock ‘n’ roll was also called *Affenmusik* (ape music). Because rockers were more concerned about personal style and fashion than was normally expected of males, their behavior was perceived as emasculate and homosexual.²⁴

While some youth tried to defend their preference for rock ‘n’ roll as being an expression of their solidarity with oppressed peoples (African Americans), the state’s position was that it had no problem with “authentic” Black popular music, which rock ‘n’ roll was not.

²¹ Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs and Rock ‘N’ Roll: Teenage Rebels in Cold-War East Germany*, 123.

²² *Ibid.*, 136.

²³ *Ibid.*, 146.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

Hans Eisler was wheeled out to argue that ‘the crazy limb contortions’ (*die verrückten Gliederverrenkungen*) exhibited by the rockers had nothing to do with the way real negroes in America danced to ‘proper Jazz.’ Socialists were not against ‘well-played jazz’, but ‘idiotic movements’ had ‘nothing at all to do with normal people!’ ... Professor Eisler obliged by stating that Louis Armstrong had been pressured by his profit-hungry managers, not just to play the trumpet, but to make a clown of himself.²⁵

Eisler’s statement is a further example of how the East German government used African American culture as an opportunity to discuss America’s oppression of its people. The GDR was, however, explicit in supporting certain genres of Black popular music. Uta Poiger’s study of Black popular music in the GDR shows that as opposed to jazz, Negro spirituals were preferred, especially since they were promoted by leftist hero Paul Robeson.²⁶

Aside from rock ‘n’ roll and spirituals, another genre of Black popular music that was very popular in the GDR was the Blues – a genre of particular importance in this chapter because both Plenzdorf’s novel and Schorr’s films pick up on the motif of the Blues. In postwar occupied Germany, Blues was alternately received as the source of jazz or a mere side note of jazz.²⁷ Blues enthusiasts in the West and East disliked modern influence and tended to mythologize the Blues as an authentic, pure music of poor Blacks. The argument that the Blues was the music of the Black proletariat and had been ruined once it reached Broadway, where it was altered to cater to a white market, corresponded well with the GDR’s Socialist beliefs.²⁸ However, this view of the Blues essentializes it as something pure and disregards the European influence in early African American music and the fact that not only white Americans but some middle-class Black Americans were offended by the music’s subject matter and dark tone.

Just as rock ‘n’ roll fans practiced *Halbstarke* culture, Blues fans developed their own scene as well. In West Germany, what connected young people in the Blues scene was a critical opinion of German society, feeling like an outsider and the desire to explore alternative lifestyles and occasionally experiment with drugs. According to historian Detlef Siegfried, the West

²⁵ Ibid., 135.

²⁶ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, 158. Although Robeson had come to be known as a champion of leftist politics in the GDR, his political engagement only came in the late 1940s, twenty years after his career had begun. Robeson’s biography alone testifies to his ability to cross racial boundaries: he graduated from Rutgers, then Columbia law school, played football and became a celebrated singer and actor. In *Heavenly Bodies*, Richard Dyer investigates what was behind Robeson’s crossover appeal. According to Dyer, “Robeson was taken to embody a set of specifically black qualities – naturalness, primitiveness, simplicity and others – that were equally valid and similarly evoked, but for different reasons, by whites and blacks...How he was handled by the media is conceptually distinct from how audiences perceived him”(70-1). One of the reasons East Germans loved Robeson so much was because of the Negro spirituals he made so famous. However, Dyer points out that Robeson had little in common with the common people represented in these songs. In fact, Robeson often changed the lyrics and the diction of the songs. Early in his career, the way he performed these spirituals often stressed Blacks’ suffering and dehistoricized them. Nevertheless, Robeson eventually became more subversive in his performances. Dyer demonstrates how the changes Robeson made to the words of *Old Man River* “are interventions in one of the most popular show tunes of the time; they mark a political black presence in a mainstream (i.e. white) cultural product” (107). Robeson’s later political engagement was detrimental to his career. He could not perform outside of the US between 1950 and 1958 because the U.S. government had taken away his passport. “...when Robeson no longer played the part of power withheld and became more vigorous and harsh in his vocal delivery as well as his opinions, he ceased to be a cross-over star” (137). Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*.

²⁷ Michael Rauhut, “Lass es bluten: Blues-Diskurse in West und Ost,” in *Ich hab’ den Blues schon etwas länger: Spuren einer Musik in Deutschland*, ed. Michael Rauhut und Reinhart Lorenz (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2008), 108.

²⁸ Ibid., 116-17.

German Blues scene “culminated around 1970, as a widely ramified ‘counterculture’ that emerged out of the non-conformist subcultures of the Sixties – beatniks, provos, communes, drug scenes – and the student movement that saw itself as a counterfort to the traditional majority.”²⁹ The blues-rock scene in East Germany was of equal importance. Michael Rauhut describes it as:

...not only the most vital and enduring youth scene in the country, but also an explicitly Eastern phenomenon. It was born out of the reverberation of Woodstock and only lost its relevance during the 1980s under the competitive pressure of punk, heavy metal and other attractive alternatives with which youth could identify. The model which the generations of “Bluesers” who came after one another followed remained the ideals of the hippie era. Freedom, authenticity and non-conformity were the primary values which were reflected in the behavior, the artistic preferences and outfits.³⁰

By the end of the 1980s, there were over 50 clubs promoting Blues in the GDR, “whose influence even reached the darkest corner of the province.”³¹ Although the state might have promoted Blues music, the style of blues-rock fans was often as provocative as the *Halbstarke*. Since the Bluesers evolved from the hippie movement and the folk rock revival of the 1960s, their scene developed later than the *Halbstarke*. Nevertheless, Bluesers’ long hair, jeans and parkas were just as much a thorn in the government’s eye. From his self-description, Edgar likely belonged to this youth culture: his clothes consist of “His burlap jacket that he’d sewn together himself, with copper wire, and his old jeans.”³² Neither the *Halbstarke* nor the Bluesers corresponded with the state’s idea of model Socialist masculinity.

It is clear that the East German state promoted a masculinity based on manual labor and militarism. Rock ‘n’ roll and Blues offered an alternative form of masculinity which I believe was rejected not only because of their Western influence, but because these forms were covertly read as influenced by Black masculinity. Historically, racist Western beliefs have set up the following corresponding binaries: white/Black, masculine/feminine, strong/overaggressive, reasonable/lacking reason, mind/body (hypersexual). Based on these historical assumptions, it was not a far leap for East German authorities to associate Black popular music with not only the *wrong* kind of aggression (violence without a political goal)³³ but also contradicting poles such as emasculation *and* hypersexuality. “Rock ‘n’ roll represented ‘an explosion of male aggression,

²⁹ “Diese Deutung kulminierte um 1970, als aus den nonkonformistischen Subkulturen der sechziger Jahre – Gammler, Provos, Kommunen, Drogenszenen – und der Studentenbewegung eine weitverzweigte >>Gegenkultur<< entstand, die sich als Widerlager zu einer traditionalistischen Mehrheit begriff.” Siegfried, “Authentisch schwarz: Blues in der Gegenkultur um 1970,” 217.

³⁰ “nicht nur die vitalste und dauerhafteste Jugendszene des Landes, sondern auch ein ausgesprochenes Spezifikum des Ostens. Sie wurde im Widerschein von Woodstock geboren und verlor erst in den achtziger Jahren unter dem Konkurrenzdruck vom Punk, Heavy Metal und anderen attraktiven Identifikationsangeboten an Relevanz. Das Leitbild, dem die einander ablösenden Generationen von >Bluesern< folgten, blieben die Ideale der Hippieära. >Freiheit<, >Authentizität<, und >Nonkonformismus< waren primäre Werte, die sich in ihren Verhaltensmustern, künstlerischen Vorlieben und Outfits niederschlugen.” Rauhut, “Lass es bluten: Blues-Diskurse in West und Ost,” 121.

³¹ “...deren Fäden noch den hintersten Winkel der Provinz überzogen.” Ibid., 119.

³² Ulrich Plenzdorf, *The New Sufferings of Young W*, trans. Kenneth P. Wilcox (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1996), 13. This will be referred to as *NS*. The original German: “Seine Rupfenjacken, die hatte er sich selber genäht, mit Kupferdraht, und seine alten Jeans.” Ulrich Plenzdorf, *Die neuen Leiden des jungen Ws* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 26. This text will be referred to as *NL*.

³³ Interestingly, while the East German regime clearly had strong opinions on rock ‘n’ roll, Blues and even hip hop (see the documentary *Here We Come* by Nico Raschick filmed in 2006), there is no mention of their response to Soul – a music which embodied Black Power at the time.

sexuality and delinquency fused into a kind of raucous urban blues.”³⁴ That is why “Police reports commonly presented young men who listened to Black popular music as a threat to women and as potential rapists.”³⁵

The DEFA³⁶ film, *Berlin, Ecke Schönhäuser Allee* (Berlin, Schonhauser Corner 1957), demonstrates many of the arguments I have discussed directed against *Halbstarke* and jazz and rock ‘n’ roll culture. The East German *Halbstarke* depicted in this film are hardly poster boys for postwar masculinity. One *Halbstarke*, Kohle, is portrayed as an immature young man who, unlike his friends, still wears short pants and is unable to protect himself and his mother and sister against his abusive stepfather. Kohle escapes his dreary life by going to the movies in West Berlin to watch American films. Karl-Heinz, another *Halbstarke*, is a remnant of the bourgeois class. His parents have a secret stash of money which Karl-Heinz uses to buy the newest Western trends. Karl-Heinz wishes to emigrate to the West and exchanges *Ostmark* (East German currency) on the black market in West Berlin to earn extra money. It is clear that neither of these boys serves as a model for East German men: both are associated with the decadent West, weakness and laziness (neither has an apprenticeship or job). In contrast, one of their friends, Dieter, works hard on a construction site where he even saves a man’s life when a bomb is exposed – a remnant from the war. Dieter may enjoy jazz as much as Kohle and Karl-Heinz, but he has potential for being of use to build the Socialist state. Thus, he is the only *Halbstarke* whom the FDJ and a good-hearted policeman try to rehabilitate. At the film’s end, Dieter’s model masculinity is proven by his disassociation from his former *Halbstarke* and his decision to stand by his girlfriend Angela after she gets pregnant. With job and family, Dieter is exactly the man East Germany needs.

In contrast, Edgar and Schultze are in danger of being condemned to the margins of their community because of their rebellious behavior and alternative masculinity. Although each character is of a completely different time and age (Edgar is a teen in the 1970s; Schultze is a retiree in the 2000s), each has a special tie to Black popular music. Investigating these characters’ motivation for rebelling against hegemonic East German culture and how Black popular music plays a role in this rebellion is an excellent opportunity to see how resistance against the state changes over time in East Germany. The fact that, despite their very different political systems, similar opinions about Black popular culture are expressed in the West German texts of the last three chapters and these East German texts shows the power of the images of Black popular culture circulated at the time and the fact that East Germany could not divorce itself from a Nazi past it shared with the West.

³⁴ Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs and Rock ‘N’ Roll: Teenage Rebels in Cold-War East Germany*, 135.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 187.

³⁶ The DEFA, Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft (German Film Society), was founded in the Soviet occupation zone in 1946 and from 1946-1989 it was East Germany’s official film company.

Child of Mittenberg³⁷

For its time, Ulrich Plenzdorf's novel was a controversial and stylistically innovative work that narrowly evaded censorship, having benefited from a change in East German politics that occurred shortly before it was published. In December 1971, the leadership in the GDR switched hands between Walther Ulbricht and Erich Honecker. Honecker announced a new phase in East German arts that allowed for more stylistic freedom, as long as the subject matter still dealt with Socialism.³⁸ Plenzdorf's novel was published a year later in the literary journal *Sinn und Form*.³⁹ By 1973, in light of such non-traditional works like Plenzdorf's, Honecker regretted the floodgates he had opened and retracted his earlier promise.⁴⁰ With a rebellious 17-year-old at its focus, aside from its stylistic experimentation which I will discuss later, Plenzdorf's text was controversial because it discussed the "failures and limitations of GDR society: especially the denial of individuality, aversion to alternative lifestyles, stress on the work ethic, the pressures to conform, the failure to cultivate critical thinking, [and] the endorsement of socialist realism as the only acceptable form of writing."⁴¹

The text is, in part, a parody of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sufferings of Young Werther, 1774).⁴² Goethe's *Werther* was a prime example of *Empfindsamkeit* (Emotionalism); an artistic movement from the 18th century that complemented Enlightenment thinking by promoting feeling instead of pure reason. Like Oskar, Goethe's Werther rejects the professional path his father lays out for him. Instead of returning to the city to pursue a career, Werther remains in the countryside to pursue a young woman named Charlotte (Lotte) with whom he falls in love and who happens to be engaged to a man named Albert. Werther eventually shoots himself because he cannot bare the pain of living without Lotte and being forced to lead the life expected of him by society. *Werther* was Goethe's best-selling text, invoking a frenzy of young people who sympathized with Werther's emotions and even dressed like the protagonist.

Plenzdorf's decision to parody Goethe's *Werther* was likely an attempt to mock the GDR's preference for 18th century literary style. In an effort to demonstrate that the GDR was *not* a successor to the Third Reich, the East German government sought to establish a link with

³⁷ Plenzdorf's protagonist Edgar enjoys listening to the Modern Soul Band; an East German jazz and soul band. One of their hits was "Child of Bitterfeld." Mittenberg is Edgar's fictional hometown.

³⁸ D.G. John, "Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*: The Death of a Fool," *Modern Drama* 23 (1980): 34.

³⁹ Peter Hutchinson, "Plenzdorf, *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*," in *Landmarks in the German Novel*, ed. Peter Hutchinson and Michael Minden (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 64.

⁴⁰ John, "Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*," 34.

⁴¹ Hutchinson, "Plenzdorf, *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*," 63.

⁴² A wealth of literature has compared the two novels. Here are just a few essays from the last twenty years. See Phillip Eckhard, "Verstehen in kleinen Schritten-Edgars Annäherung an Goethes 'Werther': Zur Sprache Plenzdorfs in 'Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.'" in *Literatur im interkulturellen Dialog*, ed. Manfred Durzak and Beate Laudenberg (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), Petra Fachinger, "Werther's Others: From Plenzdorf to Pirinçci," *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*, 33, no. 1 (1997), Fehn, "Werther's Children: The Experience of the Second Generation in Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* And Volker Braun's 'Unvollendete Geschichte,'" Márta Harmat, "Goethe und Plenzdorf aus heutiger Sicht: Zur Aktualität des Werther-Textes," *Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 14 (2002), Susan E. Hunnicutt, "'The Werther-Pistol Killed Me!': Understanding Ulrich Plenzdorf's Novel *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* as a Cult Book," *Focus on Literature: A Journal for German-Language Literature* 5, no. 1 (1998), Erhard Schütz, "Old Wibeau oder Werthers Himmelfahrt: Zur Aktualisierbarkeit eines gealterten Jugendkult-Textes," *Deutschunterricht: Beiträge zu seiner Praxis und wissenschaftlichen Grundlegung* 48, no. 5 (1996), Masanori Tsukuwa, "Die Beziehung zwischen 'Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.' und 'Die Leiden des jungen Werthers,'" *Language and Culture* 18 (1990).

older German culture such as movements from the 18th century.⁴³ By modeling a canonical text from this period, Plenzdorf could conform to the regime's desires while simultaneously ridiculing the state by drawing a comparison between 18th century bourgeois society and East Germany's "worker's paradise" and choosing the one Classicist text that East Germans did not want their children reading. According to Plenzdorf, "Werther stand nie auf dem Lehrplan" (Werther was never on the lesson plan).⁴⁴ East Germans favored Georg Lukács' reading of *Werther* as revealing the contradictions between "narrow bourgeois institutions, as epitomized by the marriage of Lotte and Albert, with the bourgeois ideal of self-realization."⁴⁵ As Ute Brandes and Ann Clark Fehn point out, "Much of the controversy of the Plenzdorf text for GDR readers lies in the very suggestion that sufferings comparable to those of the idealistic, alienated Lukács-Werther are possible in the socialist state."⁴⁶ Finally, the subject matter of Goethe's text helped Plenzdorf "make his case for the primacy of the individual and for nonconformity" and aided him in legitimizing the feelings of East German youth because Plenzdorf "took [Edgar's] teenage Angst and gave it some significance, put it on par with Werther's 'Leiden.'"⁴⁷

Goethe's *Werther* is an epistolary novel; readers learn about Werther's plight from letters he writes to a friend which are preceded and followed by an explanation from this friend after Werther's death. As a parody of this, Plenzdorf's is also a kind of epistolary novel. Plenzdorf's text opens with obituaries about Edgar followed by Edgar speaking from the grave, but we do not yet learn how he died. Throughout the course of the novel we learn about Edgar from tapes he recorded and sent to his friend Willi, passages of Goethe's novel which he quotes, interviews his father conducts with friends and relatives after Edgar's death, and from Edgar's thoughts from the grave, which offer a wiser perspective on his earlier behavior. Although Edgar makes several critical remarks about the GDR, both before and after his death, the lack of an authoritative narrative voice makes it unclear whether Plenzdorf is advocating or criticizing the Socialist way of life.⁴⁸

Rather than at its center, just like in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Die Unberatenen*, Black popular culture is more like an accent in Plenzdorf's novel. Nevertheless, allowing Edgar's references to Black popular culture go unacknowledged assumes a natural link between rebellious East German youth and Black popular culture. Thus, just as in Oskar's case, I find it important to examine Edgar's notions of Black popular culture, establish their origins and determine why he feels an affinity towards it. Edgar Wibeau's outsider status in East Germany is already apparent with his last name, which he discusses at length at the beginning of the novel. His name is a point of dispute and frustration at the workplace. Wibeau is of French origin, stemming from the Huguenots who settled in Berlin in the 17th Century. Edgar is a metal worker's apprentice and his instructor at the factory, Flemming, insistently calls him *Wiebau*,

⁴³ Hutchinson, "Plenzdorf, *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*," 68.

⁴⁴ Plenzdorf quoted in Hunnicutt, "'The Werther-Pistol Killed Me!' Understanding Ulrich Plenzdorf's Novel *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* as a Cult Book," 19.

⁴⁵ Ute Brandes and Ann Clark Fehn, "Werther's Children: The Experience of the Second Generation in Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* and Volker Braun's 'Unvollendete Geschichte,'" *The German Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (1983): 622, note 15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 619.

⁴⁷ Barbara Currie, "Diverging Attitudes in Literary Criticism: The 'Plenzdorf Debate' in the Early 1970s in East and West Germany," *Neophilologus* 79, no. 2 (1995): 288.

⁴⁸ Hutchinson, "Plenzdorf, *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*," 63.

thus Germanizing his name.⁴⁹ This is what provokes Edgar to drop a metal foundation plate on Flemming's toe and flee his hometown. From the grave, Edgar reflects about his actions:

I mean, after all, every person has the right to be correctly called by his correct name. If you don't attach any great importance to it – that's your business ... What's the matter with the name 'Wibeau'? If it'd been 'Hitler' maybe, or 'Himmler!' That would've been truly decent. But 'Wibeau'? 'Wibeau' is an old Huguenot name. So?⁵⁰ (NS 6)

Edgar insists that Wibeau cannot be as offensive a name as Hitler or Himmler. At the same time, however, he suggests his co-workers might have preferred those "truly decent" names because they would be easier to pronounce. Like Rull, Edgar suggests a persisting Nazi ideology and German nationalism in the postwar era which is reflected by the mispronunciation of and disrespect for his last name. This accusation is perhaps even more scandalous in East Germany where the official rhetoric claimed there were no Nazis; the state was allegedly built by anti-fascists and rather than inheriting the guilt of the Third Reich, East Germany was proposed as a direct descendant from the democratic Weimar Republic.

Despite Edgar's perceptive observation linking the mispronunciation of his name with an underlying nationalism, he still falls victim to the culturalist ideology in which he was socialized; for he claims that his penchant for losing his temper is directly related to his Huguenot blood: "Sometimes I would suddenly get hot and dizzy, and then I would do things, and afterwards I didn't know what I'd done. That was my Huguenot blood, or maybe my blood pressure was too high. Too high Huguenot blood pressure" (NS 6).⁵¹ His essentialist beliefs about his French heritage correspond to Northern European prejudices against the hot-tempered Southern European. His statement likens to that of the Afro-German boxer Georg Steinherr, active in the 1970s and 1980s, who attributed his aggressiveness and fighting skills to his "Negro" blood.⁵² Thus, it seems this essentialization of difference took place on both sides of the wall.

Although Edgar's running away is preceded by his dropping a metal plate on his instructor's toe, until this act, Edgar had actually been a model student. Similar to Rull in Valentin's novel, Edgar typically did not participate in his peers' pranks. It is not his behavior, but his beliefs that pose a danger to the system. On the morning of his rebellious act, Edgar's peers attempt to pass off machine-filed foundation plates as their own. As usual, Edgar does not participate in these antics. Nevertheless, he defends his peers' actions by challenging the factory's educational methods. When Flemming suggests the plates are from the filing machine located in a neighboring plant, Edgar responds, "OK, let's assume there is a machine there. Can

⁴⁹ D.G. John observes that "The syllables of Edgar's family name, when seen in the context of their French origin, reveal the words 'vie' and 'beau,' or 'beautiful life.' Yet when mispronounced as 'Wiebau,' the syllables produce a distorted meaning, 'wie' – 'how' and 'bau[en]' – 'to build,' ... The distortion of Edgar's name shows a tendency of modern industrial societies to forget the traditional and beautiful in favour of what is technologically useful." John, "Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*: The Death of a Fool," 38. Both John and Hutchinson feel the failure to pronounce Edgar's name correctly is a failure to recognize his individuality.

⁵⁰ "Jeder Mensch hat schließlich das Recht, mit deinem richtigen Namen richtig angedredet zu werden. Wenn einer keinen Wert darauf legt – eine Sache. Aber ich lege nun mal Wert darauf. ... Was ist den mit Wibeau? Wenn's Hitler wär oder Himmler! Das wär echt säuisch! Aber so? Wibeau ist ein alter Hugenottenname, na und?" (NL 14).

⁵¹ "Manchmal war mir eben plötzlich heiß und schwindlig, und dann machte ich was, von dem ich nachher nicht mehr wußte, was es war. Das war mein Hugenottenblut, oder ich hatte einen zu hohen Blutdruck. Zu hohen Hugenottenblutdruck" (NL 14).

⁵² Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America*, 175.

be. You have to ask yourself, why do we have to file down those foundation plates then? And that in our third year” (NS 5).⁵³ Flemming defends his teaching methods with the argument that only when the boys can file a watch out of a piece of iron by hand can they say they are no longer apprentices. Rather than question the best way of becoming a watchmaker, Edgar challenges his entire apprenticeship noting “But we didn’t really want to become watchmakers” (NS 5).⁵⁴ Edgar suggests that none of the boys really want to do this job and they might have other aspirations, but they live in a state that typically left its citizens little leeway regarding occupational choice.

His instructor Flemming is representative of the regime’s stubborn dogmatism which Edgar describes as “[an] attitude out of the Middle Ages: the era of handmade articles”⁵⁵ (NS 5), which is ironic for a regime supportive of Socialist industrialization. This irony shows the conflict between political ideology and an old-fashioned manner of doing things. Additionally, the East German school system, as Edgar describes it, seems to favor memorization over critical thinking. That is why Edgar’s talent for memorization made him such a star pupil. But rather than being proud of his memory, Edgar would prefer to be a free thinker. He refers to his penchant for memorization as “a real pain ... It had its advantages of course, in school for example. I mean every teacher is satisfied when he hears a passage from a book he knows. I couldn’t blame them. They don’t need to check if it’s all right, like they do with their own words. And they were all satisfied” (NS 30).⁵⁶

Rebellion, Youth and Nature

Edgar’s rebellious character is externalized in his wardrobe. For Edgar, jeans are the most important symbol of youth. He believes real jeans wearers are young, slim and have a carefree state of mind that one loses as one ages: “...people shouldn’t be allowed to get older than seventeen – or eighteen. After that they get a job or go to college or join the army and then there’s no reasoning with them anymore” (NS 14).⁵⁷ To be an adult and wear jeans is an oxymoron for him, just like “card-carrying Communists [who] beat their wives” (NS 14).⁵⁸ This comparison reveals the kind of sexist contradictions in the GDR to which I alluded earlier.

Edgar prefers being an artist to working in construction, because in comparison, art is not determined by preconceptions and cannot be judged scientifically. “A pair of pliers is good if it grips. But a picture or something like that? Nobody really knows whether it’s good or not” (NS 24).⁵⁹ Like Oskar initially does, Edgar associates childhood with innocence; it is an undetermined, pure state that has not yet been corrupted by society. That is why above all, Edgar

⁵³ “Also nehmen wir mal an, da steht ein Automat. Kann ja sein. Da fragt man sich doch, warum wir dann die Grundplatten mit der Feile zurechtschruppen müssen. Und das im dritten Lehrjahr” (NL 12).

⁵⁴ “Aber Uhrmacher wollten wir eigentlich schon damals nicht werden” (NL 13).

⁵⁵ “eine Einstellung aus dem Mittelalter: Manufakturperiode” (NL 13).

⁵⁶ “ein wirkliches Leiden von mir. Es hatte zwar auch seine Vorteile, in der Schule zum Beispiel. Ich meine, jeder Lehrer ist doch zufrieden, wenn er einen Text hört, den er aus dem Buch kennt. Ich konnte es keinem verdenken. Brauchte er nicht nachzuprüfen, ob alles stimmte, wie bei eigenen Worten. Und alle waren zufrieden” (NL 56).

⁵⁷ “...man dürfte nicht älter werden als siebzehn – achtzehn. Danach fängt es mit dem Beruf an oder mit irgendeinem Studium oder mit der Armee, und dann ist mit keinem mehr zu reden” (NL 27).

⁵⁸ “wenn einer dem Abzeichen nach Kommunist ist und zu Hause seine Frau prügelt” (NL 27).

⁵⁹ “Eine Zange ist gut, wenn sie kneift. Aber ein Bild oder was? Kein Aas weiß doch wirklich, ob eins gut ist oder nicht” (NL 47).

values artwork done by children. “Children can really bore you but they can paint so it’ll just knock you over. If I wanted to look at pictures I’d rather go to a kindergarten than a stupid old museum” (NS 27).⁶⁰

When Edgar runs away from his small town of Mittenberg, he goes to East Berlin where he takes refuge in an abandoned garden house belonging to the family of his friend Willi. Edgar fancies himself an artist and initially spends his time making abstract art. In the outhouse of the garden colony where the house is located, Edgar finds a copy of Goethe’s *Werther*. Because he used the book’s title page as toilet paper, he never discovers what he has been reading. According to Susan E. Hunnicutt, “by having Edgar strip the book of cover, title page and afterword, Plenzdorf was stripping it of all previous associations and interpretations, in particular of the Lukacsian interpretation...Plenzdorf essentially allowed Edgar to read Goethe without interference from State sanctioned interpretations.”⁶¹ Although Edgar is at first put off by Goethe’s “unmöglichen Stil” (impossible style), he is drawn to the text and feels his thoughts are reflected in it. In Berlin, Edgar meets a young woman whom he calls Charlie (a reference to *Werther*’s love Charlotte). When Charlie confronts Edgar with his ruse of being an artist, he rebukes her with a quote from *Werther*. The *Werther* quote with which he counters expresses a disgust of societal expectations that reaches back to the 18th century: “Uniformity marks the human race. Most of them spend the greater part of their time in working for a living, and the scanty freedom that is left to them burdens them so that they seek every means of getting rid of it” (NS 30).⁶² This description of adults recalls Oskar’s critique in Chapter One. Oskar believed adults desire subordination, for example his father joined the Nazi Party even before it was compulsory.

Edgar uses yet another *Werther* quote to counter Dieter, Charlie’s fiancé, who suggests he learn the rules of drawing before he can be an artist. Edgar suggests instead that rules might make someone accepted by society, but they also destroy everything natural.

One can say much in favor of rules, about the same thing as can be said in favor of civil society. A person who trains himself by the rules will never produce anything absurd or bad...can never become an intolerable neighbor...on the other hand any ‘rule,’ say what you like, will destroy the true feeling for nature and the true expression of her! (NS 41-2).⁶³

It is understandable that Edgar, a frustrated teen in the GDR of the 1970s, would be drawn to *Empfindsamkeit*. For those East German youths who wished to “drop out” of society and seek an escape from the regimented daily life in the GDR, *Empfindsamkeit*’s “turn inwards” and retreat

⁶⁰ “Kinder können einen ungeheuer anöden, aber malen können sie, daß man kaputtgeht. Wenn ich mir schon Bilder ansah, dann bin ich lieber in einen Kindergarten gegangen als in ein olles Museum” (NL 50).

⁶¹ Hunnicutt, “‘The Werther-Pistol Killed Me!’ Understanding Ulrich Plenzdorf’s Novel Die neuen Leiden des jungen W. as a Cult Book,” 20.

⁶² “Es ist ein einförmiges Ding um das Menschengeschlecht. Die meisten verarbeiten den größten Teil der Zeit, um zu leben, und das bißchen, das ihnen von Freiheit übrigbleibt, ängstigt sie so, daß sie alle Mittel aufsuchen, um es loszuwerden” (NL 56).

⁶³ “Man kann zum Vorteile der Regeln viel sagen, ungefähr was man zum Wohle der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft sagen kann. Ein Mensch, der sich nach ihnen bildet, wird nie etwas Abgeschmacktes und Schlechtes hervorbringen...nie ein unerträglicher Nachbar...dagegen wird aber auch alle Regel, man rede, was man wolle, das wahre Gefühl von Natur und den wahren Ausdruck derselben zerstören!” (NL 76).

into nature would be appealing.⁶⁴ In fact, Edgar's opinions about freedom and nature and his fascination and elevation of Black culture over German culture, both of which I will discuss later, resonate with *Empfindsamkeit*. In Karl von Eckartshausen's short story which stems from this literary period, "Isogin und Celia, eine Geschichte von einem unsrer schwarzen Brüder aus Afrika, von einem Mohren", ("Isogin and Celia, a Story About One of our Black Brothers from Africa, About a Moor," 1787) Eckartshausen expresses similar opinions to that found in *Werther*. Not only does he criticize the rules of German society, but he seems to hold Africans to a higher standard than Europeans because Africans allegedly follow the rules of nature as opposed to man-made rules.

I do not know, whether it is really true that Europeans are the more civilized peoples: I doubt this more and more each day. The name barbarian, with which we so like to label other peoples, sounds strange to me. I think we've fooled ourselves; that we may be mistaken. Could it be that we actually have earned the name barbarian more than some native, who at least, even if he does not have other laws, stays true to the laws of nature?⁶⁵

Here the European's tragic state of being alienated from nature is contrasted to the "noble savage's" harmony found in nature. Eckartshausen also shares Edgar's opinion about education.

When I think back about what the state and what education have made out of me, I often find an odd thing; a creature who was alienated from nature starting in his youth through thousands of endeavors, whom people filled with knowledge that was of little use to him and made him familiar with a system that does not exist in nature and that forces some opinions onto people which under great scrutiny are revealed as lies.⁶⁶

Despite his essentialist view of Africans, it is still remarkable that Eckartshausen sees Africans as "brothers" rather than a separate race.

The sensibility movement promoted that the individual withdraw into himself which is a stark contrast to East Germany's emphasis on collectivity. Aside from its de-emphasis on the individual, Edgar's environment did not promote feeling or affect either; rather East German bureaucracy was decidedly cold and rational. The obituary published about Edgar in the local newspaper callously condemns his alternative lifestyle and denies him any sympathy for an

⁶⁴ There was a close link between the East German Blues scene and a culture of wayfarers. See Rauhut, ed., *Bye Bye, Lübben City: Bluesfreaks, Tramps und Hippies in der DDR*.

⁶⁵ "Ich weiß es wirklich nicht, ob es den schon so ganz ausgemacht ist, daß wir Europäer die gesitteten Völker sind: Ich zweifle täglich mehr. Der Name Barbaren, mit dem wir so gerne andere Völker bennen, klingt mir so wunderlich, daß mir manchmal sehr schwindelt, wir könnten uns geirrt haben. Verdienen wir vielleicht den Namen Barbaren nicht eher als mancher Wilder, der doch wenigstens, wenn er auch keine anderen Gesetze hat, den Gesetzen der Natur treu bleibt?" Karl von Eckartshausen, "Isogin und Celia, eine Geschichte von einem unsrer schwarzen Brüder aus Afrika, von einem Mohren (1787)" in *Die edlen Wilden: Die Verklärung von Indianern, Negern und Südseeinsulanern auf dem Hintergrund der kolonialen Greuel. Vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Gerd Stein (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1984), 157.

⁶⁶ "Wenn ich mich selbst zurückdenke, was der Staat, was Erziehung aus mir gemacht haben, so finde ich oft ein sehr wunderliches Ding, ein Geschöpf, das man von Jugend auf durch tausenderlei Bemühungen von der Natur entfernte, das man mit manchen Kenntnissen anpropfte, die ihm nichts nützen, und das man mit Systemen bekannt machte, die in der Natur nicht existieren und dem man manche Meinungen aufdrang, die bei Untersuchung große Lügen waren." Ibid.

accidental death caused by his “careless tinkering with electric current” (NS 1).⁶⁷ His mother describes the messages he recorded and sent home as “Strange messages. So affected” (NS 3).⁶⁸ And she based his health on his ability to work: “No matter, at least they [the tapes] told us one thing. That Edgar was well. That he was even working, and not wasting his time” (NS 3).⁶⁹ The state’s turn from feeling and nature to reason and efficiency is reflected in the fact that the garden colony where Edgar hides out is scheduled to be demolished to make room for new high-rise apartment complexes. Ironically, such garden colonies are remnants from the Weimar Republic and were conceived as creating green spaces in the city where the working-class could find rest, fresh air and exercise – an attempt to reconcile the modern subject with nature. In Eberhard Itzenplitz’s film adaptation of the text, the constellation between Edgar, *Empfindsamkeit* and Blacks is symbolized by non-diegetic drumming that is played when Edgar runs through the garden colony.⁷⁰ This same drumming also frames the film, playing during the opening and closing credits, which makes it seem like Edgar’s leitmotif.

Romantic Notions of Black Popular Culture

Throughout the novel Edgar tries to portray himself as a rebel only to admit that he has consistently given in to authority figures like his mother, who was against his artistic ambitions and wanted him to learn an “ordentlichen Beruf” (decent job). His mother’s dedication to normalcy even led her to try to train the left-handed Edgar to write with his right hand which failed. Edgar was raised under the stigma of being a child of divorce which only made things more difficult. He reflects, “I was just sick of running around as living proof that you can raise a child very well without a father” (NS 11).⁷¹ In general, Edgar was a very obedient son, which is why an artistic lifestyle and Blues music might have been so appealing to him: both represented a way to break out of his normal routine. The reason he gives for his rebellion makes him seem like one of Mailer’s “white Negroes” who decides “to accept the terms of death, to live death as immediate danger, to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots.”⁷² Before running away, Edgar suddenly realizes that if he were to die, “If [he’d] suddenly croaked, smallpox or something... what would [he] have gotten out of life” (NS 11).⁷³ Like the “white Negro” Edgar equates danger with experiencing life, with really living.⁷⁴

While Werther’s suffering was caused by alienation, Edgar actually suffers from too much attention. “Werther was a misfit and very much alone in his society; despite his anti-social behavior, Edgar does not lack support.”⁷⁵ In fact, it is the overwhelming support, guidance and

⁶⁷ “bei Basteleien unsachgemäß mit elektrischem Strom umgegangen” (NL 7).

⁶⁸ “Mekrwürdige Texte. So geschwollen” (NL 9).

⁶⁹ “Immerhin ging so viel daraus hervor, daß Edgar gesund war, sogar arbeitete, also nicht gammelte” (NL 10).

⁷⁰ Itzenplitz’s film adaptation is from 1976 and is a West German production.

⁷¹ “Ich hatte einfach genug davor, als lebender Beweis dafür rumzulaufen, daß man einen Jungen *sehr* gut ohne Vater erziehen kann” (NL 23).

⁷² Mailer, *The White Negro*, 2.

⁷³ “... was gewesen wäre, wenn ich plötzlich abkratzen müßte, schwarze Pocken oder was. Ich meine, was ich dann vom Leben gehabt hätte” (NL 23).

⁷⁴ In *On the Road*, Jack Keruoac writes “[I wish] I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night.” Penny Vlagopoulos, “Rewriting America: Keruoac’s Nation of ‘*Underground Monsters*,” in *On the Road: The Original Scroll*, ed. Howard Cunnell (New York: Viking, 2007), 59.

⁷⁵ Hutchinson, “Plenzdorf, *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*,” 70.

smothering nature of the state and society which drive Edgar to rebel. “They [East Germans] are helpless victims of a state which overcontrols them and persuades them they are better off as they are – protected and secure. Yet the desire to break free from such ‘protection’ is clearly at the heart of Edgar’s problem.”⁷⁶ Evidence of East German society’s paternal nature is when Edgar is short on money in Berlin and he easily finds a job at a construction site where the workers take him under their wing, despite his lack of talent for the work.

In his short life, Edgar constructed himself as the underappreciated artist genius. He even brought his portfolio to an art school in Berlin to apply for a spot. The professor with whom he consulted suggested he become a draftsman, but Edgar wanted to be a “real” artist who is not a part of the GDR’s system.⁷⁷ Part of Edgar’s fantasy is the belief that his father was an avant-garde painter, when in fact his father is just a movie extra.⁷⁸ Edgar’s resentment for his mother stemmed, in part, from her determination to limit the contact between him and his father whom he calls “der schwarze Mann von Mittenberg” (NL 21). Literally this would be translated as “the black man from Mittenberg” but in German slang it really means “the bad man.” In Edgar’s imagination, his father led the kind of artist’s life which Edgar strived for. He described his father as “the slob who drank and chased women. The bad man from Mittenberg. Him with his paintings that nobody could understand” (NS 10).⁷⁹ W. Barner notes that Edgar initially sees his father as “a role model...an artist on whom he can orient himself. But this proves to be an illusion. The son has to find his own path.”⁸⁰

Edgar’s fantastical description of his father sounds like the mythical Blues musician so admired by white fans – reckless, decadent and dangerous. In general, Edgar shows great respect for artists and particularly Blues and jazz musicians. While in Plenzdorf’s text Edgar primarily listens to Blues, in the film he alternately listens to Blues, contemporary rock (Santana, Cat Stevens and Iron Butterfly) and 1950s’ rock ‘n’ roll. Among the musicians that Edgar prefers, his favorite is Louis Armstrong, whom he familiarly refers to as Satchmo. Even in his musical preferences Edgar resists the regime; for example, East German musicologists dismissed Armstrong’s music as fodder for the culture industry. Edgar writes a “Blue Jeans” song which he sings in the style of Louis Armstrong’s jazz. He asks that readers imagine “All of that [the lyrics of the Blue Jeans song] in this very rich sound, in *his* style. Some people think *he’s* dead. That’s bullshit. Satchmo can’t be killed, because Jazz can’t be killed” (NS 15).⁸¹ In the film, this comparison is articulated with Edgar ending a performance of his “Blue Jeans Song” with a Louis Armstrong impersonation. In Plenzdorf’s text, Edgar also describes himself as a combination between Robinson Crusoe and Louis Armstrong (NS 15). For Edgar, Armstrong,

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ In one scene, Edgar watches a film at school which is clearly a piece of propaganda for the military. Edgar then confronts the director about making such persuasive films that are not entertaining. The director, with whom Edgar speaks, is actually supposed to be Plenzdorf. This was Plenzdorf’s way of criticizing artists who conform to the censor’s rules, himself included.

⁷⁸ In the film, Edgar’s father confesses to Charlie that he was once a painter but stopped after he left Edgar and his mother.

⁷⁹ “...diesen Schlamper, der soff und der es ewig mit den Weibern hatte. Der schwarze Mann von Mittenberg. Der mit seiner Malerei, die kein Mensch verstand...” (NL 21).

⁸⁰ Barner quoted in Slavija Kabić and Eldi Grubišić Pulišelić, “‘Ich Idiot wollte immer der Sieger sein’: Der Anti-Held Edgar Wibeau aus Ulrich Plenzdorfs Erzählung Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.,” *Zagreber Germanistische Beiträge: Jahrbuch für Literatur- und Sprachwissenschaft* 16 (2007): 53.

⁸¹ “Das alles in diesem ganz satten Sound, in *seinem* Stil eben. Manche halten *ihn* für tot. Das ist völliger Humbug. Satchmo ist überhaupt nicht totzukriegen, weil der Jazz nicht totzukriegen ist. ... Anschließend fühlte ich mich wie Robinson Crusoe und Satchmo auf einmal” (NL 30).

who died in 1971, and jazz embody the eternal youth that he longs for. Another Black hero of Edgar's is Sidney Poitier, whom he describes as his favorite actor next to Charlie Chaplin. For Edgar, the roles these actors play position them as "advocates for justice for the small and the humiliated."⁸²

When he is not recording messages for his friend Willi, he listens to the band MS-Septet: "The MS-Septet refers to MSB – the Modern Soul Band, founded in 1968. As they say, their name was the program. MSB were the 'Blood, Sweat and Tears' of East Germany."⁸³ Edgar's love of soul is reflected in his description of himself as "Edgar Wibeau, the great rhythmist, equally great in Beat and Soul" (NS 32).⁸⁴ In Berlin, He frequents music clubs and besides the MS-Septet he enjoys hearing East German jazz and soul songstress Uschi Brüning whom he describes as not "any worse than Ella Fitzgerald" (NS 33).⁸⁵

Despite Edgar's rhythmic talent, something he also shares with Oskar, he admits to not being able to dance. He defends his inability to dance in public with the fact that the music is always interrupted by breaks. To really get into a groove, two bands would have to play interchangeably, "Otherwise no one can get into proper form. The Negroes know that. I mean the Blacks. You should say Blacks" (NS 32).⁸⁶ Edgar's self-correction, switching from the term "Neger" to "Afrikaner" in the original German, reveals a self-consciousness about racial terms that expresses his desire to side with and show respect for the oppressed; a sentiment he shares with many leftist West German young people. In the GDR, this respect of racial difference was often present in theory but not in practice. Kenneth Wilcox, translator of the English text, opted to change "Afrikaner" (African) to Black. Here, the translation definitely changes the meaning implied in the text. Like Oskar, Edgar attributes a feel for rhythm to Blacks, but in particular Africans. By changing "Afrikaner" to "Blacks" Wilcox ignores the fact that Edgar is not talking about Blacks as a nondescript racial group, which could include for example African Americans or Black Brits. Edgar purposefully mentions Africans. Perhaps he refers to Africans because considering the African orphans, students and workers present in the GDR, he was more likely to encounter Africans than African Americans. Therefore, although Black popular culture in his imaginary is very much influenced by African American culture, his actual contact with Black individuals might be limited to Africans.

⁸² Kabić and Pulišelić, "'Ich Idiot wollte immer der Sieger sein': Der Anti-Held Edgar Wibeau aus Ulrich Plenzdorfs Erzählung Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.," 65.

⁸³ "Das MS-Septet meint MSB – die Modern Soul Band, 1968 gegründet. Wie es so schön heißt: der Name war Programm. MSB waren die Blood, Sweat and Tears der DDR..." Frank et. al. Schäfer, ed., *Kultbücher : von "Schatzinsel" bis "Pooh's Corner" : eine Auswahl* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2000), 96. MSB eventually became the well-known East German band *Die Puhdys* for whom Plenzdorf wrote the songs "Geh zu ihr" (Go to her) and "Wenn ein Mensch lebt" (If a person lives) which were both featured in *The Legend of Paul and Paula*.

⁸⁴ "Edgar Wibeau, der große Rhythmiker, gleich groß in Beat und Soul" (NL 60).

⁸⁵ "sie ist nicht schlechter als Ella Fitzgerald" (NL 60).

⁸⁶ "Sonst kann sich kein Mensch in seine richtige Form steigern. Die Neger wissen das. Oder Afrikaner. Man soll wohl Afrikaner sagen" (NL 59).

Edgar Sings the Blues

Plenzdorf's text is called *The New Sufferings of Young W[ibeau]* and the Blues seem an appropriate trope for Edgar because of his numerous sorrows. Edgar's "blues" are, however, quite insignificant. Barbara Currie does not consider Edgar a tragic character; rather she argues that he merely flirts with the idea of being an outsider.⁸⁷ The insignificant nature of Edgar's troubles might be a result of his young age. Furthermore, despite his non-conformity, as a white, heterosexual German male in the GDR, he has the potential to be a part of the hegemonic majority. Despite his odd behavior, his colleagues at the construction site in Berlin seem eager to integrate him. In the film, his boss even offers to train him more closely and asks Edgar to join the brigade for their annual bowling outings.

Aside from the burden of his robotic memory, Edgar also suffers from not being able to wear long hair:

As a genuine model student in Mittenberg I naturally wasn't even allowed to have a shag, much less *long* hair. I don't know if you can imagine what a pain that was...having long hair was a nonstop hassle. Just the way people looked at it. I don't know if you know what I mean, people. That face that they make when they tell you that you can't have long hair in the shop or someplace else, for safety reasons. Or else head protection, hairnets, like the women, so you look branded, like you're being punished (NS 33-4).⁸⁸

Edgar's lament recalls the comparison West German students made between being discriminated against because of one's long hair and being a Black person in the U.S.⁸⁹ Such a comparison seems audacious, which begs one to ask whether Edgar's attachment to Blues is as superficial as his sufferings are.

Another one of Edgar's sufferings is avoidable – the cough he develops from not heating the garden house in the winter. Edgar does not have to remain in the house, he could return to his mother, who pleads him to come home and tries to find a compromise suggesting that Edgar find work in a different factory. But Edgar likes the idea of being a sickly struggling artist:

Not that I was sick or anything, at least not really. I did have a cough. Probably I'd gotten it rummaging around in the old subdivision. Maybe I should've started heating the place. But I could've stopped coughing if I'd wanted to. Only that I'd sort of gotten used to it. It had such a splendid effect. Edgar Wibeau, the unrecognized genius, selflessly works on his newest invention, his lung half eaten away, and he doesn't give up (NS 62).⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Currie, "Diverging Attitudes in Literary Criticism: The 'Plenzdorf Debate' in the Early 1970s in East and West Germany," 286.

⁸⁸ "Als echter Vorbildknabe durfte ich in Mittenberg natürlich keinen Kanten haben und eine Innenrolle schon gar nicht. Ich weiß nicht, ob sich einer vorstellen kann, was das für ein Leiden war...Dabei gab es in einer Tour Heckmeck wegen der Haare. Schon bei der Einstellung. Ich weiß nicht, wer das kennt, Leute. Dieses Gesicht, wenn sie einem erklären, daß in der Werkstatt oder wo keine langen Haare getragen werden dürfen, wegen der Sicherheit. Oder eben Kopfschutz, Haarnetz, wie die Frauen, womit einer dann aussieht wie markiert, bestraft" (NL 61-2).

⁸⁹ Siegfried, "Authentisch schwarz: Blues in der Gegenkultur um 1970," 221-2.

⁹⁰ "Nicht, daß ich krank war oder so, jedenfalls nicht wirklich. Ich hatte zwar Husten. Wahrscheinlich hatte ich mir den bei der Rumkramerei in der ollen Kolonie zugezogen. Vielleicht hätte ich auch anfangen müssen zu heizen. Aber ich hätte auch aufhören können zu husten. Bloß, ich

Edgar's acknowledgment that his suffering was avoidable draws yet another comparison to the "white Negroes" who fetishized Black popular culture without recognizing the tangible bodily pains Blacks faced in reality.

The final symptom, from which Edgar suffers, is his unrequited love for Charlie. Throughout their friendship, Edgar perceives hints of mutual affection from Charlie, but he can never be entirely sure how she feels. And for Charlie to break off her engagement to a veteran and college student in order to begin a relationship with a *Gammler* (bum) like Edgar would be social suicide. Nevertheless, shortly before Edgar's deathly accident, he shares an intimate moment with Charlie when the two go off for a motor boat trip in a rain storm, leaving an angry Dieter at home to work on a homework assignment. The two stop at a small island so that Charlie can relieve herself. Afterwards, sitting next to each other completely soaked, Charlie asks Edgar if he would like a kiss.⁹¹ Edgar accepts her offer and the experience leads him to draw the following comparison: "In some book I once read how this Negro, I mean this Black, comes to Europe and gets his first white woman. He started singing, some song from his homeland ... With Charlie I really could've started singing. I don't know if you know what I mean, people. There was no saving me" (NS 76).⁹²

Once again, the translator replaces "African" with "Black" for reasons unknown.⁹³ For Edgar, the permission to kiss Charlie is the most significant form of recognition he can imagine. The best way he can think of conveying his feelings for Charlie is an example that unites two supposedly disparate ends of the spectrum of race – the African man and the much treasured white woman. Frantz Fanon describes the significance of the white woman for Black men in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Speaking from the perspective of the Black man who desires white women, he says:

I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*.

Now – and this is a form of recognition that Hegel had not envisaged – 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.

Her love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization....⁹⁴

hatte es mir so schön angewöhnt. Es machte sich hervorragend so. Edgar Wibeau, das verkannte Genie, bei der selbstlosen Arbeit an seiner neuesten Erfindung, die Lunge halb weggefressen, und er gibt nicht auf" (NL 110-11).

⁹¹ In the film this scene proceeds slightly differently. While they are still in the boat, Charlie lays her head on Edgar's shoulder. Then she begins kissing him. During the boat trip, the non-diegetic drumming is heard and this drumming intensifies when Charlie kisses Edgar. The director's use of the drumming in this scene suggests a link between drumming, carnal desire and Edgar, which relates well to Edgar's subsequent comparison between the experience of kissing Charlie and a Black man who kisses his first white woman.

⁹² "In irgendeinem Buch hab ich mal gelesen, wie ein Neger, also ein Afrikaner, nach Europa kommt und wie er seine erste weiße Frau kriegt. Er fängt dabei an zu singen, irgendeinen Song von sich zu Hause. ... Bei Charlie hätte ich wirklich singen können. Ich weiß nicht, wer das kennt, Leute. Ich war nicht mehr zu retten" (NL 134).

⁹³ Interestingly, in the film Edgar does not correct himself; rather he unapologetically uses the word "Neger."

⁹⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 63.

Thus, although Edgar aligns himself with an African in this statement, it is a racist statement nevertheless. Edgar feels like an African, because his lowly status as a *Gammler* (bum) pales in comparison to Charlie, the ideal and noble beauty. The scene ends in disaster, for Charlie abandons Edgar never to speak to him again and Edgar realizes he has misread her signals; she had only been using him to get back at Dieter.⁹⁵ Heartbroken, Edgar returns to his garden house where he makes a final attempt to finish building an automatic paint sprayer, with which he wants to brag at the construction site. The sprayer explodes, killing Edgar instantly and leaving it unclear whether it was an accident or suicide.

Inevitably, Edgar dies because he cannot meaningfully be integrated into the system and because the state's ideology is too narrow-minded. There is no space for him to exist outside of it. For Edgar, who prefers a retreat to nature, the confrontation with modernity reveals itself to be a losing battle. He is unhappy with the prospect of being yet another worker on an assembly line – another cog in the wheel. He would prefer to withdraw into nature and into himself. However, his dream of being an artist cannot be realized in a state where most citizens were encouraged to go into manual labor. By resolving to fix the automatic paint sprayer his foreman fails to get working, Edgar gives in to modernity by seeking to create a device that makes work easier. Yet, if the sprayer had worked properly, Edgar would no longer have had to earn his living painting rooms. The time he could have saved painting at construction sites could have been devoted to his art. When the machine explodes, it kills him and any hope of reconciling his frustrations with GDR life.

Hunnicuttt questions the truth of claims that Edgar's death was an accident. She points out Willi's statement that Edgar was actually pretty successful at inventing things. Hunnicutt believes Edgar chose to let the machine explode so that his death looks like an accident, because in a state where the official statistics on suicide were kept secret, "Edgar's life *and* death would have been *totgeschwiegen* [kept silent]."⁹⁶ I do not disagree with Hunnicutt's argument, but I believe Edgar lets the machine take his life to make a point about the cold-hearted rationalism of the state. Edgar may have actually been talented with machinery, but that is not the path he *chose*. Therefore, he allows a machine, a representative of modernization and industry, to take his life as an act of protest. Edgar's death seems a testament to the GDR's failure to allow its citizens more freedom. At the end of the novel, his foreman Addi gives the following explanation to his father as the reason for Edgar's death: "According to what the doctors said, it was something electrical" (NS 83).⁹⁷ This statement recalls the ending of Georg Kaiser's Expressionist play *Vom morgen bis mitternachts* (From Morning to Midnight, 1912). In Kaiser's play, the protagonist is simply named Kassierer (cashier), after his profession. Faced with the troubles of modern society, the cashier concludes that money is the root of all evil and he therefore succeeds in breaking out of the circulation of money and bourgeois culture altogether.

⁹⁵ The film takes things a bit further, implying sex between Edgar and Charlie. After relieving herself on the island, Charlie asks Edgar if he wants to go skinny dipping. He agrees and the two strip down and slowly walk towards each other. This scene cuts to the camera panning across the forest, before settling on a half-naked Edgar and a fully clothed Charlie lying next to each other in the grass. The pastoral setting and the rain have a biblical effect, linking the two to Adam and Eve. Perhaps this scene is shot from the naïve perspective of Edgar, who believes he has a future with Charlie.

⁹⁶ Hunnicutt, "'The Werther-Pistol Killed Me!': Understanding Ulrich Plenzdorf's Novel *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* as a Cult Book," 23.

⁹⁷ "Nach dem, was die Ärzte sagten, war es eine Stromsache" (NL 148).

Yet, shortly thereafter he dies. Before his death, he makes the following observation about his mechanical life, “From morning to midnight I chase round in a frenzied circle – his beckoning finger shows the way out – where to?”⁹⁸ Because the cashier no longer values society’s rules, he is able to liberate himself; however, as a result he is disconnected from everyone else and therefore he dies. The only explanation the policeman can offer is “There must have been a short circuit.”⁹⁹ This short circuit suggests that the cashier might have rebelled, but inevitably his protest against society and his death will not disrupt the greater system; the order remains.¹⁰⁰ The same is true for Edgar; “his autonomy is the direct cause of his death.”¹⁰¹

“You’re never too old for a revolution”¹⁰²

Plenzdorf wrote *The New Sufferings of Young W.* in the 1970s – a time when East Germany was economically stable.¹⁰³ In contrast, Michael Schorr’s film is set during a time of economic depression in the East. Following reunification, after East Germans overwhelmingly voted in favor of joining the Federal Republic of Germany, nearly the entire East German system was dismantled by West Germany. This restructuring meant that many East German businesses were bought by their West German competitors and then shut down. East Germany suffered an intense rise in unemployment, from which it still has not recovered. Thus, while Edgar suffers under the GDR philosophy of a “Recht auf Arbeit” (right to employment), after reunification many Easterners lose this right.

Furthermore, animosity between East and West Germans that for years had been fed by Cold War rhetoric did not dissolve with the GDR. In the early days of reunification, the press depicted East Germans as naïve newcomers to capitalism who had quickly traded in their bankrupt state for a few hundred German Marks as *Begrüßungsgeld* (welcome money) for shopping. Once the euphoria of change subsided, many East Germans felt duped and even today feel disappointed by and highly distrustful of democracy. Eighteen years after reunification, East and West Germans still sense an enduring separation between them; whether in the differences in pay scale and unemployment rates or persisting animosities and prejudices on both sides. After four decades of isolation, East Germans soon learned that reunification not only brought welcomed change and opportunity, but problems as well. The immobility they had experienced in the GDR, such as the inability to travel to Western countries, may have been done away with, but for many of those who remained in the East it was replaced by a different kind of upward *immobility* linked to a lack of opportunity.

⁹⁸ Georg Kaiser, “From Morning to Midnight,” in *German Expressionist Plays*, ed. Ernst Schürner (New York: Continuum, 2002), 197. “Von morgens bis mitternachts rase ich im Kreise – nun zeigt sein fingerhergewinktes Zeichen den Ausweg ---wohin?” Georg Kaiser, *Von Morgens bis Mitternachts* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), 65.

⁹⁹ Kaiser, “From Morning to Midnight,” 197. “Es ist ein Kurzschluß in der Leitung.” Kaiser, *Von Morgens bis Mitternachts*, 65.

¹⁰⁰ “In her article, Christine Cosentino refers to Stromsache as the difficulty of swimming against the current of societal norms...” Hunnicutt, “‘The Werther-Pistol Killed Me!’ Understanding Ulrich Plenzdorf’s Novel *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* as a Cult Book,” 23.

¹⁰¹ John, “Ulrich Plenzdorf’s *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*: The Death of a Fool,” 36.

¹⁰² This is what Manfred says to Schultze when the two contemplate how to react to their forced retirement.

¹⁰³ The GDR’s economic stability in the 1970s made it possible for the government to roll back restrictions pertaining to the arts. Currie, “Diverging Attitudes in Literary Criticism: The ‘Plenzdorf Debate’ in the Early 1970s in East and West Germany,” 283.

Set in postunification Germany, *Schultze Gets the Blues* tells the story of a middle-aged miner named Schultze who lives in the small East German town of Teutschenthal in Saxony-Anhalt. Saxony-Anhalt is the location of the *Harzgebirge* (Harz mountains), an area of small villages which were previously dependent on mining. “Today, because of the limited industry, the region’s economy is mainly supported by tourism.”¹⁰⁴ Compared to Edgar, Schultze’s life seems to have followed a more traditional path. He is well-integrated in the community, having worked as a miner and been a member of his local music club. In contrast to Edgar, Schultze does not appear dissatisfied with the provincial lifestyle. The film opens with an establishing shot of the Eastern countryside; the *mise-en-scène* is empty aside from a lone windmill to the left of the frame, and a distant mountain and a few telephone poles in the background. The patient turning of the windmill and the lack of action conveys the slow-paced life of the village. The camera remains still as Schultze enters the frame from the left and exits on a bicycle. In the next shot, we see Schultze and his co-workers Manfred and Jürgen waiting at a railroad crossing on their bicycles. Their immobility and conflict with modern technology is emphasized not only by their bicycles, but also by their inability to move after a train has passed because they must wait for the rail operator to manually raise the bar. While Schultze is one of the group, the camera’s prior focus on his solitary movement relays his potential for mobility and change.

After the credits role to the upbeat sound of a Zydeco tune sung in French Creole, the next shot is of Schultze riding a mining elevator to the surface. The film begins on the day that Schultze, Jürgen and Manfred have been made redundant. If the three men began their careers, like Edgar, in their teens, one suspects they have been working in the mine for well over forty years. After devoting most of their life to their work, they are forced to retire and sent packing accompanied by their colleagues’ singing of the traditional *Bergmannslied* (miners’ song) “Glück auf, Glück auf! der Steiger kommt” (Good luck, Good luck! The foreman’s coming) and with gifts of lamps made out of salt rock. Schultze and his friends clearly are not satisfied with these events. Their retirement ceremony scene is shot from outside the room where the festivity takes place. From the standpoint of a voyeur, while Schultze and the other miners are limited to their own perspective, the audience can see the bigger picture. Schultze, Manfred and Jürgen sit around a small table with their heads bowed down; the salt rock lamps sit in the middle of the table. The other miners surround the three, standing around the table as they sing. The scene resembles a religious ceremony with Schultze and his friends in prayer and the choir of miners accompanying them. Schultze and Jürgen wipe away tears as if their careers were being laid to rest. This scene conveys the men’s frustration with their early retirement and the important status mining has held in their lives.

They were likely forced into retirement because the region’s industry is suffering. Not only does Jürgen say the firm “took the piss out of them” and they were “thrown out,”¹⁰⁵ but several scenes suggest that they did not voluntarily retire. First, Manfred’s wife is shown looking

¹⁰⁴ “Heute stützt sich die Wirtschaft der Region bei wenig verarbeitender Industrie vornehmlich auf den Fremdenverkehr.” Annette Erler, “Von Spielmannszügen und Bergsängern im Harz: Musikalische Aktivitäten in einer geteilten Region,” in *Musikalische Volkskultur als soziale Chance. Laienmusik und Singtradition als sozialintegratives Feld. Tagungsbericht Hildesheim 94 der Kommission für Lied-, Musik- und Tanzforschung in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde*, ed. Günther Noll and Helga Stein (Essen: Verlag die blaue Eule, 1996), 431.

¹⁰⁵ All dialogue excerpts are based on the German-language dialogue as it is heard in the DVD release of the film (based on subtitles and the author’s translation).

for a new job for him in the newspaper shortly afterwards and the jobs that she tries to convince him to take are low-paying and rather unattractive, like construction, truck driving and working in a sausage factory. Secondly, Schultze complains about getting a raw deal from their employers. When they leave the mine on their last day, rather than follow the three men, the camera focuses in on the silence and the objects left behind: a table and chairs, a kettle and pot of sausages, a coat rack with a single coat – all testaments to the simplicity of their daily lives. The emphasis is placed on the disassembly of the industry – as the young people move away and the older residents die, all that remains is silence and abandoned objects.

Without work, their core bonding activity and the most important communal activity in the former GDR, their daily routines seem to become meaningless. Jürgen and Manfred find distraction at home with their loved ones – Jürgen has his wife as company and Manfred has a wife and a son whose motocross career he encourages. Schultze, however, has neither a wife nor children. He is shown, instead, lovingly caring for his garden gnomes. From the silent scenes of Schultze in his small garden house, it slowly becomes apparent that Schultze is not the model East German citizen one might have suspected. Aside from being a good worker, another important component of postwar masculinity, in the East and the West, was marrying, having children and caring for a family – producer-provider-protector. In Robert Pirro's analysis of the film he claims "for Schultze, the end of mining work does not disrupt his life of routine: solitary meals, meeting his pals, Jürgen and Manfred, over beers at the local pub or fishing with them from a bridge, and playing accordion (as his father had before him) for the town band."¹⁰⁶ However, I believe the silence of these sequences shows how empty and meaningless Schultze's participation in these rituals has become. By losing his job, he has lost what was traditionally his key function in East German society; that which defined his manhood.

Not only does Schultze not have a wife and children, but his own family is anything from idyllic. His mother lives in a nursing home. He may visit her regularly, but she is in a catatonic state and seems incapable of conversing with him. His father has passed away and all that remains is a portrait of him with an accordion. The accordion symbolizes the pressure of the past. It is, in Emily Hauze's words, "A paternal tradition. The image of his father, of whom he feels pressured to be an exact duplicate, looms, with phallically extended accordion in hand."¹⁰⁷ Thus, playing the accordion is the only connection left between Schultze and his father and perhaps the only area in which Schultze, the eternal bachelor, has not disappointed him. Schultze tries to escape his father's view and judgment by turning his picture around, but the frame falls down, reasserting his presence.

Interestingly, Schultze spends a lot of time in a garden house that resembles where Edgar lived after running away. Unlike his friend Jürgen who is forced to interact with a rude neighbor next door, Schultze likes to be on the outskirts of town, isolated from everyone else and surrounded by his garden gnomes. Schultze has a permanent home elsewhere, but his garden house is not just a summer getaway. Therefore, despite Schultze's participation in collective

¹⁰⁶ Robert Pirro, "Tragedy, Surrogation and the Significance of African-American Culture in Postunification Germany: An Interpretation of *Schultze Gets the Blues*," *German Politics and Society* 26, no. 88 (2008): 69.

¹⁰⁷ Emily Hauze, "Keyed Fantasies: Music, the Accordion and the American Dream in *Stroszek* and *Schultze Gets the Blues*," *German Life and Letters* 62, no. 1 (2009): 93.

activities, he appears to be somewhat of an outsider. Perhaps Schultze is the man Edgar would have become, had he not died in a tragic accident and instead had tried to make a compromise with his mother and take on some other kind of work in his hometown.

Mobility vs. Immobility

There are several reasons why Schultze seems an unlikely rebel: he is old, retired and a rather quiet man who never argues, let alone raises his voice to anyone. In terms of style, his plain appearance – bald head, glasses, worn-out jeans, plaid shirt and hat – gives him the look of a farmer who would hardly turn any heads in his village. Although his retirement theoretically ushers in the opportunity for change in Schultze's life, he seems like an improbable candidate for change. He is a man of routines and traditional conventions. He spends his days engaging in the same activities he did while he was working: going to the local pub, going fishing, working in his garden, visiting his mother and playing the accordion in the local music club *Harmonie*. His life is so regulated, that even his fellow members of the music club poke fun at his stagnancy, although they themselves are also conservative. They could never imagine Schultze playing something other than his traditional polka, which one man suggests should be renamed the "Schultzepolka." During the planning for the music fest to commemorate the music club's fiftieth anniversary, one of the club members provokes Schultze, asking him what on earth he would play besides his polka, "Techno or something?"¹⁰⁸ This provocation points out the absurdity of someone as old as Schultze becoming interested in such a new musical genre, which is usually only associated with younger people.

In contrast, there are several other individuals who seem more likely candidates for rebellion. For example, there is Frau Lorant, his mother's roommate at the nursing home. Frau Lorant does not equate herself with the other nursing home residents, to whom she refers as "alte Leute" (old people). Frau Laurent's cosmopolitan nature is embodied by her taste for Irish whiskey and her French name which the nursing home workers have difficulty pronouncing, just like Wibeau. Frau Laurent behaves much more candidly than the other nursing home residents. She wears revealing dresses, flirts with Schultze and enjoys sneaking off to the casino. Her fire for life makes her sudden death all the more unfathomable for Schultze.

Another person who seems discontent with the confines of the village is Manfred. Manfred has dreams of his son going to America and competing in motor cross. He believes that America is where the opportunity and fortune is. He says about his son, "He should have it better than me, when he's over there riding motor cross."¹⁰⁹ Manfred's obsession with America is expressed in the several American flags decorating his home and the hi-tech American products he buys.

Finally, there is the mysterious new waitress at their local pub named Lisa. She arrives in town in order to work at the music festival. Much like Frau Laurent, Lisa has a very open and outspoken nature, playfully flirting with Schultze. Upon their first meeting, she boldly jumps on

¹⁰⁸ "Techno oder wie?"

¹⁰⁹ "Ihm soll's mal besser gehen, wenn er drüben fährt beim Motorcross." Teutschenthal has held competitive motorcross competitions since 1966.

to one of the barroom tables and proceeds to do a flamenco dance, shocking and intriguing Schultze and his friends at the same time. When Schultze admits that he likes the Spanish music she plays in the background she responds “I’m going there.”¹¹⁰ Thus she is yet another cosmopolitan trapped in the constraining boundaries of the town. Characters like Frau Laurent, Lisa and Manfred seem to represent those people who treat cultural contact as a kind of escape. Frau Laurent and Lisa want to escape their boredom; Manfred wants to escape the lack of economic opportunity.

In contrast to Frau Laurent, Manfred and Lisa, Schultze seems quite content with his life in the village. His static lifestyle is best conveyed in a scene which juxtaposes the mobile with the immobile and the modern with the traditional. In this scene, Schultze is on his way to the grocery store on a bicycle with a small wooden cart attached. Schultze does not seem to own a motor vehicle and it is unclear whether most residents in his town do or not for most shots show them riding bicycles. In this scene, everything that is associated with Schultze is archaic and unprogressive. He is an old man, on an old bicycle, careening down a grass covered path. Suddenly, a youth enters the frame, parallel to Schultze. In contrast to Schultze, the youth is on a motorbike, going much faster. The youth is even positioned higher than Schultze on the screen, as if to stress his superiority compared to Schultze. The two figures meet at the same position in the frame for just a brief moment, before the youth passes Schultze up as anticipated.

Both Schultze and the youth on the motorbike continue moving forward in the same direction, but at different speeds and at different heights, appearing to form a kind of spiral. Thus, instead of representing contrasting images, Schultze and the motorcyclist could possibly be mirror images of each other. Based on Schultze’s age, appearance and behavior, one would expect him to remain stuck in tradition. Nevertheless, Schultze is approaching something new and exciting in his life, perhaps even faster than his younger equivalent. In this scene, he is actually on the way to the grocery store to buy ingredients for Jambalaya. While some of the town’s youth dream of going to America to compete in motor cross and earn money, Schultze reaches America before them. It is actually the youth of the town who are stuck, which is represented by Manfred’s son, who is left behind with a motorbike that does not start during one of the competitions. The agent that helps Schultze step beyond his traditional boundaries and gain more mobility is music.

Music as a Contact Zone

In Chapter Two, I showed how Rull’s association with certain kinds of music, whether Louis Armstrong or the Velvet Underground, underlined his desire to break with German culture and align himself with the victims of oppression rather than the oppressors. In my discussion of *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*, I discussed how Edgar’s musical preferences for Blues expresses and enhances his outsider status in East Germany. I believe that in Schorr’s film, Black popular music, in particular Zydeco, is not only a marker of Schultze’s status as a stranger or a rebel, rather it also takes on the function of a “contact zone” through which Schultze and

¹¹⁰ “Da gehe ich nämlich hin.”

eventually his fellow town residents are able to experience cultural encounters despite their own immobility. Mary Louis Pratt defines a “contact zone” as “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations.”¹¹¹ Although Pratt uses this term in the context of colonialism, I believe it can also be used in the contexts of postunification and globalization. East Germans have often referred to reunification as the “colonization” of the East.¹¹² They justify this metaphor, partly because of the many East German institutions that were immediately done away with as a result of reunification and the East German customs that became obsolete.

Once the short lived elation of reunification had subsided, East Germans felt as if the culture of the West was being forced upon them. This may be one of the many experiences that triggered Ostalgie, the desire to (re)construct a “lost” East German identity through the consumption of East German products and the continuation of East German customs like the *Jugendweihe*.¹¹³ As a character, Schultze would be an excellent example of someone who has been relatively isolated from Western (American) culture, and perhaps has been clinging to traditional structures like his music club or his local pub as a reaction to Western intrusion. In the film, Western intrusion is symbolized by, among other things, a gambling machine brought into Schultze’s local pub. The machine’s peeps and beeps continuously interrupt the locals’ conversations. The machine represents modernity, capitalism and the West. When Lisa arrives, she battles the machine and wins when she dances flamenco and in a climactic move rips out its cord. The negative effects of globalization also bare their ugly head when Schultze sees a news report about counterfeit garden gnomes from Poland that have flooded the German market and must be destroyed; a horrified Schultze cannot believe his ears.

Because the comparison between reunification and colonization has already been discussed in earlier studies,¹¹⁴ I believe we can compare Schultze’s encounter with American folk music in the film to an encounter between the colonized, East German Schultze, and the colonizer, the USA. In the context of the film, American culture is designated by greed and ambition such as Manfred’s desire that his son make money in the US with motor cross. American culture is also marked by lawlessness and a lack of tradition.

There is one blatant reference made to the lawlessness of American culture while Schultze watches Manfred and Jürgen play chess in what appears to be a community center. Manfred moves one of his chess pieces, then he proceeds to move it back, claiming he had made a mistake. Jürgen protests adamantly, repeating the phrase “Berührt geführt” (touch-move). Like the contrast between Schultze’s bicycle and the youth’s motorcycle, this scene is yet another moment where tradition is contrasted with change. Manfred, the younger of the two and the one fascinated by American culture, sees no problem in changing the rules of the game. However

¹¹¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6.

¹¹² John Torpey, “The Abortive Revolution Continues: East-German Civil Rights Activists since Unification,” *Theory and Society* 24, no. 1 (1995): 109.

¹¹³ The *Jugendweihe* is a ceremony serving as rite of passage for fourteen year-olds, which was created by the GDR as an alternative to such ceremonies provided by the church.

¹¹⁴ See Andrea Wuerth, “National Politics/Local Identities’: Abortion Rights Activism in Post-Wall Berlin,” *Feminist Studies* 25, no. 3 (1999). Christine Leuenberger, “‘The End of Socialism and the Reinvention of the Self’: A Study of the East German Psychotherapeutic Community in Transition,” *Theory and Society* 31, no. 2 (2002). André Gunder Frank, “‘Soviet and East European ‘Socialism’: A Review of the International Political Economy on What Went Wrong,” *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 2 (1994).

Jürgen, who is a bit more set in his ways and distrustful of change, insists on sticking to the rules. Jürgen abhors Manfred's "lawlessness" and proceeds to accuse Manfred of acting as if he was in the Wild West. Manfred angrily scatters the chess pieces on the floor and replies almost disappointingly "Wild West . . . here? This is no Wild West."¹¹⁵ This scene portrays the tension within the town between those who desire change and those who insist on holding on to tradition. Perhaps for those who are afraid of change, like Jürgen, Manfred's obsession with American culture is just a symbol of globalization's expansion into their small town. Pirro rightly points out that Jürgen's "Wild West" comment invokes post-Cold War lawlessness and self-interest. However, for East Germans the "Wild West" also embodied escapism and freedom, such as in the DEFA *Indianerfilme* which I mentioned earlier. Jürgen can only see the negatives and Manfred the positives of the new "Wild West."

Increased Mobility through Music

Music creates such an effective contact zone, because people use it both to construct boundaries and to transcend them. National musical genres may help people "recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them,"¹¹⁶ but hybrid musical genres help dissolve these boundaries. Although music is often thought of as something which "involves notions of difference and social boundary,"¹¹⁷ a musical style which initially was seen as identifying a certain ethnic group or class, like hip hop, may eventually have a universal appeal which subverts claims of "national" music or authenticity.

Schultze's first encounter with Zydeco immediately changes his life and propels him beyond his usual boundaries. One evening, Schultze, who appears to be having trouble sleeping, enters the kitchen in his pajamas to get a late-night snack. He turns on the radio and upon briefly hearing a news report about miners suffering from lung cancer, he changes the dial with a disturbed look on his face. Pirro claims "periodic episodes of labored breathing and coughing depicted throughout the film suggest the cause of [Schultze's] death is congestive heart failure."¹¹⁸ However, as Emily Hauze rightly suggests, Schultze's reaction to this news report leads one to believe that he perhaps either has lung cancer or fears that he does. Schultze continues changing the dial past a classical music station and yet another news station reporting about an event which happened in 1936, until he happens upon Zydeco Force's "Zydeco 1988." Martin Stokes has explored how radio has been implemented by states to help construct a national identity; a method which he claims is "seldom foolproof."¹¹⁹ The fact that Schultze does not stop at the classical music station or the history station symbolizes his emerging lack of interest in the German past. He is literally searching for something new, Zydeco, which he ironically discovers on German radio.

¹¹⁵ "Wilder Westen...hier? Det ist kein Wilder Westen."

¹¹⁶ Martin Stokes, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music," in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford, Providence: Berg, 1994), 5.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁸ Pirro, "Tragedy, Surrogation and the Significance of African-American Culture in Postunification Germany: An Interpretation of *Schultze Gets the Blues*," 70.

¹¹⁹ Stokes, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music," 12.

Zydeco may in fact be older music within the context of American history, but since it is not German and Schultze has never heard it before, it represents something brand new. Once Schultze hears the Zydeco, we get a close up of his face as he pauses several times with a contemplating expression. It seems as if he is trying to listen more closely in order to discover what the music actually is. He most likely recognizes the use of his own instrument, the accordion, but cannot quite identify the musical style. Schultze's curiosity is, however, still shrouded in an air of suspicion. He proceeds to turn off the radio and gets as far as the kitchen door. Yet the music haunts him to such a degree, that he then returns to the radio, in order to turn it back on.

Each time Schultze turns on the radio, a light simultaneously goes on. The light is perhaps a metaphor for Schultze's own enlightenment, indicating that his encounter with Zydeco will bring a bit more light or knowledge into his life. Once again, we see Schultze contemplating the music, even stepping back from the radio, as if this music could pose a threat to him. After he turns off the radio a second time, he then enters his living room, picks up his accordion, and attempts to play the song he just heard. He starts off slowly, trying to mimic the melody, creating a Germanized polka version of the song. Nonetheless, he gradually becomes more confident in his playing and starts playing faster and faster. As Schultze begins to nod his head and close his eyes, one sees that he is clearly enjoying the music, even if there is still a bit of distrust. He then sighs deeply while looking down at his accordion, as if he knows that his new interest will soon make waves.

Racism, Tradition and Resistance to Zydeco

Directly after he hears Zydeco for the first time, the next scene shows Schultze at his doctor's office with his accordion. Apparently, Schultze's interest in Zydeco has made him concerned about his health. His doctor tries to reassure him,

My dear Schultze, a changing taste in music isn't an illness. I mean, I'm not a psychologist, but it's not life-threatening to not play polka for once, more the other way around. But let's be serious; be happy that for once something happens in your life. You truly now have all the time in the world. Think of it more like a gift.¹²⁰

The doctor then admits that he had actually wanted to become an opera singer before opting to become a doctor. This suggests that while most people in the town have chosen a decent job, perhaps everyone has a secret inkling in them to do something different, be someone or somewhere else like Edgar. Local confines seem to trump transnational/transcultural ambition. Schultze's doctor praises him for having the courage, at his age, to do something different. Schultze's short response is, "If you think so doctor."¹²¹ He is clearly still reluctant to pursue this

¹²⁰ "Mein lieber Schultze, ein sich ändernder musikalischer Geschmack ist doch keine Krankheit. Ich meine, ich bin zwar keine Psychologe, aber lebensgefährlich ist es ja wohl nicht, mal keine Polka zu spielen, eher umgekehrt. Aber nun mal ernsthaft, seien Sie froh, dass in Ihrem Leben mal etwas passiert. Sie haben jetzt wahrlich aller Zeit der Welt. Denken Sie eher, dass es eine Gabe ist."

¹²¹ "Wenn Sie meinen Herr Doktor."

new found interest. This is, however, only the beginning of Schultze's battle with himself and the rest of the town concerning Zydeco. Despite Schultze's hesitancy in engaging with Zydeco, he decides to play some of what he learned for a small audience at his mother's nursing home, including his own mother. In conclusion of his performance, the audience merely stares blankly at him and then each other. Frau Laurent is the only person there who encourages Schultze. "Don't look like that Schultze. Don't let them get you down. They don't have any idea, they're old people,"¹²² Frau Laurent says, as she leans towards Schultze so that his mother cannot hear.

For the most part, Schultze keeps his transformation to himself, revealing hints of his new interest to his friends here and there. It is not surprising that Schultze is reluctant to be more vocal about the changes in his life. His town's conservatism is perhaps best represented by the music club. Music clubs play a very important role in small towns in the region where Schultze lives. Participating in the music club is a way of solidifying one's part in the community. The music club is a symbol of his village and its traditions. Even his village's partner city, New Braunfels, Texas, is an indication of Teutschenthal's lack of desire to explore something new. New Braunfels is a town anchored in German heritage and home of a yearly German music fest modeled after the Munich Oktoberfest. Thus, even when Schultze's music club demonstrates a willingness to engage with America, their engagement is with a town that emulates German culture. Even though they have contacts in America, the music club has never really left its traditional boundaries. Therefore, when Schultze suggests he play "was Amerikanisches" (something American) at the upcoming festival it is immediately met with displeasure. The music director is already upset that Schultze wants to play something other than his "Schultzepolka," the fact that it is American is even worse; "Das auch noch?" (That, too?), the director responds. The director then poses the question, what would Schultze's deceased father, think if Schultze were to abandon the polka? The music director's response stresses how much the town refuses to let go of the past, preferring to face the dead rather than the future.

Schultze's performance at the music festival is preceded by a choir, which performs a very traditional *Volkslied* (German folk song), "Kein schöner Land" (No land country more beautiful) written in the nineteenth century. Philip V. Bohlman explores the importance of German folk songs for creating a German national identity in his essay "Landscape – Region – Nation – Reich." According to Bohlman:

Imagined during the late eighteenth-century *Aufklärung*, the German Enlightenment, and invented during the romanticism of the early nineteenth century, German folk song became a visible player in the struggle to construct German nationalism.... By coining the term *Volkslied*, or folk song, in the 1770s, Johann Gottfried Herder consciously engaged in an act of naming a previously unnamed quality of Germanness. From its Enlightenment beginnings, folk songs served to connect language to place.¹²³

¹²² "Nun schauen Sie doch nicht so Schultze. Lassen Sie sich nicht unterkriegen. Die haben doch keine Ahnung, sind alte Leute."

¹²³ Philip V. Bohlman, "Landscape - Region - Nation - Reich: German Folk Song in the Nexus of National Identity," in *Music & German National Identity*, ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 108.

“Kein schöner Land” is a particular favorite among folk song enthusiasts and it was part of the repertoire of the Spielschar Ekkehard; a group of young singers led by anti-Republican conservative Gerhard Roßbach during the Weimar Republic.¹²⁴ The group’s performances of folk songs, mystery plays and classical music were meant to promote the kind of German identity Roßbach endorsed – an identity that was characteristically non-Jewish and anti-modern.

In the film, the music festival is actually the second time a song from the nineteenth century is performed by the town’s inhabitants. As I mentioned earlier, during his modest retirement ceremony at the beginning of the film, Schultze’s colleagues sing “Glück auf, Glück auf! der Steiger kommt,” a traditional miner’s song also written in the nineteenth century. Opening the film with a *Bergmannslied*, a subcategory of folk song that specifically speaks to the region’s mining tradition, establishes the setting of the film and the importance of tradition for its characters. As the choir at the music fest attests their country’s beauty and God’s grace, the song “Kein schöner Land” evokes pastoral and idyllic images typical of the *Heimatfilme* (Homeland films) of postwar West Germany. Pirro claims *Schultze* invokes a *Heimatfilm* because it places regional dialects, rural life and local traditions on display. However, he qualifies this comparison: “unlike those [*Heimat*] films, *Schultze*’s embrace of homespun values is multicultural, not provincial, extending to a foreign place and people.”¹²⁵

Bohlman suggests that “German folk songs did not simply represent German national identity, they were agents participating in its formation and implementation.”¹²⁶ When the music club and choir perform these traditional songs they are doing just that – forming and articulating a particular kind of German national identity, which Schultze inevitably contrasts with his performance of a foreign music, Zydeco. Campbell remarks that present-day fans of *Volkslieder* praise the music’s ability to uphold a German identity “that has endured unsuccessful democracy, economic chaos, fascism, war, and now successful democracy.”¹²⁷ Schultze’s fellow villagers would likely add unification, unemployment, emigration and foreign influence to that list of ailments.

One of the Harz region’s dearest tourist attractions is its *Volksmusik*. In fact, instrumental music clubs had been an important part of communities in the GDR. “The solidarity of the choir community is prized as being more important than choir practice.”¹²⁸ After re-unification, the clubs were needed not only to bring the community together, but to offer everything from “leisure to distraction from unemployment and lack of prospects.”¹²⁹ During the days of the GDR, music clubs in the Harz region were dependent upon their LPGs.¹³⁰ After reunification, however, the LPGs were dismantled and music clubs found themselves with a lack of funding

¹²⁴ Bruce Campbell, “*Kein schöner Land*: The Spielschar Ekkehard and the Struggle to Define German National Identity in the Weimar Republic,” in *Music & German National Identity*, ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago, 2002), 128.

¹²⁵ Pirro, “Tragedy, Surrogation and the Significance of African-American Culture in Postunification Germany: An Interpretation of *Schultze Gets the Blues*,” 70.

¹²⁶ Bohlman, “Landscape - Region - Nation - Reich: German Folk Song in the Nexus of National Identity,” 110.

¹²⁷ Campbell, “*Kein schöner Land*: The Spielschar Ekkehard and the Struggle to Define German National Identity in the Weimar Republic,” 139.

¹²⁸ “Die ‘Soldiarität’ der Chorgemeinschaft’ wird ‘wichtiger’ als Chorausübung’ eingeschätzt.” Erler, “Von Spielmannszügen und Bergsängern im Harz: Musikalische Aktivitäten in einer geteilten Region,” 347.

¹²⁹ “Freizeitverhalten bis hin zur Ablenkung von Arbeits- und Perspektivlosigkeit.” *Ibid.*, 262.

¹³⁰ LPG stands for *Landwirtschaftliche Produktions-Genossenschaft* (agricultural cooperative), which was the major form of agricultural collective in the GDR.

and a lack of gigs, resulting in the disbandment of many. Members of East German music clubs in the region blamed reunification for the deterioration of their clubs, claiming that members must now work more and have little time for music. Supposedly, members also preferred going window shopping in the West over band practice. The deterioration of East German music clubs due to the influence of the West is also evident in the fact that more and more of the remaining music clubs no longer play the traditional workers songs, but rather their routines have been increasingly influenced by American music. Placing Schultze's story in the context of the real tension between music clubs in East German mining towns postunification and Western or foreign influence makes Schultze's story seem all the more relevant.

When Schultze plays Zydeco at the village fest, although his friends enthusiastically clap for him, the other villagers are so shocked by his performance that when he is finished the once cheerful crowd falls totally silent. One villager even angrily refers to Schultze's playing as "Negermusik" (Negro music). This outburst invokes past perceptions of Black popular music, for in the 1930s and 1940s Germans often referred to jazz as "Negermusik."¹³¹ The choice of such a derogatory word to describe Zydeco gives us a hint at one of the reasons why the villagers are so opposed to it. As I have shown in the previous chapters, racist responses to "Negermusik" or Black popular music have a long tradition regarding the history of German encounters with American culture. Lisa defiantly counters this outburst, raising her glass with the toast "auf die Negermusik" (to Negro music). Since "Neger" stems from the colonial period, the description of Zydeco as "Negermusik" almost suggests a case of reverse colonization. Instead of Germans bringing culture to Africa, now African Americans are bringing culture to [East] Germany by way of Schultze. Lisa's toast to the "Negermusik" might reinstate Schultze, but it still explicitly marks Zydeco as Other, Black and therefore non-German. It would have been much more radical to argue that this music is as European or German as a polka.

Why Zydeco?

The townspeople's labeling of Zydeco as "Negermusik" actually conceals the fact that Zydeco, like many musical genres from the United States, is a product of contact between African Americans and Europeans. I believe there are several reasons why Schorr may have decided to use Zydeco music in this film instead of another African American genre. First of all, Zydeco, which combines African, Caribbean, European and American influences, is both threatening and innocuous simultaneously. It poses a threat to the locals, not only because it is new and foreign, but because it is American. The fear of Zydeco's intrusion into Schultze's town may symbolize the fear of the Americanization of Germany, as jazz did following WWI. For the town residents, this music is both that of the "conqueror," the Americans, and that of the "conquered," the Blacks, giving them even more reason to reject it.

On the other hand, one could see Zydeco as less threatening because although it is American music, it is marginal American music. In his article "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," Arjun Appadurai suggests that a community is more afraid of being

¹³¹ Schroer, *Recasting Race after World War 2: Germans and African Americans in American-Occupied Germany*, 7.

dominated by its neighbor's culture than a culture that is farther away. Although Zydeco's "invasion" of Schultze's life and his village can be read as Americanization, it is a different kind of Americanization than the current popularity of hip hop or pop music. Zydeco is the local music of a marginal African American Southern community, thus it would most likely belong more to the genre of "world music" than more popular genres of American music. By listening to Zydeco, Schultze can engage in a music style that does not follow the familiar formula of other popular American genres, which makes it seem less American.

Furthermore, Zydeco implements the accordion, providing Schultze with enough of an aspect of familiarity to make him interested. Emily Hauze recognizes the accordion in both *Schultze* and Werner Herzog's earlier film *Stroszek* (1976) as a "metaphor for dreams that might be realized in America and for the mobility required to realize them."¹³² And Zydeco is rural music that is very much tied to farm life.¹³³ Therefore, as someone living in a rural setting, Schultze could perhaps better identify with it.

Musically, Zydeco was formed when Creole music from south-central and southwest Louisiana was crossed with rhythm and blues in the years after World War II ... In his [Schorr's] commentary on the film made available on the DVD release, he explained his need for an American music 'basically connected to the kind of polka accordion music Schultze plays' and his discovery that Zydeco, like polka, has 'the accordion as the lead instrument.'¹³⁴

Zydeco was actually quite popular among West Germans in the 1960s. Thus, Schultze's interest in Zydeco can perhaps be read as an anachronistic case of the mass consumption of Zydeco in West Germany. The fact that it took nearly four decades for Zydeco to reach Schultze's town points out just how isolated it had been. Additionally, the song which Schultze listens to, "Zydeco 1988" by Zydeco Force, does not have much text and therefore his lack of English skills does not pose a problem to enjoying the song.

Finally, considering the long history of Blues in the GDR, one could even say Schultze's engagement with Zydeco, a form of Blues, is a means of reclaiming an earlier dissident East German culture. In this way, Schultze reinstates a history of rebellion that is often overlooked

¹³² Hauze sees several similarities between *Stroszek* and *Schultze* as characters. "Both figures leave behind a life in northern Germany on a quest for fulfillment in America, with their accordions in hand, and each of their stories will end in death. Parallels between the stories abound: Schultze's emergence from years spent working in the salt mine reflects Bruno's release from prison, neither of them speaks English and thus they both encounter language difficulties in America, and each of them, despite humble backgrounds, displays a certain nobility of character and old-school charm." Hauze, "Keyed Fantasies: Music, the Accordion and the American Dream in *Stroszek* and *Schultze Gets the Blues*," 84.

¹³³ One of the arguments about where the word "Zydeco" originated is that it is merely the Creole pronunciation for the French word for snap beans, *les haricots*, and that the first Zydeco song had to do with expressing frustration over poverty and the lack of money to buy meat to add to a pot of beans. Hence a common line in Zydeco tunes, "The beans aren't salty." Hauze reiterates this myth as the origin of the name. *Ibid.*: 92. According to Michael Tisserand, however, "For black Creoles in Louisiana, the word 'zydeco' may have a similar blended history, resulting from the French *les haricots* converging with words from several languages of West African tribes, including the Yula, where *a zaré* means 'I dance.' Support for this theory, which was put forth in 1986 by folklorist Nicholas Spitzer, and further developed by Barry Ancelet in his essay 'Zydeco/Zarico: The Term and the Tradition,' can be found in the remarkable existence of some musical cousins to zydeco located on a number of Indian Ocean islands, especially Rodrigues. [...] A dance called *séga* includes a pantomime of the planting of beans [...] Ancelet reports that the traditional *séga* connects beans, fertility, and sex in a symbolic dance." Michael Tisserand, *The Kingdom of Zydeco* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1998), 17.

¹³⁴ Pirro, "Tragedy, Surrogation and the Significance of African-American Culture in Postunification Germany: An Interpretation of *Schultze Gets the Blues*," 77.

when remembering the GDR. Furthermore Schultze's actions pose the question of whether listening to Blues in a postunification East German village is *not German* or whether the Blues has been a part of East German culture for so long that it is no longer a foreign entity. One significance of Schultze listening to contemporary Zydeco is that he does not fall prey to the tendency among white Blues fans of only respecting the roots of a genre. By listening to a more contemporary form of Zydeco, Schultze is not the white expert of Black popular music who does not allow for it to change. Instead, he is open to a more contemporary version.

Same Game, Different Field

Since first hearing it, Schultze's urge to play Zydeco becomes so great, that even when he tries to play his traditional polka, hints of Zydeco seep into his performance. The broadening of Schultze's musical taste is soon followed by an attempt to cook Jambalaya. These are all changes in Schultze's character which would have been unthinkable prior to his encounter with Zydeco. Performing Zydeco and eating Jambalaya are Schultze's attempts at participating in a community that exists beyond his immediate boundaries. But these activities are not enough to satisfy him. Soon, he is shown doing odd jobs for additional money and going to the travel agency to inquire about flights to Louisiana. He finally decides he would like to travel to the U.S. Previously, to Manfred's envy, Schultze even resisted entertaining the idea of a visit to America which provoked Jürgen to ironically comment "One can go and doesn't want to. The other wants to go and can't."¹³⁵

Despite the feelings of suspicion, confusion and even disgust brought on by Schultze's performing Zydeco, his music club still decides to send him as their representative to their partner city New Braunfels, Texas in honor of his birthday. There are many possible reasons behind this generous act on the part of the music club. Perhaps they knew Schultze did not have the money for a trip to the U.S. and they wanted to do something nice for him or maybe no one else in the club wanted to go. It is possible they wished to excise Schultze's foreign influences from the community in order to restore the harmony promoted by their club's name. Regardless of the reason, I believe their gesture shows some willingness on their part to understand Schultze's interest and support him despite their personal beliefs.

Schultze, like many *young* Germans, leaves Saxony in search of more experiences. By the time Schultze travels to New Braunfels, he has already established his own fantasies of what the Southern United States is like. He has been listening to and playing Zydeco, cooking Jambalaya and reading his book about the South, *Kings of Swamp Music*, which Lisa gave to him. What Schultze encounters at the Wurstfest, however, is a music festival which seems like a parody of hegemonic German culture. He finds no trace of Zydeco, Jambalaya or even many African Americans. What he encounters are several Americans most likely of German descent, who may be wearing Texan attire – cowboy hats and boots – but they are dancing to polka performed by a Lederhosen-clad American playing the accordion. Schultze, however, is in search of an "authentic" experience with Southern American culture. Being at the Wurstfest

¹³⁵ "Einer kann und will nicht. Der andere will und kann nicht."

makes him feel as if he had never left his town. After hearing a rendition of the German national anthem, Schultze leaves the fest for good.

Before traveling to the U.S., Schultze did not realize that despite its location, New Braunfels is probably the best cultural equivalent to his home town one could find in America. New Braunfels was founded in the late nineteenth century by German immigrants who were not afraid to settle in the notoriously dangerous area. It is also the site of the first statewide Saengerfest (singer fest) held in the 1850s. At the time, Saengerfests provided German immigrants of central Texas with a social context to come together. However, the Saengerfests soon roused suspicion and opposition by the surrounding Americans after a statewide Saengerbund in San Antonio criticized Americans for practicing slavery because it was contradictory to democracy. Afterwards, tensions ensued between the English-speaking and German-speaking communities, the latter of which withdrew into its own community. Although this tension persisted through the Civil War and both world wars and many music clubs became obsolete, some music clubs, as well as the New Braunfels Wurstfest, still exist to this day. According to Chester Rosson, “in retrospect, these events can be seen as efforts by the German (sic) community to reach out to the larger American community and involve it in the European cultural tradition.”¹³⁶ This offers yet another example of music functioning as a tool of social integration. Although the musicians of these Texan-German music clubs may have added a few new instruments like the accordion, they are still rather conservative, “choosing tried and true nineteenth-century pieces, mostly by secondary composers over any newer material.”¹³⁷

Hauze believes that Schultze “is content to find glimmers of himself, and of his European heritage, reflected in a country that, ultimately, is not ‘really he,’ but welcoming to him.”¹³⁸ However, I believe that Schultze anticipated “authentic” Southern culture and what he actually encounters is an American version of the music fests he knew from Germany. Disappointed, Schultze sets out in search of “real” Southern culture, only to discover that there is no such thing. Rather than a monoculture, Schultze encounters various hybrid cultures like the Bobby Jones Czech Band, a Texan band that plays Czech polkas and waltzes, country music, and Cajun music.

On his quest to find Zydeco, Schultze steals a motor boat and travels along the gulf coast until he reaches Louisiana. Throughout his journey, it becomes more evident how much Schultze has changed since the beginning of the film. He no longer uses an old form of transportation, but rather has acquired a motorized vehicle. He tries his best to communicate with the people he encounters, despite his poor English skills. He is also not too shy to interact with women. As Pirro points out, Schultze’s very first interaction with an American is with an African American woman with whom he shares a hot tub at his motel, the Edelweiss Inn which is decorated in German Fachwerk architectural style. Schultze’s initial reluctance to get into the hot tub seems less a fear of difference and more about exposing his whiteness. He enters the frame wearing a bathrobe. After the woman in the hot tub, Josephine, encourages him to get in, from behind we

¹³⁶ Chester Rosson, “Some Thoughts on the Survival of German Music in Texas,” in *Musikalische Volkskultur als soziale Chance*, ed. Günther Noll (Essen: Die blaue Eule, 1996), 161.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 163.

¹³⁸ Hauze, “Keyed Fantasies: Music, the Accordion and the American Dream in *Stroszek* and *Schultze Gets the Blues*,” 95.

see Schultze disrobe and then turn to face the camera exposing his protruding beer belly. In *White*, Richard Dyer remarks that part of the power of whiteness is its ambiguity. One can never define what whiteness *is*, only what it is *not*. Due to its ambiguity, the marking quality of whiteness is hardly ever noticed. Exposing himself to this Black woman perhaps helps Schultze recognize his own whiteness. As Hauze notes, his bathing in the hot tub resembles a kind of rebirth. When he emerges and later goes to the German-American festival he cannot bare to take part in this performance of a traditional German identity.

Conclusion: The Blues, Modernity and Masculinity in Crisis

Both Michael Rauhut and Peter Wicke, prominent German musicologists who have written extensively on the reception of Black popular music in Germany, suggest fans' search for an "authentic" Blues relates to a desire to hold onto something old when faced with a changing society.¹³⁹ The Blues is one form which African American music took during Reconstruction (after slavery was abolished by the 13th Amendment in 1865), when newly freed slaves were faced with all kinds of new challenges. Richard Middleton describes Blues as "corresponding to culture shock: mobility, uprooting, alienation and freedom,"¹⁴⁰ therefore making it the perfect soundtrack for the "losers of modernization, black and white alike."¹⁴¹

Keeping the origin of the music in mind, Wicke points out that the popularization of Blues and the notion of "authentic" Blues have a lot to do with the myths spread by white ethnomusicologists such as John and Alan Lomax who recorded Black Blues singers in Southern prisons between 1933 and 1939.¹⁴² What attracted the Lomaxes to incarcerated musicians was the desire to find music performed by Blacks who were cut off from society and whose music supposedly had little or no European influence. Therefore, the music labeled "authentic" Blues did not necessarily reflect the nuances or variety of the genre – rather early Blues history was written by whites who believed in a narrow notion of Blues in the vain of Herdian *Volksmusik*. This Blues myth was later revived in the 1960s by white folk music enthusiasts and record collectors and quickly found its way to Germany. For example, in 1962, the American Folk Blues Festival (AFBF) was started by the West German concert agency Lippmann and Rau. African Americans criticized the AFBF for solidifying Blues and only including older Blues musicians instead of incorporating its many contemporary forms. Charles Keil called the festival a "third rate minstrel show" because of its stereotypical portrayal of African American musicians.¹⁴³ Jimi Hendrix expressed similar concern for white fans' essentialization of Black popular music:

¹³⁹ Rauhut, "Lass es bluten: Blues-Diskurse in West und Ost," 115. Wicke, "Die Leiden des weißen Mannes: Konstruktionen von Authentizität in der Geschichte des Blues."

¹⁴⁰ Middleton quoted in Wicke. "Blues spricht vom Kulturschock: Mobilität, Entwurzelung, Entfremdung und Freiheit..." Wicke, "Die Leiden des weißen Mannes: Konstruktionen von Authentizität in der Geschichte des Blues," 249.

¹⁴¹ "Modernisierungsverlierern, schwarzen wie weißen gleichermaßen." Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., 244.

¹⁴³ Siegfried, "Authentisch schwarz: Blues in der Gegenkultur um 1970." Keil is quoted in note 9.

You know the trip: after a few years they [the record executives] drop you like a hot potato. Then you're lying in the street. If you're lucky, some whities will get turned onto the stuff you used to do years ago. Then the fat manager pigs will get you from the docks, where you've had to work, give you a new set of teeth and a guitar and earn money off of you like crazy – just like they're doing now with the old blues singers.¹⁴⁴

I believe that in Plenzdorf's novel and Schorr's film, the myth of the Blues is utilized as a means of dealing with modern changes and the characters' resulting masculinity crisis. Despite the thirty-year difference between these texts, both protagonists find themselves at odds with their community and unable to fulfill East Germany's masculine ideal. Edgar prefers to be an artist and not the manual laborer his country demands. He does not win the girl; he loses her to Dieter, the less intelligent army veteran. Schultze is emasculated when he loses his job and he has neither wife nor children to rehabilitate his masculinity. For both men, the Blues becomes an important leitmotif. Yet, the connection made between these men and Blues music does not only rest on lamentation about their problems. In order to further investigate the significance of Blues for these protagonists, we must turn briefly to the music's origins.

In his seminal work on Black popular music in America *Blues People*, Amiri Baraka locates the birth of Blues in the era of Reconstruction. There are several significant differences between the earlier slave songs (ballits and field hollers) and "primitive" or country Blues. Slave songs were collectively sung, dealt with the problems of the social group and often focused on the afterlife – achieving redemption for one's suffering in heaven – and the prospect of returning to Africa. Blues songs, however, were much more individual.¹⁴⁵ During Reconstruction, those freed slaves "lucky" enough to work a plot of land typically worked alone. Therefore, the lament each man sang was about his unique situation.¹⁴⁶ I consciously refer to men singing country Blues in the fields, because most country Blues singers were men – as opposed to classical Blues singers like Ma Rainey and Bettie Smith.

This gender imbalance has to do with the difficulties Black men in particular faced during Reconstruction. During slavery, it was not uncommon for slaves to be taught a trade, because white men did not worry about competition with Blacks on the job market. Once slavery was abolished, however, Black men had difficulty finding any work and when they did, it was agricultural labor.¹⁴⁷ Black women, on the other hand, typically had little trouble finding domestic work.¹⁴⁸ Under the paternal institution of slavery:

¹⁴⁴ "Ihr kennt ja die Tour: nach ein paar Jahren lassen sie dich fallen wie eine heiße Kartoffel. Dann liegst du auf der Straße. Wenn du Glück hast, kommen irgendwelche *whities* mal auf die Tour, auf der du vor Jahren warst. Dann kommen die fetten Managerschweine, holen dich aus dem Hafen, wo du malochen mußt, schenken dir ein Gebiß und eine Gitarre und verdienen sich wieder dämlich an dir – wie jetzt an den alten Bluesängern." Hendrix quoted in *Ibid.*, 226.

¹⁴⁵ Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 61.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

the black man in America performed an integral function in the mainstream of white American society. One that was easy to ascertain, and almost as easy to provide for. ... With the old paternalistic society of the South went the simple role of the Negro in the Western world. Now the Negro was asked to throw himself into what was certainly still an alien environment and to deal with that environment in the same manner as his newly found white 'brother' had been doing for centuries.¹⁴⁹

Black men's failure to provide for their women is a common theme in Blues songs. Faced with high unemployment, and migration to find agricultural work, Black men in particular had become "isolated from the mainstream of American society."¹⁵⁰ Thus, country Blues tends to thematize this alienation from American society and the desire to find recognition in the U.S.¹⁵¹ Baraka's history of the Blues does not contradict Wicke's claims. Rather, while the primitive Blues of Reconstruction likely developed according to Baraka's history, Blues as an independent genre was not recorded until 1902/03 and by then it had made its way to white audiences. Therefore the Blues that was promoted as "authentically" non-European in the 1930s, was more likely the result of musical exchanges between the Black and white communities of musicians and fans.

I certainly would not claim that Edgar and Schultze's outsider status is equivalent to the precarious position of the Black man during Reconstruction. For freed slaves, aside from poverty, unemployment and a lack of education, discrimination and racial violence were every day realities. In contrast, Edgar and Schultze have relatively comfortable lives and have, Schultze more successfully than Edgar, found ways to become recognized members of their societies. Nevertheless, Edgar and Schultze also suffer from a feeling of alienation that has to do with their failure to fulfill masculine expectations. It is no wonder that Edgar's idol was Louis Armstrong, whom Adorno viewed as a eunuch whose music was for emasculated fans.¹⁵² For both Edgar and Schultze, their primary failure as East German men – their lack of meaningful work – has been caused by modern changes. However, they have opposing relationships to the modernization of their environments. Edgar is a creative young man who wishes to technically revolutionize how East Germans work. When he fails at his ambitions to be an artist – a profession that would grant him little recognition in the worker's state – he turns his aspirations to building a machine that can paint a room by itself. But his efforts are not taken seriously, for by the 1970s, the GDR's established political leaders were slow to promote technological innovation. While Edgar becomes an agent of modernity, attempting to make the GDR more technically modern, the recently unemployed Schultze is more of a victim who is weathering the changes of reunification and globalization. Despite these characters' opposing relationships to modernity, their age difference and differing historical contexts, each develops an affinity for Black popular culture. The Blues, or more specifically the "myth" of the Blues, becomes an

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 54-5.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 55.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 64.

¹⁵² See Theodor Adorno, "Perennial Fashion – Jazz," in Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Sherry Weber (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967).

outlet for them to express their outsider status and its exotic nature fulfills their longing for freedom.

In postwall East Germany, increasingly influenced by global capital, older trades that depend on manual labor are becoming less prominent as the service industry grows in importance. At first, Schultze's confrontation with modernity also appears to be a losing battle – for at the very start of the film he loses his job and he appears to be a stagnant and lonely individual. Just like Edgar's Blues music, I believe Zydeco helps Schultze cope with the impending modernism and globalization. Through Zydeco, Schultze is able to engage with American culture in a form that is less threatening. Furthermore, in contrast to Edgar, Schultze does not romanticize or exoticize Black popular culture and his engagement with Zydeco does not remain a form of escapism, like Edgar's dancing to Blues by himself. Schultze actually seeks out a community of Zydeco enthusiasts in the U.S.

After stealing the boat, he happens upon an African American woman and her young daughter living on a house boat. Initially, he only asks the woman for a glass of water, but she invites him in for dinner. After dinner, the woman offers Schultze a glass of whiskey which alludes to an earlier relationship with Frau Laurent which was cut short by her untimely death. When he accepts, an awkward Schultze blushes after the woman sends her daughter away, telling Schultze the two adults will take the liquor upstairs. Her request to “go upstairs” is clearly read as sexual innuendo by the blushing Schultze. However, the director then cuts to Schultze and the woman sitting and innocently chatting upstairs which turns out to be the boat's upper deck instead of a bedroom and the sexual tension is instantly relieved. Schultze stays with the family for at least several days; he even sends pictures of himself on their boat to Manfred and Jürgen. Towards the end of the film, Schultze finally gets to experience a live performance of Zydeco when the family takes him dancing. Schultze is seen dancing lively until he nearly collapses because he is unable to breathe. Pirro observes, “After the visit to the dance club and while Schultze sleeps on the houseboat deck, she [the African American woman] tucks a blanket around him. These arguably maternal gestures on the part of African-American women characters raise the possibility that notions of the nurturing and caregiving ‘mammy,’”¹⁵³ a figure who has also been important in Chapters One and Three.

Although he dies in his sleep atop the houseboat, in contrast to Edgar, Schultze's death accomplishes something which is confirmed when the African American family attends his funeral in Germany. For Schultze, Zydeco was a way of getting outside his bubble. It could just as well have been any other music. Pirro reads Schultze's engagement with Zydeco as leading to the integration of outsiders into his Saxon community. Additionally, his death also marks a transition to the villagers' acceptance of modernization. During the service, Manfred's cell phone rings and he jokingly pretends that Schultze is calling him. This interference by technology lightens the mood of the more serious and traditional service and as Pirro argues “To the extent that the cell phone has become one of the icons of globalization, Schultze's ‘call’ evokes his

¹⁵³ Pirro, “Tragedy, Surrogation and the Significance of African-American Culture in Postunification Germany: An Interpretation of *Schultze Gets the Blues*,” 78.

community's newfound capacity to manage the intrusive presence of global technologies and even integrate them into local practices."¹⁵⁴

At the end of the film, Schultze's funeral procession leads the way from the cemetery as the local music club plays a German polka rendition of "Zydeco 1988." As was typical of 19th century jazz funerals in Louisiana, the band plays a slower more somber song on the way to the funeral and a lighter, upbeat song leaving the cemetery. Schultze's village has adopted Zydeco and made it their own and one gets the feeling that they have become more open and more capable of bracing the changes globalization will bring.¹⁵⁵ The East German community mimics this Black performance to articulate their mourning over Schultze.

Finally, one could argue that Schultze's trip to Louisiana helped him regain his masculinity. The African American mother and her daughter stand in for the progeny he lacked in Germany. Their presence at his funeral is a testament to their having become his family. Schultze's is a story of rebellion *and* alternative social integration. His act of adopting a Black family can perhaps be compared to the modern emasculated German man who, as in Kerstin Specht's play *Lila* (1990), takes an Asian mail order bride in order to rehabilitate his masculinity after a lack of success with German women.¹⁵⁶ Edgar, however, does not get the girl or the family and his marginality ends with his death.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.: 82.

¹⁵⁵ Pirro reads Schultze's funeral as a traditional jazz funeral. He utilizes Joseph Roach's analysis of jazz funerals in Louisiana in order to explain Schultze's engagement with Zydeco. In *Cities of the Dead*, Roach suggests the term surrogation to explain the inclusion of Native American culture in the performance of the "Mardi Gras Indians": "The practice of Mardi Gras Indians thus marks a dynamic by which one group's history of struggle against oppression can become a resource for another group encountering their own set of challenges through the latter's creative appropriation and reworking of past performance rites." Ibid.: 80.

¹⁵⁶ Katrin Sieg discusses this play in *Ethnic Drag*.

Chapter Five

Two Black Boys Look Back at the White Boy

In both the introduction and Chapter Two, I briefly touched on Suzanne Moore's essay, "Getting a bit of the Other," which addresses white men's postmodern "slumming"¹ in the experience of the female Other. Here I would like to address her argument in a bit more detail. Moore says of white men who seek to experience female Otherness, "In deciphering the language of the 'other' and then claiming it for themselves, these theoretical drag queens [Barthes, Baudrillard] don the trappings of femininity for a night on the town without so much as a glance back at the poor woman whose clothes they have stolen."² Moore's description of postmodern white males depicts them as selfishly capitalizing on the age-old privilege of white masculinity as something unmarked (both racially and sexually). In a Western patriarchal society, these men can exploit femininity in order to expand their own horizon of experience, but this masquerade is not permanent; they can reclaim their powerful position at any time.

Nevertheless, the woman left without clothes is not doomed to the status of a victim. According to Moore, "As her terrain is taken over, all boundaries dissolve and so in turn she is able to 'reterritorialise' what was once 'Man.'"³ I believe Moore's argument about postmodern white men "slumming" as women could be applied to the experience of white Germans "slumming" as Blacks. In truth, none of the texts examined in the last four chapters allowed their protagonists to be successfully reintegrated into their (German) communities. For several of the *white* male protagonists – Rull, Edgar and Schultze – the option of reintegration remained a possibility. The Black popular culture these characters performed was not tied to their appearance. Despite their strangeness, their whiteness ensured that no one would have questioned their belonging to the German community. Only in Oskar's case would I argue that his Otherness was, in part, linked to physical difference and in Nazi Germany, this difference (the disability due to his short stature) was life threatening.

In this chapter, I turn my attention to the Other who is presumably left standing naked after the white man has made off with her clothes. The "naked" Others to whom I refer are the protagonists of Paul Beatty's novel *Slumberland* (2008) and Stew's⁴ Broadway musical, based on a Tony award-winning script, *Passing Strange* (2009). Both protagonists are African American artists from Los Angeles who have come of age during "post-soul" Black America.⁵

¹ My use of "slumming" here is a reference to Cathy Covell Waegner's article on the popularity of hip hop among German youth. Waegner argues that part of the appeal of American hip hop for young Germans who idolize the ghetto lifestyle is the experience of "cultural slumming," which is experiencing the thrills of Black American life in poverty vicariously through the music. Cathy Covell Waegner, "Rap, Rebounds, and Rocawear: The 'Darkening' Of German Youth Culture," in *Blackening Europe: The African American Presence*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 24. bell hooks makes a similar argument about white Americans' consumption of hip hop in bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

² Suzanne Moore, "Getting a Bit of the Other - the Pimps of Postmodernism," in *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity*, ed. Rowena Chapman and Jonathon Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), 185.

³ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁴ Mark Stewart, who goes by the name Stew, is an African American artist from Los Angeles. Aside from working as a playwright, he also has a band called "The Negro Problem" which is based in LA and Berlin.

⁵ Mark Anthony Neal uses the term "post-soul" to describe "political, social, and cultural experiences of the African-American community since the end of the civil rights and Black Power movements." Mark Anthony Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic* (New York; London: Routledge, 2002), 3.

Their versatile identities and experiences are an example of the diversity possible, but often denied, within the African American community. Quintessential “soul babies,” these young men feel unfulfilled by LA’s false happiness and they travel to Germany to escape the narrow confines of (Black) American culture. By traveling abroad to Germany, they ‘reterritorialise’ the white man’s space, but also participate in a transnational exchange between Germany and African America that has been going on for centuries.

As you may recall, Chapter Three also centered on an African American protagonist, *Whity*. Fassbinder’s film was purposefully set in the US, using the struggle of the Black slave to articulate West Germans’ struggle against the oppressive culture of their parents. Though this present chapter also focuses on African American protagonists, what differentiates it from Chapter Three is the fact that the texts in question are set in Germany; therefore they stage an encounter with *German* racism rather than American racism. Furthermore, while *Whity* was a white German’s take on the African American subject, both of the texts in this chapter were written by African Americans. Thus, this chapter reverses the gaze, analyzing the African American encounter with Germans’ notions of Black popular culture. But what would motivate the protagonists of *Slumberland* and *Passing Strange* to go to Germany to rebel? What are they rebelling against? What can Germany offer them that they cannot find in the U.S.? The past four chapters discussed Germans’ essentialization of African Americans, but do the Black characters at the focus of this chapter fall prey to the same practice and expect a single German experience and/or identity? And what happens when their notions of Germany encounter German notions of Black America?

Music for the Soul

Both the protagonists of *Slumberland* and *Passing Strange*, named Ferguson W. Sowell and Youth respectively, come of age during a time when African American protest culture was heavily commodified. Thanks, in part, to new laws (e.g. The Civil Rights Act of 1965) which began to dismantle the decades of discrimination that had made it difficult for African Americans to escape poverty and move up to the middle-class, African Americans enjoyed increasing geographic and economic mobility. Professor of Africana Studies Mark Anthony Neal describes this period as a second migration. Unlike the Great Migration of African Americans from rural Southern towns to urban Northern cities, this migration consisted of the Black middle-class leaving urban areas for the suburbs. Ferguson and Youth’s family belongs to this new generation of African Americans raising their families in the suburbs. In both *Slumberland* and *Passing Strange*, one senses the anxiety of the Black middle-class regarding their place within the history of the African Diaspora and within American history. For example, in *Slumberland*, Ferguson’s father’s job is to think of Spanish street names for new suburban settlements. As a member of the Black middle-class, his father is, at least economically, closer to the white mainstream and therefore he now participates in the act of “colonizing” what was once Mexican land and superficially commemorating Mexican history by planting Spanish street names throughout a largely white landscape.

When the burgeoning Black middle-class of the 1970s was in need of corresponding representations of themselves in the media, as always, music was an important tool. The Black middle-class was especially attracted to a more commercial and polished brand of Soul music with crossover appeal.⁶ As historian Alice Echols explains, “Having gained a foothold in a more integrated America, bourgeois blacks struggled to live as though they were colorless. Consuming crossover became part of the great beige way.”⁷ While music critic Nelson George views this move on the part of the middle-class as what killed R&B in the late 1970s, Echols argues that the concept of crossover had been important to R&B from the beginning and that Black music had always been “elastic.”⁸

Soul had been the preferred music of the late 1960s and the Civil Rights and the Black Panther movements. Around 1968, Soul was considered the music that reflected “the broadly interpreted populist concerns of a largely black, urban-based working class.”⁹ However, by the early 1970s, as class differences within the African American community intensified, a more commercialized version of Soul was cultivated for the middle-class that was rather disconnected from the music’s urban, working-class roots. One of the leading record labels producing Soul, Detroit-based Motown Records, increasingly focused on “its investment in the mainstream consumer public as a vehicle for black middle-class mobility.”¹⁰

It is no coincidence that at this transitional moment, Motown’s founder and producer Barry Gordy moved the label’s base to LA – the very hub of Black middle-class life that Ferguson and Youth find so oppressing. Neal reads this relocation as symbolic for Soul music’s leaving its urban, working-class roots in the Black community and being marketed to a larger, Black *and* white audience. Neal claims that in order to be successful in a mass market, Gordy had to “divorce African-American expressive culture from its political and social roots, solely for the purpose of mass-market acceptance.”¹¹ Echols defends the Black middle-class’s and Black musicians’ desire for a less raw and more “colorless” sound. In her opinion, these Blacks might have been reacting against white fans’ insistence that Soul and R&B remain “roots music” that testifies to the hardship of Black reality. In contrast to whites’ glorification of mythological Black hardship, many Blacks wished to embrace integration and the new economic mobility it brought. Correspondingly, they wanted this optimism to be reflected in music.

A part of this crossover craze was the commodification of Black popular culture in the form of afros, dashikis and other marketable symbols of African American culture. This commodification of Black culture is mocked in *Passing Strange*, when Youth’s love interest Edwina portrays their future life together as living in “a sprawling two-story house fulla African sculptures from tribes we know nothing about, kente cloth couch covers, and Malcolm X commemorative plates lining the walls of our airy, peach-colored breakfast nook!!!”¹² While the African sculptures, kente cloth and Malcolm X souvenirs are supposed to ground Edwina’s

⁶ The term “crossover” designates music that appeals to a Black and white audience.

⁷ Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The '60s and Its Aftershocks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

⁸ Echols, *Shaky Ground*, 166-67.

⁹ Neal, Mark Anthony, *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture* (New York; London: Routledge 1999), 62.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹² Stew, *Passing Strange: The Complete Book and Lyrics of the Broadway Musical* (New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2008), 19. This text will otherwise be referred to as *PS*.

middle-class dream in Black popular culture, they are still dehistoricized, decontextualized and stripped of any political meaning. As Neal continues, “the mass commodification of soul reduced blackness to a commodity that could be bought and sold –and this is important – without the cultural and social markers that have defined blackness... Afro wigs could be easily removed when they proved socially problematic.”¹³

Another important cultural symbol for the suburban Black middle-class was the church. As Neal points out, the Black middle-class had a difficult time “creat[ing] and maintain[ing] social and cultural institutions, excepting possibly the black church, within their own middle-class enclaves.”¹⁴ This importance of the church is highlighted in *Passing Strange*; the musical even opens with an argument between Youth and his mother as he tries to convince her why he should not have to go to church on Sunday. His mother concedes that she too does not enjoy the catty comments and mean stares of the other women there, but going to church in one’s Sunday best is a necessary ritual that keeps them grounded in the African American community. The mother’s focus on *past* cultural practices, however, makes her resistant to the changes underway and her son’s desire to explore something new. She is offended by his desire to unite the sacred and the profane in music:

YOUTH: Mom, I can feel the spirit and it’s real! Check it out: Reverend Jones is singing the blues! And what we’re doing is call and response – we brought it over from the motherland! Mom, we’re all just a tribe of bluesy Africans and church ain’t nothin’ but rock and roll...

MOTHER: Are you trying to embarrass me in front of all these people?...Do you want these people to think I’ve raised a heathen?...Don’t you know the difference between the sacred and the profane?

YOUTH: I can’t hear the difference. (*PS* 13-4)

Youth’s mother’s rejection of his diverse music tastes mirrors the racial divide in music that was reinstated in the 1970s. Echols points out that in the late 1960s, while AM radio continued to play Top 40 pop singles by both Black and white artists, on FM radio, several stations emerged dedicated to broadcasting non-commercial music. This non-commercial music was most often “progressive free-form rock” played by white musicians who viewed their music as an art form, rather than mere “entertainment.”¹⁵ This subgenre of rock was especially attractive to white male rock fans who had been alienated by the fragmentation of the larger countercultural movement of the 1960s. These fans tended to reject Soul that was more commercially successful; opting instead to hold on to older Black artists like B.B. King and Chuck Berry who, in their minds, played more “authentic” music. Meanwhile these Black musicians who were heralded as non-commercial actually preferred to see themselves as entertainers.¹⁶

¹³ Neal, *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture*, 95.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁵ Echols, *Shaky Ground*, 165.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.

Echols stresses that white rock fans, DJs and critics began constructing a revisionist history of rock that all but excluded Black musicians. Older Black musicians were viewed as the pioneers who had taught whites their craft, but they were banished to a bygone era.¹⁷ Those Black musicians who continued to change their sound and seek out commercial, more accessible and dance-oriented, crossover hits were condemned. This development is why, from the late 1970s until, arguably, the present, rock has been considered white music with which Blacks have little connection. These constricting notions of popular music are exactly what Ferguson and Youth fight against and I will elaborate upon this below.

To return to the comments Youth's mother made about his behaviour in church, the ability to collapse the sacred and the profane is the very characteristic that has been used to describe Soul.¹⁸ It is one of the reasons why the genre was so appealing to Germans during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In *Schwarz werden*, Moritz Ege examines the reception of Soul in several German magazines of the time, including the publications *twen* and *Bravo*. Some of the reoccurring praises for Soul stress that it is "authentic" and vital. Several German authors argue that Soul is a new boundary, intentionally established by Blacks to express their "exclusivity."¹⁹

The notion that Soul is more "authentic" or "exclusive" initiated debates about whether a white artist could "*schwarzsingen*" (sing Black). Despite the idea that Soul was somehow more difficult for whites to grasp than other genres from the African Diaspora, this did not stop Germans from seeking out not only the music, but communal experiences with Black Soul fans. The musical tastes of Black GIs created a market for Black bars that played Soul in contrast to bars frequented by white soldiers who preferred Country music. Ege reprinted the comment of a music journalist, Werner Bernhart, who expresses the euphoria and communal belonging he experienced after visiting a Soul bar and feeling like he was celebrating *with* Blacks and not merely viewing them as some primitive Other.²⁰ Such a Soul bar is also portrayed in Lothar Lambert's film *1 Berlin Harlem*.

Nevertheless, Germans did not wholeheartedly celebrate Soul. Some considered it "dance music" and therefore too feminine for serious (male) music fans. Like their white American counterparts who also held essentialist notions about what Black popular music should sound like, in some of the reports Ege mentions, Germans complain about how clean Soul fans are and how concerned they are with appearances. Among German critics, the cleanliness associated with the genre gets reinterpreted as suggesting the music lacks subversive potential. Finally, some German fans also sensed Soul's increasing commodification. Neal says of this time:

By mid-decade [the 1970s], much of the black popular music tradition had been successfully annexed by a small cadre of entertainment conglomerates and thus driven by the logic of mass-market forces. The need to package black popular music as a mass consumable served to constrict the most progressive, both aesthetically and politically, forms of black music during the era...the production and marketing strategies of

¹⁷ Ibid., 167.

¹⁸ Ege, *Schwarz Werden: >>Afroamerikanophilie<< in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren*, 61.

¹⁹ Ibid., 50-1.

²⁰ Ibid., 69.

corporate entities placed significant limitations on both the narrative and aesthetic content of black popular music. Within this context, much of black popular music became formulaic and stagnant, though commercially successful for both recording companies and artists...²¹

Evidence that some German fans took notice of this development is what Ege calls “the recurring, derogatory labeling of the Motown label as a ‘soul factory.’”²²

It is important to note that Soul music was one of many popular genres in the West Germany of the 1970s. While Soul might have still appealed to the leftists and Afro-americanophiles of the '68 movement, the early Seventies were also a time when German musicians began experimenting with the notion of embracing their cultural heritage and actually singing in German. The electronic and avant-garde musicians of the early 1970s provoked via “German texts, [using] their own cultural legacy, [and] citing history as art...”²³ Aside from their willingness to sing in German, what also differentiated these musicians from the folk and rock acts of the 1960s was their turn *away* from Black popular music: “One no longer invoked exclusively Blues and Rock ‘n’ Roll, rather one also was influenced by German masters of electronic music like Karlheinz Stockhausen and Oskar Sala.”²⁴ An example of a successful German band of this movement is *Kraftwerk* – formed by two art students, Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider, in Düsseldorf. *Kraftwerk* went on to have international success, including in the U.S. where their first album *Autobahn* (1974) sold hundreds of thousands of copies.²⁵ *Kraftwerk* was especially influential in America’s house and techno scenes.²⁶ Wilfried Breyvogel points out that in contrast to America, where hip hop’s popularity preceded that of techno, in Germany it was the other way around.

Besides electronic music, other burgeoning genres of popular music in West Germany were punk, which had made its way from Great Britain around 1977, German New Wave (a more experimental and less aggressive version of punk which grew out of the art scene) and hip hop, which I will address in more detail in the next chapter. This is the musical landscape of West Germany onto which Ferguson and Youth set foot. And like the African American DJs who were inspired by *Kraftwerk*’s electronic sound, Ferguson and Youth are most interested in learning what German music, including the industrial, minimalist sound similar to that of *Einstürzende Neubauten*, has to offer them. In both texts, we will see how Berlin’s physical, political and musical landscape changes Ferguson and Youth’s self-perception.

²¹ Neal, *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture*, 102;106.

²² “In der wiederkehrenden, abfälligen Kennzeichnung des Motown-Labels als ‘Soulfabrik...’” Ege, *Schwarz Werden:*

>>Afroamerikanophilie<< in *den 1960er und 1970er Jahren*, 53.

²³ “...deutsche Texte, eigenes Kulturerbe, historisierende Zitatskunst.” Jürgen Stark, “‘Tief im Westen’: Vom Krautrock bis zur Neuen Deutschen Welle,” in *Rock! Jugend und Musik in Deutschland*, ed. Stiftung der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik in Deutschland and Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2005), 63.

²⁴ “Man berief sich nicht mehr ausschließlich auf Blues und Rock ‘n’ Roll, sondern auch auf deutsche Elektronikmeister wie Karlheinz Stockhausen und Oskar Sala.” Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 63-4.

²⁶ Wilfried Breyvogel, “Bunte Vielfalt und Anarchie: Jugendkultur und Rockmusik der 1980er Jahre,” in *Rock! Jugend und Musik in Deutschland*, ed. Stiftung der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik in Deutschland and Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2005), 95.

Black Rebels, German Locales

In both *Slumberland* and *Passing Strange*, the protagonists choose West Berlin as the site for their transformation. In general, West Berlin was a unique space compared to the rest of West Germany. West Berlin was actually located in the East, surrounded by the German Democratic Republic; therefore its borders made it a democratic island within Socialist East Germany. The reason for West Berlin's special status was, immediately following WWII, the four occupation powers divided the capital city into four zones. After the three Western occupation countries decided to unify their zones and create a currency for them in 1948 and the Soviet Union created a currency for its zone in response, the unified French/American/British part of Berlin happened to be within the Soviet-occupied East. West Berlin's tense position is best exemplified by the Berlin *Luftbrücke* (Airlift).²⁷ "[T]he USSR wanted the steps toward formation of a government for western Germany halted. Until that happened, West Berlin would be held hostage."²⁸ The Soviets blockaded roads leading to Berlin, making it impossible for the Allies to bring provisions to the bombed out city. In response, the Western Allies air-dropped supplies to the city from June 24th 1948 until May 12th 1949, when the Soviets called off the blockade.²⁹

During the forty years of Germany's division, while East Berlin was demarcated the capital of East Germany, the West German capital was moved from Berlin to Bonn. Berlin maintained a special status:

The Western powers were intent upon preserving the four-power occupation of the former capital that provided the legal foundation for their presence in its Western sectors. They therefore refused to allow full incorporation of West Berlin into the Federal Republic. For all practical purposes, however, the Western sectors of the former capital would function like a state of the Federal Republic, whose currency was used there.³⁰

Furthermore, as opposed to the rest of West Germany, there was no military draft in West Berlin.³¹ This exception in particular made the city a favorite among West German pacifists as well as any Germans who were critical of the government, opposed to militarism or who merely wished to avoid serving in the army. Many of these reluctant draftees were not only pacifists, but champions of alternative living, from hippies to punks.³² From the 1960s until reunification, West Berlin was a hot spot for leftist political activity, house squatting and a vibrant music

²⁷ It was actually the Berlin Airlift that forced the US Army to allow that Black GIs be used as occupying troops. Prior to the Airlift, the Army considered excluding Black GIs from occupation, but the Airlift "curbed all further efforts to keep blacks from participating in the occupation in Germany as it generated an urgent demand for troops in transportation and supply units." Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany*, 41.

²⁸ Henry Ashby Turner Jr., *Germany from Partition to Reunification* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 25.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 25-9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 37-8.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

³² This scenario is brilliantly depicted in Sven Regener's trilogy which includes *Herr Lehmann* (2001), *Neue Vahr Süd* (2004) and *Der kleine Bruder* (2008). The main protagonist of the trilogy, Frank Lehmann, leaves his military service in Bremen pre-maturely to seek a new life with his artist brother in Berlin in the late 1970s. Frank moves to Kreuzberg, the center of alternative culture. *Herr Lehmann* in particular shows how Kreuzberg's status as an autonomous zone for leftist politics and offcolor subcultures was supported by its close proximity to the Berlin Wall, which made it an unattractive district for most Berliners.

scene. Thus, it is significant that the protagonists of *Slumberland* and *Passing Strange* are not only musicians, but that they travel to West Berlin in particular.

Finally, while the first four chapters of this dissertation have looked at instances where Black popular culture is used as a vehicle to express a German's alterity or as a tool with which a German character can rebel against German hegemony, in *Slumberland* and *Passing Strange*, African Americans go to Germany in order to rebel and find freedom. Actually, the idea of Black men going to Germany to find freedom is not far-fetched, but mirrors the experience of many Black GIs who served in Germany after WWII – a topic I will address in more detail below. Therefore, this chapter is not just a reversal of the gaze, but a challenge to the assumption that Black popular culture is always already rebellious and free. By traveling to Germany in order to interrogate Black popular culture and their individual identities, these protagonists question the assumptions and binaries that have been established by the German texts in the previous chapters.

One also wonders whether there is something unique about being confronted by the essentialist Black subject in Germany as opposed to in the US. The popularity of Black popular music in postwar America, from R&B to hip hop, has proven how accepting white Americans can be of Black popular culture.³³ Perhaps America's longer history of institutional discrimination and violence against Blacks and the Blackophobia that often accompanies Blackophilia, for example in minstrelsy, has made African Americans more skeptical of white American interest in Black culture.³⁴ In Europe, however, Black artists and intellectuals were enthralled by how whites embraced their culture and this acceptance afforded Blacks more freedom and equality than in the U.S.,³⁵ where Black musicians often found themselves performing in front of a segregated audience.³⁶ If Black GIs really conceived of West Germany as a post-racial utopia, at least compared to the pre-Civil Rights US, then maybe they found Germans' love of Black popular culture more convincing.

Furthermore, Germans might have been more eager to prove their love of Black culture as a counter to the country's past racist crimes. As I mentioned above, many (poor) Germans and Black GIs felt a special understanding existed between Germans and Blacks following WWII. As losers of the war, Germans were often treated disrespectfully by occupying soldiers and therefore they knew how it felt to be treated like second class citizens.³⁷ In *Slumberland*, Ferguson jokingly suggests the following similarities between Germans and Blacks that might explain their mutual affinity: "The nouns themselves [Germans and Blacks] are loaded with so much

³³ Andrew Ross discusses how the American culture of the Baby Boomers has become dominated by African American culture in particular in Andrew Ross, "Pop-Politik: Schwarze Musik und Weiße Identität," in *Globalkolorit: Multikulturalismus und Populärkultur*, ed. Ruth Mayer and Mark Terkessidis (Andrä/Wördern: Hannibal Verlag, 1998). For a discussion of the popularity of hip hop among white Americans see bakari kitwana, *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop: Wankstas, Wiggers, Wannabes, and the New Reality of Race in America* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2005).

³⁴ See Bill Youssman, "Blackophilia and Blackophobia: White Youth, the Consumption of Rap Music, and White Supremacy," *Communication Theory* 13, no. 4 (2003). See also hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*.

³⁵ Throughout the 20th century, many Black intellectuals and artists relocated to Europe. See for example Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (New York: Mariner Books, 1996).

³⁶ Timothy Schroer reports on Josephine Baker's outrage while performing on an army base in the U.S. where she was first expected to perform for white GIs and German POWs, after which Black GIs could view the performance. Schroer, *Recasting Race after World War 2: Germans and African Americans in American-Occupied Germany*.

³⁷ Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins*, 91.

historical baggage it's impossible for anyone to be indifferent to the simple mention of either group. We're two insightful peoples constantly looking for reasons to love ourselves; and let's not forget we both love pork and wear sandals with socks."³⁸ What draws Ferguson and Youth to Germany just might be a genuine curiosity about this foreign country that has a history of embracing and condemning Black culture.

“Blackness” is Laid to Rest

Throughout his work, Paul Beatty shows a concern with challenging essentialism. For example the protagonist of his first novel, *The White Boy Shuffle* (2001), is an African American boy named Gunnar Kaufman (oddly similar to the Afro-German star of *Whity*, Günther Kaufmann) who comes from “a long line of Kaufmans with Scandinavian and German first names (others include Ludwig, Wolfgang...[and Swen].”³⁹ As an African American youth with a German name who writes poetry and plays basketball, Gunnar is likely received by readers as what Jared Champion describes as a:

‘paradoxical’ character [meant] to highlight the reader’s expectations, and therefore criticize a restrictive racial binary. In other words, the mere fact that the reader finds the character of Gunnar Kaufmann culturally paradoxical highlights the ways that our understanding of identity is hindered by social expectations. By emphasizing the subtle, yet powerful, white/non-white binary inherent in the reader’s assumptions and expectations – and the expectations of other characters – Beatty breaks free of discourse on polarity. Only when society moves beyond an erroneous dichotomy of inherent racial difference, argues the novel, can there be progress. For Beatty, race is exclusively a social construct, and the novel seeks to break free of its absurd and largely arbitrary stricture in order to begin a new dialogue of individual authenticity.⁴⁰

Beatty’s character interrogates the limits of Black popular culture, confronting both white and Black expectations of Black popular culture and Black masculinity in particular. Beatty’s title, *White Boy Shuffle*, refers to Gunnar’s negotiation between his own identity and society’s expectations of the essential Black subject. Shuffling not only refers to dancing, but also to quickly moving one’s feet and this describes how Gunnar relentlessly tries to evade stereotypes about Black popular culture. As Champion states, “Gunnar is constantly on a spinning log in terms of his identity. The only way for him to be truly authentic is continually to shift character, and his efforts to establish any level of identity separate from the expectations of his audience, those around him, are constantly undercut by the expectations others place on him...others’ preformed notions of blackness.”⁴¹

³⁸ Paul Beatty, *Slumberland* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 239. The novel will otherwise be referred to as *SL*.

³⁹ Jared Champion, “The Hillside Opera: Paul Beatty’s *the White Boy Shuffle* as a Brechtian Opera,” in *Engaging Tradition, Making It New: Essays on Teaching Recent African American Literature*

ed. Stephanie Brown and Eva Tettenborn (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 43.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

In an interview with Christian Haye in the magazine *BOMB*, Beatty expresses his own frustration about being typified because he is Black, which might help explain why this issue is so prominent in his work. Beatty laments about being called a “hip-hop-poet,” “I think it’s a very shallow label. My work is influenced by hip-hop, whatever hip-hop is, but I don’t think it’s hip-hop poetry.”⁴² Haye responds “It’s an easy way to classify black poets, just as black. We can’t just say they’re great poets. So they say they’re the Byron of blues, or this is the funk master of phrase. (*laughter*) You can cakewalk through this Paul Laurence Dunbar poem.”⁴³ Beatty also criticizes Black poets’ for choosing oral performance solely based on its tie to African American cultural heritage. “... it’s like everyone throws up the quick ‘oral tradition, oral tradition.’ Fuck that. We’re allowed to write now.”⁴⁴ Thus, while in *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy supports Blacks’ preference for conveying their experience through music and oral culture as a challenge to the Western preference for the written word, Beatty does not wish to engage with a historical tradition for its own sake.

Beatty toured Germany around 1993, when spoken word had just taken off there. He toured with the Nuyorican Poets – artists affiliated with the Nuyorican Poetry Café in New York, the birthplace of slam poetry in the 1980s and a place Beatty bemusingly refers to as a death camp in *Slumberland*. During his tour of Germany, Beatty was included on a multicultural platform, of which he was very critical, in part because he saw it as an attempt to simultaneously showcase difference and erase differences among minorities – a practice one of his characters in *Slumberland* also chastises. Beatty criticizes, “As soon as they say ‘multicultural,’ they act like everybody involved is the best of friends.”⁴⁵ He also describes reading in front of a predominantly white audience as feeling “like you’re in a minstrel show.”⁴⁶ His interlocutor Haye also uses blackface as a metaphor to criticize the pro-multicultural showcasing of differences, “That kind of pairing [between Beatty and the Nuyorican Poets] seems more like a minstrel show than anything else. At that point, it’s not about the work. It’s about, we have this voice, we have that voice.”⁴⁷

Much of Beatty’s criticism of essentialism and multicultural politics is echoed in the thoughts of *Slumberland*’s protagonist, Ferguson. Ferguson a.k.a DJ Darky travels to Berlin in search of Charles Stone, whom he refers to as the Schwa – an avant-garde jazz musician who went missing in the 1960s and whom Ferguson suspects is living in Berlin. Ferguson eventually discovers that Stone had immigrated to East Germany where he enjoyed special privileges as a *Verfolgter des Naziregimes* (victim of Nazi persecution).⁴⁸ The novel begins at least a decade after Ferguson first arrived in Berlin. Reflecting on his experiences in Germany, Ferguson wastes no time before he addresses Germans’ preconceived notions of Black popular culture. However, he does not speak to Germans directly; rather he talks *about* them, presumably to a Black

⁴² Christian Haye, “Paul Beatty,” *BOMB*, no. Spring (1994), <http://bombsite.com/issues/47/articles/1764>. Accessed 11 March 2011.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ In the novel this is falsely described as a “*Vergolte des Naziregimes*” (SL 201) and no explanation is given for how Stone was persecuted by the Nazis.

audience who is familiar with the German essentialization of Blacks that has occurred since the middle Ages.

The novel begins, “You would think they’d be used to me by now. I mean, don’t they know that after fourteen hundred years the charade of blackness is over?” (SL 3) Ferguson’s tone places him in a higher position of authority than his German subjects. *He* and his audience are in on the charade and he is surprised that Germans have yet to catch up. Most likely, this “charade of blackness” would be composed of the many stereotypes we have encountered throughout these chapters: Black popular culture as primitive, naïve, childlike, free, and innocent, in close proximity to nature, authentic, wild and most false according to Ferguson, “cool.” Throughout the novel, Ferguson’s main project is to declare “Blackness” passé, which has to do with his belief that coolness is not solely an attribute of Black popular culture. Following Gilroy’s lead in *The Black Atlantic*, Ferguson tries to reinstate the influence of European culture present in Black culture. He stresses that the evolution of “cool” includes many cultures and he recognizes the constellations connecting past and present vanguard movements.

While Black popular culture was considered “cool” among German rock fans in the 1950s and among leftists during the 1960s and 70s, Ferguson believes that by the 1980s, Black popular culture has lost its outsider appeal. He insists that “The Negro is now officially human” (SL 3). He does not lament the demise of Black coolness. On the contrary, for him, Blacks’ being perceived of “as mediocre and mundane as the rest of the species” (SL 3) is a testament to a new stage of equality. Rather than being essentialized for the traits I mentioned earlier, if Black popular culture is passé, Blacks will no longer be perceived as tied to some natural identity; rather their identity can be as fluid and shifting as whites. This new freedom is heralded by Ferguson’s collaboration with Charles Stone. Ferguson proudly proclaims that because his and Charles’s collaborative beat is of “indeterminate blackness” and “out of character,” Blacks will no longer be judged by the color of their skin (SL 16) and finally the ghosts of Josephine Baker, Langston Hughes and the Black Panthers – all Black icons in European society – can rest in peace. Ferguson appears to embody what, in 1989, Trey Ellis defined as the “New Black Aesthetic” (NBA). Ellis describes members of this new aesthetic as “cultural mulattoes”:

Just as a genetic mulatto is a black person of mixed parents who can often get along fine with his white grandparents, a cultural mulatto, educated by a multi-racial mix of cultures, can also navigate easily in the white world. And it is by and large this rapidly growing group of cultural mulattoes that fuels the NBA. We no longer need to deny or suppress any part of our complicated and sometimes contradictory cultural baggage to please either white people or black.⁴⁹

Ferguson proudly states, “Blackness is passé and I for one couldn’t be happier, because now I’m free to go to the tanning salon if I want to, and I want to” (SL 4). His trips to the tanning salon are not only a means of coping with the gray Berlin winter, but also his way of invoking his right to be a blank slate. In his opinion, his naturally dark complexion does not undermine his

⁴⁹ Trey Ellis, “The New Black Aesthetic,” *Callaloo* (1989): 235.

actions. By tanning, he joins the ranks of whites who for decades enjoyed the freedom of being unmarked and for whom tanning signified a privilege. Like the postmodern man masquerading in women's oppression, whites who tanned could momentarily experience being "Black", but inevitably return to their unmarked state. By tanning, Ferguson stakes his claim to being unmarked.⁵⁰ The fact that the experience of tanning reminds him of his mother suggests he might equate lying in the tanning bed with being in the womb; "the ultraviolet radiation substitute[es] for [his] overprotective mother piling blanket after blanket on her baby boy. The warmth from the lamps becomes indistinguishable from that of [his] mother's dry, calloused hands" (SL 7). If his tanning symbolizes a return to the womb, perhaps Ferguson hopes to emerge from the tanning bed reborn as the unmarked man he longs to be. However, his identity is undeniably entwined with how others see him and regardless of his self-perception, Germans' projections keep him in chains.

Ferguson's idea to go to Berlin came about one night while he was playing a newly crafted beat for his group of music connoisseur friends, the Beard Scratchers. His friends were so impressed, they suggested Ferguson find Charles Stone to have it "ratified" as the perfect beat. What points Ferguson to Berlin is a mysterious pornographic film he receives in the mail which is set to Stone's unmistakable music. The return address for the film is "Schallplattenunterhalter Dunkelmann" at the Slumberland Bar at Winterfeld Square in West Berlin. Assuming that "Schallplattenunterhalter Dunkelmann" is the name of the person who sent the film, Ferguson calls the Slumberland asking to speak with this mysterious person. A female bartender responds: "There are many *dunkel* [dark] men here" (SL 43). In fact, the Slumberland is a bar favored by dark men of all kinds including Black GIs, Black ex-pats and African immigrants who mingle with their white girlfriends there. Ferguson decides to head to Germany to track down Charles Stone. In order to get a work visa, Ferguson proposes he work as a jukebox sommelier at the Slumberland. The bar accepts his proposition and in the fall, he takes his record collection to the walled-in city.

When Ferguson arrives in Berlin he feels "as happy as a runaway slave" (SL 51), which is perhaps a reference to the many African Americans who found a certain kind of freedom in Europe. Despite Black GIs' claims that Germany was a racial Utopia compared to the United States, Ferguson is not delusional about the extent of the Germans' hospitality, as he remarks, "Everyone was so nice – to a point" (SL 51). He understands that as an African American he is received with a certain degree of friendliness, as long as his interlocutors believe he is staying in Germany for a short while – long enough for them to "pick [his] brain about jazz and American racism" (SL 51), but not long enough to take root.

⁵⁰ As Richard Dyer remarks about tanning, "The most conscious association of tanning is with healthiness, a belief in the beneficence of the sun's rays (doing for the skin what they do for the fruits of the earth), of the outdoor life, fresh air, exercise. It is also associated with leisure, with time not devoted to work and the necessities of life, with travel and living away from home, and therefore, in connection with all of these, with money... The desire 'to be black' – vividly expressed in white people's relationship to black music and dance – may well inform the fashion for tanning, but the point about tanning is that the white person never does become black...not only does tanning bespeak a wealth and lifestyle largely at white people's disposition, but it also displays white people's right to be various, literally to incorporate into themselves features of other peoples." Dyer, *White*, 49. The association between tanning and visiting exotic lands is exemplified in the coupon Ferguson uses at the salon which features "a glossy aerial photo of a Caribbean coastline" and the different tanning specials "*Malibu, Waikiki, or Ibiza*" (SL 4).

Trapped in the Black Box

This feeling of freedom soon subsides; however, as Ferguson grows increasingly aware of the burden of Black popular culture he must carry in Germany. Germans' objectification of him makes him feel akin to a group of emperor penguins on display at the Berlin zoo. He praises the animals for "rebell[ing] in penguin defiance in the face of the curious stares and the stereotyped expectations of the outside world" (SL 56). His equivalence between himself and the penguins at the zoo recalls the *Völkerschauen* (literally "people shows" or human zoos) that Carl Hagenbeck organized in the 19th century, when he put a variety of indigenous peoples, including Africans, on display in German zoos. Ferguson later applies this metaphor to an African American security guard he meets at the *Amerikahaus*. It is not coincidental that a Black man has been chosen as the gate keeper for the *Amerikahaus*. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the *Amerikahaus* is a cultural institution that was introduced to German cities in 1946. It was instrumental in making Germans familiar with the kinds of American culture that the US army deemed representative of America's colorful democracy.⁵¹ The Black guard stands inside a "glass-enclosed vestibule" which Ferguson describes as a cage. It is clear from Ferguson's description of the guard that he does not view the long history of cultural exchange between African Americans and Germans from a solely positive perspective. He muses, "The tall African-American watchman belonged to the long legacy of freak show blackness including the Venus Hottentot" (SL 57). The nameless man designated only with the badge "Security" also conforms to stereotypes of the childlike Black who is not entrusted with a weapon, but who "disarmed intruders with his smile" (SL 57).

Like the men Ferguson encounters in the Slumberland, the security guard seems to be a remnant of a bygone era – Black GIs who chose to remain in Germany after WWII. This might explain the bar's name. With its red lighting, bamboo blinds, banana trees, reggae and sand strewn floors, the Slumberland is described as a hyperreal location that simultaneously signifies every German's fantasy of an exotic getaway and nowhere at all. For the men who frequent the Slumberland, although Germany *and* America have changed significantly since the 1950s, they are still convinced that "Germany is the black man's heaven" (SL 58). As an outsider coming into this "racial utopia" with the post-Civil Rights mindset of the New Black Aesthetic, rather than accept the guard's claims, Ferguson remains skeptical. The security guard suggests that in exchange for the freedom to date white women, Black men in Germany must give in to their essentialization and objectification. "You have to let them love you" (SL 58) he advises Ferguson.

One of the first assumptions about Black popular culture Ferguson encounters in Germany is that of Black popular culture as free and innovative – as if it was more of a bricolage than other pop-cultural phenomena. One German tells him, "You know, jazz improvisation comes from the slaves having to improvise in order to survive" (SL 52). Ferguson counters this naïve romanticization of Black popular culture by reinvoking the physicality of the Black

⁵¹ Höhn and Klimke reported that many Black GIs criticized the army's practice of tokenism. As one soldier remarks, "Whenever we got a parade or something, you got the black man out front to show equal rights of man or something. It's bullshit." Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany*, 147.

experience.⁵² His counterargument demystifies Black popular culture, stripping it of the German's attractive notions: "Making a holiday meal from pig innards isn't improvisation; it's common sense to throw whatever's left into the fucking pot" (SL 52). While "improvisation" comes from a place of luxury, like Richard Huelsenbeck's "African" drumming at the Cabaret Voltaire, survival tactics are what desperate men resort to. Slaves did not drum purely as a means of artistic expression, but as a necessary means of communication.

Music appears to be the area regarding which Ferguson is most confronted with essentialist notions about Blacks. This could be because he is a DJ and jukebox sommelier, but also because Germans' ideas about Black popular culture are strongly tied to music. After reunification, during his first gig in East Berlin he is surprised to see his DJing event labeled as "BLACK MUSIC!" (SL 122).⁵³ As he sets up his equipment, "it dawned on [him] that [he] and not [his] music was the entertainment, the atmosphere" (SL 122). When he realizes that the crowd's desire for Black popular music has as much to do with watching him "perform" Black popular culture as it does with him playing "black music," Ferguson spins a mixture of "unsung American and German funkateers: Shuggie Otis, Chocolate Milk, Xhol, Manfred Krug, and Veronika Fischer" (SL 122). By playing the music of white East German artists like jazz vocalist Manfred Krug and *Schlager* star Veronika Fischer under the label of "black music," Ferguson questions the felicity of such labels. Is "black music" music by Black artists? Music *traditionally* played by Black musicians? Somber music? Or music which originated in the Black Diaspora? In Chapter Four, the act of labeling Zydeco "Negermusik" in Schultze's village obfuscates this music's European influence and this is the case for most musical genres that tend to be labeled "black music."⁵⁴

Wir sind ein (weißes) Volk⁵⁵

While taking a walk one day, searching for obscure jazz artist Charles Stone, Ferguson literally happens upon German reunification. While he watches Berliners dismantle the wall, a middle-aged East German runs up to him, hugs him and shouts "'Ich bin frei!' *I am free!* Then, cribbing from Kennedy's famous speech, he whispered in [Ferguson's] ear, 'Ich bin ein Negro. Ich bin frei jetzt' (I'm a Negro. Now I'm free)" (SL 118). This encounter reminds Ferguson of something his "father would say whenever he'd come across a hard-luck colored person in a witness box, cardboard box, or coffin box before his time. He'd say, 'Lincoln freed the slaves like Henry Ford freed the horses'" (SL 118). This equivalence relates to my closing argument in the last chapter. Ferguson's father compares freed slaves post-Emancipation with "freed horses"

⁵² E. Patrick Johnson argues it is precisely the "consequential aspects of bodily harm that [he believes] racial performativity fails to account for. Gender, sexuality, race, and even class are discursive categories that are subject to mediation; nonetheless, they are categories that exist beyond abstraction and function within the realm of the 'real.'" Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*, 40.

⁵³ In Germany, the term "black music" is used as a category of music referring to genres that have been pioneered by African Americans. It can include genres ranging from R&B and soul to funk and hip hop. The label "black music" is used by concert venues, clubs and music stores.

⁵⁴ In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy discusses how misleading it is when we talk about a genre like hip hop as being African American. This notion does not pay tribute to the music's Caribbean influence. Referring to hip hop as "African American" also assumes that German and French hip hop and every other variation found throughout the world is somehow a copy or inauthentic.

⁵⁵ Translated as "We are one (white) people" this is meant as a play on the common slogan of German unification "Wir sind ein Volk" (We are one people).

after Ford revolutionized the mass production of the automobile because one could argue that both the slaves and the horses lost their purpose for the system. Once horses were no longer needed as the primary means of transportation, they became good only for sport and when a horse is worn out on the race track his fate is to be grinded up and eaten or used for glue. Emancipation freed the slaves from forced labor, but those who did not become sharecroppers (enslaved by debt) had grave difficulty finding any kind of work. And in light of the staggering number of African American children whose dreams are to play professional sports, one might say that American society in particular has conditioned Blacks to see their only worth in sports as well.

Ferguson pushes the comparison between freed slaves and East Germans even further. After reunification, he claims that:

Germany changed. After the wall fell it reminded [him] of the Reconstruction period of American history, complete with scalawags, carpetbaggers, lynch mobs, and the woefully lynched. The country had every manifestation of the post-1865 Union save Negro senators and decent peanut butter. Turn on the television and there'd be minstrel shows – tuxedoed *Schauspieler* in blackface acting out *Showboat* and literally whistling Dixie... There were East Germans passing for West Germans.⁵⁶ (*SL* 134)

To refer back to my argument in the last chapter, Ferguson equates East Germans with freed slaves because with reunification East Germans were also thrust into modernity (in the stage of late capitalism) and expected to compete with West German “brothers” who had been at the game much longer. It is no surprise that shortly after the euphoria of reunification subsides, Ferguson witnesses his West German friends mocking East Germans; the animosities and feelings of difference built up during the Cold War do not disappear overnight.

The connection Ferguson feels between East Germans and African Americans could also be a consequence of the strong East German solidarity movement with African Americans’ fight for civil rights – a movement which had been officially endorsed by the government. As I mentioned in the last chapter, several prominent African Americans who viewed their fight for civil rights within the larger international solidarity movement were celebrated in the GDR. On several occasions, large crowds of East Germans turned up to see Angela Davis, Martin Luther King Jr. and Paul Robeson. A handful of Black GIs serving in West Germany even fled to the GDR after deserting the U.S. Army. In the East they were given political and vocational training and were championed as proof of Socialist countries’ superior treatment of minorities compared to the U.S. and West Germany.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Even today, East Germans feel they are openly discriminated against. In 2006, the first case to be tried under Germany’s new Anti-discrimination Law, which was ratified in 2005, involved an East German woman who claimed she was turned down for a position because she was an “Ossi.” “Ossi” is a degrading term for an East German. When the woman received her application back after having not been hired, she observed that the company had written “kein Ossi” (No Easterner) on her papers. The Stuttgart Labour Court ruled against the woman with the reasoning that East Germans are not a separate ethnicity and therefore could not use the General Equal Treatment Act in such cases. <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/soziales/0,1518,687929,00.html>. Accessed 04 January 2011.

⁵⁷ Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany*, 127.

Despite the GDR's official efforts at erasing racism and discrimination from public view, the every-day reality was quite different. Regardless of the government's claims that racism was only a symptom of capitalist oppression and therefore it could not exist in their Socialist state, even the African Americans who praised the GDR reported incidents of racism. Oliver Harrington, who lived in the GDR from 1961 until 1991 translating American classics for the Aufbau publishing house, claimed that "living in East Germany, he was 'insulted on the streets on an average of about 5 times a day.'"⁵⁸ Even the director of the Cultural Commission of the Politbüro of the Central Committee of the SED⁵⁹ Alfred Kurella claimed that East Germans had "'pseudosympathies' with blacks. In a letter to his colleague Albert Norden, Kurella went even further, alleging that 'behind the very loudly proclaimed propaganda for the 'poor Negro' and his 'culture' that certain people propagated, there actually lay a 'racial hatred with inverse indicators.'"⁶⁰

It is, therefore, not surprising that despite the similarities Ferguson recognizes between the East German and the African American experience, reunification brings a rise of overt nationalism and racism with it. As an African American, Ferguson experiences reunification in a similar way as Afro-Germans. Many Germans of color claimed that reunification revived German nationalism – the "we" in the common phrase "Wir sind ein Volk" did not include immigrants or dark-skinned Germans. As Afro-German poet and activist May Ayim stated, after reunification:

...concepts such as homeland, people, and fatherland were suddenly–again–on many tongues. Words came back into official circulation that had not been used without hesitation in either German state since the Holocaust....In the first days after November 9, 1989, I noticed that there were hardly any immigrants and Black Germans visible in the city landscape...Our participation at the party was not requested...I found the 'receptiveness' and 'hospitality' toward white GDR citizens duplicitous considering the constant warnings to our so-called foreign fellow citizens that the 'boat is full' [...]⁶¹

Reflecting on the troubling nationalism that he begins to notice in his ex-girlfriend Doris's speech, Ferguson's feelings reflect those of Ayim's:

The way she [Doris] bandied about *Jew* made [Ferguson] miss the Wall. Before reunification no one called [him] *Neger* to [his] face or said *Jew* as a pejorative...Needless to say, the black expat population longed for the Wall's return...Reunification and the rise of neo-Nazi activity had given the West German asshole the freedom to show his true colors. (*SL* 138-9)

⁵⁸ Ibid., 141.

⁵⁹ The SED was the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei* (Socialist Unity Party); the sole ruling party throughout the GDR's 40-year existence.

⁶⁰ Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany*, 141.

⁶¹ May Ayim, "The Year 1990: Homeland and Unity from an Afro-German Perspective," in *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration, 1955-2005*, ed. Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling, and Anton Kaes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 126-8.

This observation sheds light on Charles Stone's protest against the Wall's dismantling. Stone, whom Ferguson finally encounters as an elderly Black man collecting stones throughout the city in order to rebuild the wall, wears a placard proclaiming "how can we read the writing on the wall, if there is no wall" (SL 140). Ironically, it was precisely the Wall's dismantling that revealed the true colors of both Germanies. While Germany was divided in East and West, West Germany contracted guest workers from abroad due to a labor shortage which was caused in part by the building of the Wall which had cut off the flow of migrants from the East. Meanwhile, the Socialist East often described its country as free of race and racism in contrast to the West which exploited its guest workers. The East even argued that the problem of neo-Nazi violence, which existed in both Germanies, was a Western import. With reunification, the writing on the wall reveals Germany to be an imagined community that does not consider persons of color a part of the fold.

Bad Girls for Boys Who Never Had it So Good⁶²

As he grows accustomed to living in Germany, Ferguson can sense how German culture is changing him. He reflects "Though you never hear of a black person 'going native' (that shameful fall from grace is reserved for whites), [he] had gone, if not native, then at least temporarily Teutonic for one special day [Loveparade]" (SL 135). Ferguson's observation reveals that while whites who found freedom in Black culture were often described as "going native" (something degrading), Blacks who found freedom in white (European) culture are more likely described as having assimilated, which automatically passes judgment about European culture being higher than any form of Black culture.

Despite Ferguson's claims of having gone "Teutonic," there are still moments in Germany – especially the proud re-unified Germany – when he feels uncomfortable in his skin:

Sometimes I'll be on a train, standing in an out-of-the-way corner looking at the commuters...and my prejudice and genocidal fears get the best of me. I think that one day a buzzer will ring and these people will all stand in unison, snap to attention with a heel click and a bellicose 'Jawohl!', and order me to take the *next* train. (SL 137)

After revealing his secret suspicion that all Germans have fascist tendencies, an assumption that would be as unfair as Germans' assumptions about Blacks, Ferguson is quick to qualify this statement. He knows "this buzzer can sound in any country, at any time. And that some will stand in good faith and others will stand in fear, and that a select few will stand taller than the rest by fighting back, harboring, leafleting, dying, and trying. But still" (SL 137-8).

His underlying discomfort in Germany seems motivated by several concerns. First of all, his friends Doris and Lars's uncomfortable relationship to the country's Nazi past seems to drive a wedge between them and Ferguson. Despite the fictional and factual efforts discussed in the past four chapters, where Germans tried to align themselves with the oppressed, Ferguson

⁶² In Timothy Schroer's *Recasting Race After World War 2*, he quotes an army official who describes German women as "bad girls" and Black GIs as "boys who never had it so good."

realizes that there is a fundamental difference (of experience) between himself and the white German majority. He can only see himself committing to Doris once the “statute of limitations on genocidal guilt” expires (SL 138); meaning although she is likely too young to be implicated in Germany’s Nazi crimes, she and all Germans, regardless of age, share a collective guilt for the Holocaust. This guilt will be passed on from generation to generation, presumably until Germans are relieved thereof. But Ferguson does not know what the conditions for absolution are. And though he cannot suggest when this exoneration might come, he imagines its arrival will be announced with a buzzer: “What’s funny is that if that buzzer ever does go off, [he] know[s] [he]’d run to her [Doris]” (SL 138).

A further cause of his discomfort in Germany is the dangerously thin line between Blackophilia and Blackophobia that keeps making itself apparent— a line that was discussed in Chapters One and Three. This line is revealed on the day of reunification when he encounters an elderly woman who is muttering to herself about foreigners.⁶³ When Ferguson asks the woman how she feels about *Neger* she replies ““Love them. Slept with a couple after the war. Nice boys. Polite. Big *schwanz*, small minds, and even tinier ears. Maybe that’s why they’re so stupid, they don’t hear everything”” (SL 110). This exchange confirms a suspicion which Ferguson addresses throughout the novel: interracial sex cannot necessarily be equated with a political act.⁶⁴ Ferguson often pokes fun at the ageing Black “revolutionaries” in West Berlin who have been using sex as a weapon in the fight against racism. After the Wall fell, he muses that with all of the East German women descending on West Berlin, “The black man’s burden had never been heavier than it was at that moment” (SL 119).

Ferguson’s encounters with German women refer back to the legacy of interracial relationships between Black GIs and German women after WWII. When the female employee at the tanning salon looks at him, he claims “A look of bemused familiarity creeps across her face. A look that says, *Maybe I’ve seen you somewhere before. Didn’t you rape me last Tuesday. Aren’t you my son’s tap dance teacher?*” (SL 4). Upon seeing Ferguson, the woman’s only points of reference are the available stereotypes of African American men that have circulated in Germany since the 19th century; ranging from violent rapist to entertainer and deadbeat dad. She is unable to see him as an individual. Aside from these stock figures, the Berliners tend to associate Ferguson with the newest African American pop icons, from Urkel to Dave Chappelle. The immense difference between these cultural icons shows how Ferguson’s Black identity trumps any other characteristics that might define him. For Berliners, he is the Black Everyman.

As I mentioned earlier, Ferguson claims not to buy into the seasoned ex-pats’ ideas of Germany. For Ferguson, Berlin is heaven not because he can date white women but because

⁶³ This woman is reminiscent of the elderly woman played by Senta Moira in Pepe Danquart’s short film about racism, *Schwarzfahrer* (Black Rider, 1993). In the film, a Black passenger on a streetcar sits down next to an elderly white woman who then spends the entire trip repeating negative stereotypes about Africans and ranting about how foreigners (including Poles and Turks) have “ruined” Germany. The film’s title is a pun. While the Black passenger is physically a “Black rider,” the term *Schwarzfahrer* is German for “fare dodger.” However, the Black man is not the fare dodger, as authorities might typically expect. Rather, when he eats the woman’s ticket as an act of revenge she becomes the *Schwarzfahrer* and is removed from the streetcar when no one comes to her defense. As the inspector removes her from the streetcar, she claims that “The Blacks are eating our tickets” – a statement which is subsumed into the other outlandish claims she has made during the trip.

⁶⁴ Anthropologist Damani James Partridge addresses the link between interracial sex, politics and citizenship in postwall Germany. He found that white German women often sought out Black men because they assumed these men were more interesting, less controlling and more comfortable with their bodies than white men. Damani James Partridge, “We Were Dancing in the Club, Not on the Berlin Wall: Black Bodies, Street Bureaucrats, and Exclusionary Incorporation into the New Europe,” *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 4 (2008): 668.

women, regardless of their skin color, do not have the same false, Hollywood-driven romantic expectations of relationships. In Berlin he could have casual, honest sexual relations with women and both parties were not delusional about their motivations for being together.⁶⁵ He sees the white German women and Black men of the Slumberland as being united by their desire for exhibitionism and the fear and excitement they experience from doing something taboo. To him, white women who date Black men have an “inner nigger. The nigger who had so much in common with these defeated and delusional men, the bipolar white woman in all of us who needs to be worshiped whistled at, and sometimes beaten” (SL 78).

Yet, Ferguson’s relationship to white and Black women is much more complicated. On the one hand, he claims to have no particular draw towards white women and he scoffs at the Black ex-pat “warriors” who find freedom in sex with white women. For someone disgusted with essentialization, however, it is a bit surprising that Ferguson feels he has to find an “African queen.” Perhaps despite his shape-shifting identity, he still longs for a companion who has shared the tangible experience of being Black in the world. It is during the scary moments when German nationalism and racism rear their ugly heads, for example when Lars expresses pride about the efficiency of the Holocaust, that Ferguson desperately needs a Black woman (SL 105).

Despite Ferguson’s critique of the Black men at the Slumberland, his own desires reveal notions about beauty that have been influenced by racism. Ferguson describes his perfect Black soul mate as “[his] African queen without the African features” (SL 104). In fact, when he meets his first Black German women, the sisters Klaudia and Fatima, he is drawn to the sister with the more European features. If Ferguson’s desire for an African without African features is a desire for a woman who is as physically unmarked as he is culturally unmarked, then his default conclusion that Europeans are unmarked and Africans are marked suggests that he is thinking within the Western hegemonic system of thought he so dislikes.⁶⁶

Ferguson is highly aware of how skin tone affects how Germans perceive someone. Rather than simply “Black”, he describes himself as “a nice, nonthreatening sitcom Negro brown” (SL 5) which is simultaneously a commentary on whites’ and the American mass media’s preference for light-skinned Blacks. To get beyond essentialization, instead of skin color, he suggests “mammals should be classified by their sun protection factors” (SL 5). Despite his dreams for a post-racial society of unmarked individuals, in the present Ferguson does not shy away from using skin tone to describe other Blacks. In contrast to the lighter-skinned Klaudia, Fatima, whom Ferguson describes as having been “hit harder by the ‘nigger stick’ than her sister”⁶⁷ (SL 123), is suicidal and plagued by depression over the state of Germany postunification. Perhaps her darker skin not only explains her more serious problems, but also her more exotic Arabic name in contrast to her sister’s German name.

An example of Ferguson’s racist notions of beauty is when he praises Klaudia’s feet. According to Ferguson, “Klaudia’s dancing feet could pass for white” (SL 144). He revels seeing

⁶⁵ This assumption is shared with Youth in *Passing Strange*. Youth is enthralled by the sexual freedom he finds in Amsterdam. In Europe, sex is depicted as less of a taboo than in the U.S.

⁶⁶ For example, it is telling that Ferguson only felt confirmed in his identity when he scored high on the Scholastic Aptitude and Scholastic Assessment Tests (SATs). Therefore, he too judges himself according to normative standards.

⁶⁷ Ferguson claims this expression originated in German; a qualifying statement which is likely meant to absolve him of the guilt for having used it to describe her.

“her feet smooth, almost white, and as sculpted as a Parthenon Athena’s hanging off the futon and resting gently on the floor” (SL 145). Although he compares Klaudia’s feet to a symbol of traditional (white) beauty, the Greek goddess Athena, his qualifier “almost” in “almost white” shows that instead of a construction, whiteness embodies something tangible for him – a state of perfection Klaudia will never be able to reach. Prior to his observations about Klaudia’s feet, Ferguson attempts to explain his desire for white women: “It was my mother’s feet that drove me to white women” (SL 144). He then goes on to describe how disgusted he was as a boy when his mother made him massage her “crusty appendages” (SL 144). Ferguson has this traumatic experience in common with the protagonist of Beatty’s first novel, Gunnar Kaufman, who also had to massage his mother’s feet after a hard day’s work.

While Ferguson spends at least a paragraph describing how horrible his mother’s feet were, he fails to address the cause. His mother’s rugged feet have nothing to do with her being Black, but with her labor. Thus, rather than a question of “race,” Ferguson’s foot fetish, or more precisely his repugnance towards calloused feet, is an issue of class. A woman’s worn down feet are commonly the product of hard labor. The fantasy of white feet as clean and as delicate as porcelain was propagated by the white upper-class in families where women not only did not have to do household labor but possibly had their feet washed and pampered by servants. The image of the Black Moor slave washing the feet of his white mistress was common in advertising in Victorian England.⁶⁸ The Moor was a favored figure in such ads not only because his dark skin made the white woman’s feet appear even whiter, but his slave status made white female customers who identified with the woman in the ad feel elevated. As much as Ferguson criticizes the Black men he encounters in the Slumberland, the fact that he affirms an ideal beauty influenced by the white upper-class shows his own inability to interrogate the historical context of his desires.

Brothers, Keepers of Black Culture

In *Slumberland*, the cultural exchanges between Africans or African Americans and Germans are particularly male-centric and interracial sex seems to be the center of Black men’s experience in Germany. The novel’s preoccupation with this topic is not surprising, considering how much scholarship has been written about the political and social significance of interracial relationships between Black GIs and German women after WWII. In *Fräuleins and GIs*, Maria Höhn interprets German women’s relationships with Black GIs as a kind of rebellion against German norms which allowed them to challenge race, class and gender hierarchies. Damani James Partridge’s investigation of these relationships since the end of the Cold War reiterates this claim.

Considering the laws against miscegenation in twenty-four US states during the postwar period, the instances of lynching and the discrimination they suffered at home and within the army itself; for Black GIs, the freedom to date German women carried a great deal of significance in the battle against racism and for equal rights.⁶⁹ However, it is interesting how in

⁶⁸ Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*.

⁶⁹ Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins*, 106.

some statements made by Black GIs, a freedom from racial prejudice becomes intertwined with definitions of masculinity.⁷⁰ For example, one Black GI says the following regarding what it was like to serve in postwar France: “I have never before experienced what it meant to be really free, to taste real liberty – in a phrase, ‘to be a man.’”⁷¹ Perhaps racial equality is so often tied to masculinity in these accounts because the subjects in question are Black *men*. However, one must also keep in mind how racism and sexism have historically functioned as interlocking systems of domination. As I discussed in Chapter Three, during slavery, slave owners were both fearful and envious of Black masculinity, which often expressed itself in sadistic punishment such as the castration of male slaves.⁷² Further emasculation resulted from the feeling of weakness experienced by male slaves who were powerless as female slaves were raped by their white masters.⁷³ And the many lynchings which occurred up until the mid-20th century are an example of how Black masculinity’s “threat” towards white femininity continued to be propagated in American culture long after slavery was abolished.

Nevertheless, this soldier’s comparison between liberty and masculinity reveals an assumption that possibly endangers Black *femininity*. To equate “being really free” with being a man suggests that Black women do not deserve or desire the same rights for freedom as Black men, presumably because even with their civil rights, Black women would still be expected to make themselves subservient to Black men.⁷⁴ Ironically, by equating masculinity with a freedom attained from interracial dating, those Black men who did value white femininity more for its whiteness risked making themselves subservient to white women.⁷⁵

This was Berlin before the Wall came down. State-supported hedonism. Every one-night stand a propaganda poster for democratic freedom and third-world empowerment. In [Ferguson’s] mind [he] made a vow that [he’d] never be like those sex warriors who subsisted only on their exoticness. These men of the diaspora who smiled meekly while libertine frauleins debated as to who was the ‘true black’ ... This was a time when if a white woman saw a black man she wanted, she’d step to him and dangle her car keys in his face. The customary response on the part of the buck was to take those keys in hand and drive her home. (SL 62)

Ferguson’s description of the Black men at the Slumberland as meek and obedient reveals the complicated power struggles and positionality in these relationships. On the one hand, in the immediate postwar U.S., most Black men dared not glance at a white woman let alone engage in a sexual relationship with one, for fear of being accused of rape and possibly lynched. On the

⁷⁰ This is also demonstrated in the Blaxploitation film from Chapter Three, *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song*. “On two occasions in the film, women, one black and one white, are constructed as gatekeepers or obstructions to Sweetback’s desire for freedom,” Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*, 25.

⁷¹ Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany*, 11.

⁷² See Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*.

⁷³ “It has often been easier for black men to suggest that black women derived some privilege from these relationships than to admit that black women have been victims of sexual violence, ironically also at the hands of black men.” Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*, 27.

⁷⁴ bell hooks criticizes this sexist way of thinking among Black revolutionaries of the Civil Rights Movement in hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*.

⁷⁵ In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon criticizes Black men whose relationships with white women conceal a desire to become white.

other hand, as Timothy Schroer points out, Black GIs in Germany found themselves in a position of power because they were American, the victors, and they had access to goods which were hard for most poverty stricken Germans to come by.⁷⁶ If one considers Eldrige Cleaver's arguments in *Soul on Ice*⁷⁷ that the key to fighting racist oppression was to rehabilitate Black masculinity, perhaps that is what Black men hoped to achieve in their relationships with German women.⁷⁸ Therefore, Ferguson sarcastically refers to his jukebox selection in the Slumberland as helping "a haughty German woman come down off her high horse and put a discouraged, diasporic black man on his" (SL 79).

Regarding Ferguson's thoughts on interracial relationships between Blacks and Germans, he never mentions relations between Black women and white men – although there are definitely historical accounts of these relationships as well.⁷⁹ For example, after he meets the Afro-German sisters Klaudia and Fatima von Robinson,⁸⁰ the possibility of them dating a German man is never entertained. Ferguson only mentions self-evidently that the two sisters had "many dateless and lonely night[s]" (SL 143) until they met him.⁸¹ The fact that the Slumberland bar is a primarily Black *male* space, and particularly a space that fears Black femininity, is best exemplified when Klaudia and Fatima begin visiting Ferguson there:

Klaudia and Fatima were the Rosa Parkses of Slumberland integration. To my knowledge, before them no black female had ever set foot in the place. Whenever they came through, the regulars treated them like black-hatted gunfighters blown into town by an ill wind. Petrified, the locals would duly deputize a couple of brave white women to find out what the dark strangers wanted. (SL 164)

Besides Black men being the main interlopers in African American-German relations in the novel, they also appear to be the gate keepers of Black culture – like the Black security guard at the *Amerikahaus*. Ferguson relays how lonely Klaudia and Fatima felt growing up Black in East Germany. In search of Black culture and voices with whom they could relate, they began

⁷⁶ Black GIs were considered more generous than white GIs, partially because Black servicemen were more often "assigned to supply, labor, and service details, [and] they had unfettered access to the food and goods that hungry Germans in their war-torn cities lacked." Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany*, 47.

⁷⁷ In Germany, *Soul on Ice* was translated and distributed by the Black Panther Solidarity Committee through KD Wolff's publication house "Roter Stern." Bernard Vesper and his fiancé Gudrun Ensslin, who would later become a founding member of the West German terrorist group the Red Army Fraction (*Rote Armee Fraktion* [RAF]), also translated much of the Black Panther Party's literature. *Ibid.*, 113-15.

⁷⁸ Even Huey P. Newton admitted that one of the challenges within the Black Power Movement was to overcome homophobia and sexism. "We want to hit a homosexual in the mouth because we are afraid we might be homosexual, and we want to hit the woman or shut her up because we are afraid that she might castrate us, or take the nuts that we might not have to start with." Newtown as quoted in Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*, 6. Newtown's statement reflects a fear that black women's freedom will take from or hinder black men's freedom.

⁷⁹ In the 19th century, due in part to the shortage of German women in the African colonies, many German married African women until a law was passed by the German Empire deeming these unions illegal. Schroer, *Recasting Race after World War 2: Germans and African Americans in American-Occupied Germany*. Heide Fehrenbach's *Race after Hitler* and the collaborated effort between Katharina Oguntoye, May Ayim and Dagmar Schultze, *Farbe Bekennen* (Showing Our Colors), both address the difficulties Afro-German women have faced in interracial relationships. Fehrenbach relates that Afro-German women were especially encouraged to go into child care, because popular opinion assumed that German men would never marry them and therefore they would likely never have children of their own.

⁸⁰ "von Robinson" is an unusual and very artificial family name. It is perhaps a tongue-in-cheek reference to a would-be African American father.

⁸¹ bell hooks addresses the higher proportion of Black men in interracial relationships in *Outlaw Culture*, where she suggests that Black men – especially those who are successful and financially secure – are still seen as elevating a white woman's status. Meanwhile, in a traditionally patriarchal Western society, there is no way a Black woman can elevate a white man's status.

reading the literature of Pushkin. Eventually, they ventured into the realm of music and began listening to a jazz program on the Voice of America. Although the broadcaster was white, he often interviewed Black musicians and it is from these Black *male* artists that the sisters could construct a Black identity. Klaudia and Fatima,

could hear colors in the language...the black cautiousness in [Conover's] subjects' voices and minds. Other than Muhammad Ali rants on the news, and Pushkin's poetic voice in the poems of which they'd grown so fond, these interviews were the only times they'd ever heard a black man speak. They reminded them of the father neither of them had ever seen. (*SL* 143)

And when Klaudia hears Charles Stone's recording "Darn that Dharma" on the radio, "She [finally] had found her blackness" (*SL* 143). The idea that Klaudia and Fatima first begin to construct a Black identity when they hear Black popular music is understandable. For many Germans, regardless of color, and especially those who lived in East Germany, Black music was a very accessible and popular form of Black culture. However, why are the musicians, artists and athletes that inspire the sisters purely male? Is it possible that because their mother was white they equated femininity with whiteness and masculinity with their Black, absent father? However, would not one expect the sisters to long for a Black *femininity* with which they could identify as well?

The novel might reveal a general undervaluing of Black women's contribution to constructing Black culture. As bell hooks remarks in "Postmodern Blackness,"⁸²

Even if an aspect of black culture is the subject of postmodern critical writing, the works cited will usually be those of black men. A work that comes immediately to mind is Andrew Ross's chapter "Hip and the Long Front of Color" in *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*; while it is an interesting reading, it constructs black culture as though black women have had no role in black cultural production.

Considering that Black female artists and intellectuals have traveled to Germany throughout the 20th century and up until the present,⁸³ why is the common discourse on African American-German cultural transfer so centered on Black men? When Black women are discussed, they often appear only as the offspring of Black men – like Klaudia and Fatima. One wonders, are there perhaps Black women who, during American occupation of Germany, had relationships *and children* with German men? Considering that in cases when a child's parents are not together the child has traditionally remained with its mother, would these children have returned to America and been raised as Americans? And even if the contribution of Black women to Black European history and culture is somehow disproportionate, Black women (American, African and Afro-German) had a strong public voice in Germany during the 1980s and 1990s

⁸² hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*, 24.

⁸³ For example, Owen Levy's documentary film *Haven Dwellers* (1994) profiles a few African American women who have chosen to live and work in Berlin.

through autobiographical writing and collaborations with feminist movements at home and across the African Diaspora. But what have become of these Black female voices and contributions to Black Europe?⁸⁴

In his study of Afro-German pop music, Alexander G. Weheliye notes a very male-centered construction of Afro-German identity. In his analysis of the Brothers Keepers and Sisters Keepers'⁸⁵ video for "Adriano (Letzte Warnung)," Weheliye observed that although the song is a collaboration between Afro-German male *and* female artists,

While a few women are featured in the final shots of this video, female musicians are completely absent, drawing attention to the constitutive (female) outside of this mode of racial unity. When Brothers Keepers were asked in interviews about the visible and audible absence of women from this group, the organizers responded that all the eligible female performers were either pregnant or on maternity leave. Though women are needed to both literally and figuratively reproduce the Afro-German Volk, they remain absent from the Afro-German Volk envisioned by the Brothers, and they do not pose a threat to the whiteness of the German nation. In other words, Afro-German women are not needed to fight neo-Nazi violence but to bear children and to play the role of the consoling counterpart to Brothers Keepers' aggressive stance.⁸⁶

Weheliye's observation reveals a similarity between Civil Rights-era Black chauvinism and Brothers Keepers' preference for a predominantly male Afro-German identity.⁸⁷ I must, however, disagree with Weheliye's claim that Afro-German women do not pose a threat to the whiteness of the German nation. It is precisely *because* of their child-bearing capabilities that Afro-German women pose a threat. When, for example, the Nazis secretly sterilized hundreds of Afro-Germans whose fathers were African French colonial soldiers they did so to both men *and* women. Heterosexual relations between Blacks and Germans, regardless of whether it is a Black man or Black woman involved, are always threatening to the homogenized notion of a German nation. Why, then, in both fictional and factual accounts, is there more of an interest in the Black *male* experience in Germany? Perhaps sexist stereotypes have made us more familiar with the notion of the Black male, whether soldier or musician, experimenting and finding himself in Europe, whereas an equally independent Black femininity is unfeasible. Mark Anthony Neal suggests that within the Black community there is a "discomfort with heightened black female

⁸⁴ A few recent, nonliterary contributions by Afro-German women to the debate on racism in Germany are Mo Asumang's documentary film *Roots Germania* (2007) and Noah Sow's book *Deutschland Schwarz Weiss: der alltägliche Rassismus* (2009).

⁸⁵ Brothers Keepers and Sisters Keepers are "two not-for-profit hip-hop projects...that consist of well-known Afro-German hip-hop, R&B, and reggae artists formed in 2001 to protest neo-Nazi terror and to publicly perform a collective black presence in Germany." Alexander G. Weheliye, "My Volk to Come: Peoplehood in Recent Diaspora Discourse and Afro-German Popular Music," in *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*, ed. Trica Danielle Keaton, Darlene Clark Hine and Stephen Small (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 166. The song "Adriano (Letzte Warnung)" was written in response to the death of Afro-German Alberto Adriano who was beaten to death by neo-Nazis in 2000 in Dessau (Eastern Germany).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁸⁷ The male Black Panthers defined their masculinity through the idea that women were designated to the home, adopting a role that was allegedly natural for African women. See Finzsch, "'Gay Punk, White Lesbian, Black Bitch' Zur Konstruktion des schwarzen Männlichen Revolutionärs durch die Black Panther Party - 1966 bis 1982," 207.

sexuality, [which] explicitly reinscribes black women's sexual pleasure as deviant, particularly when not used in the service of the 'revolution.'"⁸⁸

When one considers the scholarship done on African American-German relations and Black cultural transfer to Germany during the postwar period, aside from accounts of Angela Davis's popularity in both Germanies and Audre Lorde's importance for the Afro-German movement, most of the focus has been placed on the experiences of Black men. However, Black women also served in Germany at this time, some Black GIs were accompanied by their wives and children and Black women visited Germany as delegates from churches and women's organizations.⁸⁹ Did any of these women have relationships with Germans? Höhn and Klimke's analysis of the press coverage of Black GIs in Germany also reveals a male-centric perspective that was most interested in relations between Black men and German women. A six-page photo essay published by *Ebony* entitled "Germany Meets the Negro Soldier" "included not only photos of interracial romance but also of interracial families (e.g., a proud new dad going for a stroll with his white German partner and their baby), work environments (e.g., soldiers in their offices interacting with white German secretaries), and black GIs interacting with adoring German children."⁹⁰ This photo essay does not seem to include any pictures of Black GIs with German men. Furthermore, Höhn and Klimke only report that "male readers of the African American press responded approvingly to this sort of coverage,"⁹¹ but what about *female* readers? It seems the guideline for measuring German tolerance of Blacks has focused primarily on relations between Black men and German women. Accounts of queer relationships and relationships between German men and Black women have yet to be discussed in detail.⁹²

Punk and Circumstance⁹³

Passing Strange is also told from the perspective of a Black male and the protagonist's failed relationships to women (the Dutch Marianne and the German Desi) are also central to the narrative. Nevertheless, *Passing Strange* does not feel as focused on the Black male experience as *Slumberland*, perhaps because all of the European characters (male and female) are played by Black actors. Stew's Germany is *all* Black. This strategy interrogates the audience's notions of German culture, Black popular culture and identity in general – for the same actors who play

⁸⁸ Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*, 27. It is worth noting; however, that during the late 1960s and 1970s there were several articles and photos in German magazines that thematized Black women in interracial relationships. Some articles celebrated the Black woman's choice of a sexual partner irrespective of race. In contrast to the days of slavery, Black women could now actually *choose* a white male partner. Some articles also confronted Afro-German women's problem of being desired for their exotic appearance, but only for brief affairs and not for marriage. See Ege, *Schwarz Werden: >>Afroamerikanophilie<< in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren*, 80-1.

⁸⁹ Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany*, 42. "Very few black families were in Germany during the occupation since only wives of officers and high-ranking NCOs were allowed to come initially. The numbers increased significantly after the build-up of troops in the 1950s, when about 30,000 black GIs were stationed in Germany on a regular basis" (Ibid., 189 note 45).

⁹⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² In *GIs and Frauleins*, Maria Hoehn does mention that "According to [youth welfare agencies'] anxious reports, young boys were in danger of homosexual seduction because it was not always easy for the 'Negroes...to establish relationships with women.' Because of their GIs' consumer goods, but especially because of their flashy cars, German boys were judged easy targets." Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins*, 94-5. Queer interactions between German men and Blacks also figured in works by director Lothar Lambert and author Hubert Fichte.

⁹³ This subheading is taken from a photomontage by Marc Brandenburg entitled "Punk and Circumstance along the Yellow Brick Road."

Black Los Angelenos, become Dutch in Amsterdam and German in Berlin. The (in)stability of race and identity is a theme which *Passing Strange* has in common with *Slumberland*. The protagonist of *Passing Strange* is simply referred to as Youth. Since it is a semi-autobiographical piece, the name “Youth” seems to suggest that this is the younger self of the narrator, who is played by Stew.⁹⁴ “Youth” could also be a reference to the common practice of using such general names for characters in Expressionism and later in Situationist street theater. This name makes the protagonist a universal figure with whom many can identify. After all, Youth’s progression from adolescent rebellion against his background to acceptance and love for his family is a common journey.

Although *Passing Strange* is set several years earlier, in the late 1970s, there are several similarities between Youth and Ferguson. Youth is also an African American male, with a love of music, who has grown dissatisfied with LA’s eternal sunshine and feigned happiness. Ferguson says little about his family background. But although his mother’s calloused feet suggest she did not have a white-collar job, his father was an “embittered literature Ph.D” with a government job (*SL* 52) and therefore one could conclude that his family might be middle-class. No secret is made of Youth’s background; he comes from; “a big two-story, black middle-class dream [with] ...manicured lawns, [and] some saving bonds...” (*PS* 2). This is a stark contrast to the poverty-stricken images of African Americans normally circulated in Germany.

Stew plays with familiar stereotypes of Black popular culture at the beginning of the musical when the character “Mother” is introduced to the audience speaking Black vernacular in a Southern accent, “Lawd ham mercy, child, look at cho head! Look jus’ like a feathuh bed! Now let go dat pillow! Leave dat dangerous dream be. Jump outta dat bed ‘n come a churchin’ with me!” (*PS* 2). In Brechtian fashion, the Narrator interrupts this performance in order to point out the Mother’s artifice: “She drops the Negro dialect and speaks in her natural voice” (*PS* 2). According to Brandon Woolf, this scene demonstrates how *Passing Strange* is a response to the limits of African American theater and narrow notions of Black popular culture in general: “*Passing Strange* is Stew’s refusal. It is his refusal to accept the traditions of (black) musical theatre, the strictures of racial authenticity, and any neat and tidy process of identity formation.”⁹⁵ Thus, from the beginning, *Passing Strange* introduces the possibility of different Black identities that not only exist in the Black community simultaneously, but can be performed, referred back to and undermined by individuals.

Youth feels his middle-class suburban surroundings have grown too comfortable to the point of becoming “chains.” Instead of being himself, he is forced to dress “phony” and go to church because that is the convention – even if the church-goers are clearly unhappy. Youth’s experiences reflect Mark Anthony Neal’s description of the conservative nature of post-soul Black America. “Efforts to create the most ‘positive’ historical read of the black experience and its various icons have often denied a full exploration of the humanity of black folks.”⁹⁶ When Youth’s offbeat choir instructor Mr. Franklin discusses his own struggle with Black conformity it

⁹⁴ In Spike Lee’s film of the musical’s final performance at the Belasco Theater on July 20, 2008, in the final scenes of the Stew’s wardrobe mirrors that of Youth’s, which further suggests the musical can be read as Stew’s reflections on his younger self.

⁹⁵ Brandon Woolf, “Negotiating The ‘Negro Problem’: Stew’s *Passing (Made) Strange*,” *Theater Journal* 62, no. 2 (2010): 194.

⁹⁶ Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*, 9.

lights a spark of rebellion in Youth. Mr. Franklin describes them both as “just two brothers...(Thinks for a sec or two) passing. (This epiphany hits him hard...Mr. Franklin is perhaps growing a bit angry now) Like your high yellow grandma back in the day, only we’re passing for black folks. Good, lawn trimmin’, tax payin’, morally upstanding, narrow-minded Christian black folk!” (PS 25). As the son of the pastor, Mr. Franklin’s dreams of exploring Europe have been suspended by his dependence on his father, for whom he works. He reflects: “You could say he’s [the pastor’s] paying me to... not be myself” (PS 24). But Mr. Franklin would not call himself a slave. “Because... slaves...ha ha ha...SLAVES! Yes, that’s it!! Slaves got options! Options, ya dig? I’m talking escape ... revolt ... death. (Pause) Options. (Pause) But cowards ain’t got shit. Cowards only have... consequences” (PS 24).

Unlike the slave willing to risk death for freedom, in his own comfortable Black middle-class life in LA, Mr. Franklin is not willing to risk failure and alienation to follow his dreams. To survive, he and Youth pass for the dominant notion of what it means to be Black and middle-class in 1970s America.. But Youth soon grows tired of passing for Black and he quits the choir to express himself in punk, which to him is more “real” than Mr. Franklin’s “spicing up the spirituals” (PS 29).⁹⁷ Speaking on behalf of his band, the Scaryotypes, Youth tells Mr. Franklin: “The double life shit’s not working for us anymore...we’re gonna live...the way you...just talk” (PS 29). After an acid trip with his two band mates, Sherry and Terry, Youth concludes they must go to Europe to be really free. “If we’re gonna deal with the real, we gotta tour Europe. America can’t handle freaky Negroes” (PS 31). Yet, Sherry and Terry are too afraid to leave the confines of their neighborhood and instead, Youth makes the journey on his own.

...Along the Yellow Brick Road

Youth’s first stop in Europe is in Amsterdam which is introduced by bright, colorful lights and a happy upbeat song. In one of the city’s quintessential coffee shops, he encounters some of European’s stereotypes about Blacks for the first time. When he declares that he is a musician, Christophe and Joop ask him, “Do you play jazz?” “Do you play duh blues?” (PS 44). Youth’s biting response is “Do you live in a fucking windmill? Do you wear clog shoes?” (PS 44). He may take offense at their assumptions about his music, but he too is not free of essentialist thinking. Youth believes that compared to America, Europe represents “real” culture. He accepts the old stereotypes differentiating between high (European) and low (American) culture. For him America is too new, artificial and kitschy.

In Amsterdam, Youth meets Marianna and is immediately taken into her “family” of artists and outsiders. At first, he revels in how friendly and trustful the citizens of Amsterdam are compared to people in LA. Youth soaks up the positive state of mind. His uninhibited sexual encounters help him learn to accept his body and (he thinks) himself. Nevertheless, Amsterdam soon becomes as comfortable as LA and Youth yearns to move on, because he believes the

⁹⁷ Mark Anthony Neal argues that black Soul artists’ “willingness to use their ‘sacred’ [musical] gifts in the service of the secular desires” is what made them the target of black middle-class critique (Neal 2002: 15). Youth’s choices of punk over spirituals and his garage band over the church choir can be understood in relation to this history. In Neal’s *Soul Babies*, he relates Al Green’s description of the pain he experienced “of having the choice between lifting up your voice for God or taking a bow for your third encore” (Neal 2002: 16). This pain is articulated throughout *Passing Strange*.

“Real” cannot be found in paradise. Paradise makes people complacent and instead of *really* living, one just goes through the motions. Truthfully, in Amsterdam Youth’s songs are much more cliché and sentimental than his punk lyrics were in LA. He believes true song writing comes only from pain and that he cannot write songs when he is comfortable. Only in Berlin will he learn that the clichés plaguing his song writing have little to do with where he is and are actually the influence of the formulaic pop songs he once viewed as rebellious *and* his avoidance of feeling real emotions.

Amsterdam’s friendly atmosphere is starkly contrasted when Youth reaches Berlin, which at the time was still a hot spot where the superpowers of the Cold War faced off. The narrator’s description of Berlin as “a black hole with taxis” (*PS* 57) conveys the effect of political conflict on the divided city’s atmosphere. Located in East Germany and surrounded by a wall, the city is physically cut off from the West; however, its political and cultural ties to the Western world and its appeal for American and British artists and tourists make it a bastion of capitalism in the East. Appropriately, Youth’s first encounter is with a border guard at Checkpoint Charlie:

BORDER GUARD: Ausweis!!!
YOUTH: Huh?
BORDER GUARD: Identity! Your identity!!!
YOUTH: My identity?
BORDER GUARD: Pass! (Youth *attempts to pass him*. border guard *grabs him, really pissed*.)
YOUTH: I don’t understand –
BORDER GUARD: Your PASS-PORT! (*PS* 57-8)

Youth’s confusion in this scene is partly based on cultural misunderstandings. The border guard’s poor English leads him to translate *Ausweis* (identification card) as “identity.” As Brandon Woolf points out, beyond a misunderstanding attributed to poor translation,

Youth’s seemingly innocent moment of confusion at Checkpoint Charlie is indicative of the more complex relation between national and racial identity for which *Passing Strange* is arguing. In the most literal sense, ‘identity’ is strictly associated with Youth’s national affiliation: he is an American with an American passport, and he must claim this identity to pass through the border. Youth’s identity is also his pass(age) itself, formed in and through his movement from one place to another.⁹⁸

A further source of linguistic confusion is the border guard’s demand for a *Pass* which is German for “passport.” Youth mistakes the border guard’s “Pass!” for his allowance to pass into Berlin. This reference to passing, however, does not only have to do with physical movement, but also with performance. Wolf continues, “In a third sense, Youth’s identity is his ‘pass,’ his

⁹⁸ Woolf, “Negotiating The ‘Negro Problem’: Stew’s Passing (Made) Strange,” 202.

ability to masquerade as something other than what the picture on his passport says he is: African American. Youth's confusion – his 'I don't understand' – implies that no one notion of identity is sufficient here and that the moniker 'African American' is too reductive, too stagnant."⁹⁹ Ironically, although Youth's journey at the beginning of the musical begins with his resistance against a stagnant (Black) identity, he falls prey to this very practice; for it is in Berlin that he passes as a poverty-stricken ghetto youth in order to find acceptance.

Youth arrives in Berlin on May Day, a day that for decades has seen battles between protesters and police on the city's streets, specifically in the district of Kreuzberg. It is during one of these riots that Youth meets the Nowhaus Collective. The Nowhaus consists of: Hugo, a music critic and part-time bartender reminiscent of *Slumberland's* Lars; Sudabey, a director of pornographic films; Mr. Venus, a cabaret artist; and Desi, the founder of the collective, with whom Youth falls in love. The collective's name is a play on Bauhaus, the Weimar-era leftist architectural collective founded by Walther Gropius. While the Bauhaus designers intended to combine art and technology in products for a mass market to "alleviate environmental deprivation and improve living and working conditions for the urban masses,"¹⁰⁰ the Nowhaus's stance *against* mass culture is indicative of a shift from modernism to postmodernism and from a belief in ideology to the conclusion that "Mr. Venus: What's inside is just a lie. There's only surface" (*PS* 62).

Mr. Venus's assertion recalls arguments made by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulations* which was originally published in 1983. According to Baudrillard, simulation "is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal."¹⁰¹ He uses the analogy of feigning an illness to elaborate the difference between dissimulation and simulation:

To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn't. ... 'Someone who feigns an illness can simply go to bed and make believe he is ill. Some[one] who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms.' [Émile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*] Thus, feigning or dissimulating leaves the reality principle intact: the difference is always clear, it is only masked; whereas simulation threatens the difference between 'true' and 'false,' between 'real' and 'imaginary.'¹⁰²

If the characters of *Passing Strange* simulate an essential Black identity, one could argue that Black vernacular is one "symptom" of Black popular culture. By speaking this vernacular and then switching into her "real voice" at the start of the play, the Mother demonstrates how Black popular culture can be simulated.

Following Baudrillard's notion of simulation, one could argue that there have been so many images of Blacks produced and circulated for centuries – images which continue to be recycled and quoted – that it is no longer clear what is real. Today's images of Black popular

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Phelan, "Weimar Culture: The Birth of Modernism."

¹⁰¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 2.

¹⁰² Ibid., 5.

culture have become so detached from any reality that they are hyperreal. While a modernist might have argued that past images – whites in blackface, Blacks performing spirituals, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Hagenbeck's *Völkerschauen*, Josephine Baker – distorted the real Black experience, today one would reject any notion of authentic Black culture. Baudrillard's description of reality TV sheds some light on this issue. Speaking of a reality TV show where a family was taped in their home, Baudrillard repeats the producer's claim that "'They [the family] live[d] as if we [the television crew] weren't there.'"¹⁰³ Baudrillard points out the impossibility of this statement. Of course, the family was always aware of the cameras and their behavior naturally changed due to the presence of an audience. The pleasure the audience gets from watching such television is "a thrill of vertiginous and phony exactitude... Here the real can be seen to have never existed."¹⁰⁴

The same could be said about Hagenbeck's *Völkerschauen* or Josephine Baker's performance. The behavior of the Africans, African Americans and Afro-Germans in these "shows" was always mediated by the presence of an audience, like the photo on the cover of Tobias Nagl's book *Die unheimliche Maschine* which depicts an African "astonished" by a camera. As Nagl points out, what is obviously present but not openly referred to is the fact that the African and the camera he is looking at are subjects of yet another camera. Thus, rather than an "authentic" encounter between "primitive" man and technology, as the caption of the photo claims, this is an African man posing with a camera for a picture.¹⁰⁵ However, rather than thinking of this as a performance, the Weimar audience viewing this photo likely thought of itself as invisible – not an audience at all; for the white viewer is an objective bystander merely looking in on the "natural" behavior of Blacks. As I pointed out in Ivan Goll's comments quoted in Chapter One, when the sophisticated Josephine Baker wore a banana skirt on stage, the joke was really on the European audience. Baker's audience expected to see a Black woman in "authentic" garb, but Baker's skirt is a prop in her performance of primitivism. Perhaps Youth's *passing as strange* in Berlin is what Goll had in mind when he said "It [Black performance] confronts us all, it confronts everything with the *strange* impression of a snarling parody"¹⁰⁶ (my italics).

The Nowhaus's ideas about culture and society come as a shock to Youth. The Narrator astutely points out the conflict between Berlin's postmodern cynicism and Youth's naïveté:

NARRATOR: Now, say you sounded like this:

YOUTH: Don't try to hide... [This lyric is accompanied by slow, romantic music. Youth's singing, his drawing out the vowels, is clichéd.]

The truth is inside...

NARRATOR: And then you heard this...

MR. VENUS: WHAT'S INSIDE IS JUST A LIE!!! [This is set to hard rock industrial music]

¹⁰³ Ibid., 50.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Nagl, *Die Unheimliche Maschine: Rasse und Repräsentation im Weimarer Kino*.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. In his reading of Josephine Baker's performances, Jed Rusula also argues that black performances of the "primitive" during the jazz age were self-aware parodies of European fantasies. See Jed Rusula, "Jazz as Decal for the European Avant-Garde."

NARRATOR: It would have to make some kind of impression on you, wouldn't it? (*PS* 63)

When Youth subsequently claims that “the Real that [he’s] been searching for...is in the beauty of these burning streets [of Berlin]” (*PS* 65), his cry for revolution is accompanied by romantic piano music and he quickly falls back into his old singing style. Youth has traveled to Berlin to find “the Real,” only to be told that there is no real. During the song “Surface,” the Narrator and Mr. Venus turn Youth’s world upside down by revealing his intimate lyrics to be a mere product of the culture industry:

NARRATOR: ...according to the Nowhaus manifesto and I quote: “...what we mistakenly call *our* thoughts, *our* feelings and *our* dreams, have actually been put there by a system, therefore...”

MR. VENUS: What’s inside is just a lie...

NARRATOR: Our minds have been invaded, conquered and occupied. Hence:

MR. VENUS: What’s inside is just a lie.

NARRATOR: And like a catchy refrain that gets trapped in your head...

MR. VENUS: What’s inside is just a lie. [...]

NARRATOR: And so the only way to become your true self...

MR. VENUS: What’s inside?

YOUTH: I’m starting to feel real...

NARRATOR: You gotta create your true self.

MR. VENUS: What’s inside?

YOUTH: I’m starting to feel real... (*PS* 63-4, italics in the original)

Youth soon finds himself swept up by the Nowhaus’s postmodern cynicism and before he knows it, their politics begin to influence his own music, exemplified by his performance art piece which is set to electronic music instead of the earlier sentimental piano playing. It is no coincidence that Stew links Berlin to Youth’s rejection of authenticity and his departure from pop lyrics. From the 1970s until 1990, several famous musicians, such as the Americans Lou Reed and Iggy Pop, the British David Bowie and the Irish U2, journeyed to a still divided (or newly reunited) Berlin in order to purge their music of its commercialism and reinvent themselves. In *Slumberland*, Ferguson comments on the city’s appeal and danger for (Black) American artists in particular:

Americans die in this city. Fleeing political and parental oppression, they come to Berlin claiming to be maligned and marginalized by racist America too insecure to ‘get’ them. Most find something less than moderate success and end up dying pitiful, meaningless, alcoholic deaths in small two-room flats, to be found by friends laid out in their own excrement, their livers bloated, their artwork unsold and dusty. (*SL* 64)

One of the things that drew Anglophone musicians to Germany at this time was its lively electronic scene which was closely tied to Germans' attempts to come to terms with the legacy of fascism.

...postwar composers shunned any association, even a stylistic one, with the music of Germany's past that had, in their view, allowed itself to be exploited for overzealous nationalist aims. Severing all ties with the music from German romanticism on, they turned instead to the most symbolic victims of National Socialist propaganda, Arnold Schoenberg and his school. Yet this turn to the esoteric realms of serialism and electronic music was not solely a rejection of the past and flight into the realm of purely musical abstraction, but also an indication of the infiltration of Cold War ideology into musical politics. For as West German composers received encouragement in their ventures from American military consultants operating German radio stations, East German composers received a clear message that such forays into avant-garde 'formalism' would not be tolerated in the new socialist state.¹⁰⁷

The German postwar music scenes which I have discussed thus far – jazz, rock 'n' roll, zydeco – all have strong ties to (Rhythm &) Blues. Although Germany's first electronic musicians may have been reacting against much *earlier* music (Romanticism), as I mentioned earlier, their attempts to distance themselves from Nazism via electronic music resulted in a simultaneous break from postwar genres heavily influenced by African American popular culture. If the West has historically thought of Black popular culture as more "primitive" and "authentic," then perhaps the postmodern rejection of authenticity could have concurrently led musicians away from Black musical influence. Thus, musicians who previously were influenced by R&B, such as Iggy Pop, Lou Reed and David Bowie, traveled to Berlin to strip away their notions of authenticity and recreate themselves. The idea of electronic music as especially devoid of Black musical influence has been grotesquely misappropriated by some neo-Nazis, who prefer electronic music for that very reason. This tempts one to ask whether the practice of going to Germany to discard Black musical influence has racist undertones?

Nevertheless, Ferguson and Youth, two Black men, make this very same journey for similar reasons. They both believe Berlin can emancipate them from a static, essential notion of Black popular culture. Ferguson and Youth are fictional characters, but there are examples of *real* ethnic minorities who had similar liberating experiences in 1980s Berlin. For example, artist Marc Brandenburg,¹⁰⁸ a self-described "Mischling" (half-breed), also found a kind of freedom in Berlin that he did not experience in the US. Although born in Berlin in 1965, Brandenburg spent his childhood on army bases in the U.S. only to return to Berlin in 1977. According to an interview he did with Jürgen Heinrichs:

¹⁰⁷ Potter, "Germans as the 'People of Music': Genealogy of an Identity," 28-9.

¹⁰⁸ Brandenburg's mother is a white German and his father is African American. His parents met in postwar Germany while his father was serving in the US Army.

The move, he later remarked, occurred just in time to join Berlin's burgeoning punk scene. Marking the onset of a period of a newly found personal freedom, he dyed his hair and experimented with other modifications of his appearance. This episode underscores his fondness of Berlin as a city that he remembers as nonconformist and rebellious.¹⁰⁹

Brandenburg explores the "rite of passage from well-behaved childhood to rebellious youth and adulthood" in a photomontage entitled "Punk and Circumstance along the Yellow Brick Road" which features a photo of Brandenburg as a boy draped by "large, colorful wings [that] render him in an angelic fashion."¹¹⁰ A further example of minorities embracing freedom in Berlin's punk scene is the Turkish German director Hussi Kutlucan, who also spent his teenage years in the Berlin punk scene where he had a short stint drumming for the punk band Soilent Green which would later be known as Die Ärzte.¹¹¹ To date, accounts of the German punk scene pay little attention to the participation of ethnic minorities which leaves one to ask how many more young people of color were involved; after all, in the squatter scene of the early 1980s it was common for punks in Berlin to unite with ethnic minorities against real estate speculation.¹¹²

German electronic music achieved a poppier, more marketable form in the *Neue Deutsche Welle* (NDW) scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Reacting against the Anglophilia and political sensibilities of the student movement, NDW musicians felt comfortable discarding Anglophone pop aesthetics, which coincidentally were strongly influenced by Black culture.¹¹³ Perhaps this new trend enabled musicians, both white *and* Black, to experiment more with music, art and identity and it gave them the courage to break away from notions of authenticity. In fact, despite both *Passing Strange* and *Slumberland* being set in the late 1970s and late 1980s, the elephant in the room of each narrative is hip hop which emerged precisely during this period. Neither text makes hip hop a central theme. Rather than the soundtrack to the African American experience of the post-disco era, which hip hop has come to represent, in *Slumberland* hip hop becomes one of *many* musical options available to the protagonist.¹¹⁴ And in *Passing Strange*, hip hop is not mentioned at all. Instead of something mandatory, hip hop remains merely an option these protagonists do not feel obliged to listen to. Thus, these texts' *disengagement* (or limited engagement) with hip hop could be a statement affirming African Americans' equal rights to musical unmarkedness – an issue I will address further in Chapter Six.

¹⁰⁹ Heinrichs, "Mixed Media, Mixed Identities: The Universal Aesthetics of Marc Brandenburg," 315.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 317. In this essay, Heinrich does a longer interpretation of this photomontage as well as other artistic pieces of Brandenburg's.

¹¹¹ "Kutlucan was born in Turkey in 1962 and came to Berlin at the age of nine." Deniz Göktürk, "Strangers in Disguise: Role Play Beyond Identity Politics in Anarchic Film Comedy," *New German Critique* 92, Spring/Summer (2004): 112. Kutlucan is mostly known for his comedic films on migration and racism, such as *Ich Chef, du Turnschuh* (Me Boss, You Sneakers! 1998) and *Drei gegen Troja* (Three Against Troy 2005).

¹¹² See Breyvogel, "Bunte Vielfalt und Anarchie: Jugendkultur und Rockmusik der 1980er Jahre."

¹¹³ If one recalls Richard Langston's arguments in Chapter Two, it would have been unthinkable for the '68 generation to *prefer* German-language songs. In the late 1960s, Anglophone music and lyrics were embraced as revolutionary, in part because they were not German. Black music, in particular Soul, brought Germans closer to their African American brothers and sisters who were struggling for civil rights. Thus, the German New Wave's turn away from English and embracing of German is a direct reaction to previous musical developments.

¹¹⁴ Ferguson claims the jukebox he programs in Berlin does not have hip hop because hip hop does not fit the mood of a bar or a café. Hip hop needs "spatial intimacy with the listener" (SL 87) and is best heard on headphones or in the privacy of one's room.

Passing (as from the) Ghetto

Despite his budding relationship with Nowhaus-founder Desi, Youth is told that he can only remain in the collective if he can contribute to their goal of creating “*an anti-bourgeois living community/ That stands in opposition to capitalist society* (italics in the original)” (PS 65). Even after his philosophical discussions with the collective have opened up his mind, it takes time before this has an audible effect on his music. Mr. Venus addresses him disparagingly,

- MR. VENUS: Look, Mr. American Pop Song Maker: if your songs do not critique the hegemony of populist consumption...
- SUDABEY: Or if they mimic the phallogocentric narrative of verse chorus verse chorus climax fade out smoke a cigarette turn over snore all night and never call me again...
- HUGO: Then they are nothing more than tools of the oppressor...
- YOUTH: Wait a minute!!! Rock and roll: a tool of the oppressor? What about the Clash? [...]
- HUGO: Punk rock was a marketing strategy. (PS 72-3)

At a loss for what he can contribute to the collective, Youth takes the advice of the Black security guard in *Slumberland* who tells Ferguson to “let them love you” and he defaults to his exotic appeal:

- HUGO: Look, let’s cut to ze chase scene, ja? Please give us one reason why we should allow you to stay.
- YOUTH: Um...because I’m black?
- ALL: What’s that?
- YOUTH: (To Hugo.) Yeah, Mr. May 68: you know what it’s like to be the object of oppression living under police occupation in the ghetto?
- NARRATOR: He did not [...]
- YOUTH: (*Emboldened, to Hugo*) Well, let me ask you this, Mr. Know-It-All: do you know what it’s like to hustle for dimes on the mean streets of South Central?
- NARRATOR: Nobody in this play knows what it’s like to hustle for dimes on the mean streets of South Central. [...]
- YOUTH: NOBODY knows the trouble I’ve seen! Nobody! I come from hell on earth: illiteracy – guns – drugs – insanity – decay – [...] And I am no mere *popsongmaker*. I am an artist. My work is about re-invention. My work is about...transcendence. My work is about...the limits of blackness.

(Youth does James Brown spin, capping it with a ...HEY! Everyone except Desi flinches...) (PS 73-5)

When Youth stakes his claim to a tough, ghetto persona, this is accompanied by funky, soulful music. Every now and then, his mother interrupts him, reinstating his true middle-class background. Her comments are set to excerpts from *The Barber of Seville* played on flute.¹¹⁵

Confirming the ideas in the German texts we have examined thus far, Youth's argument is that his Black identity makes him always already revolutionary and rebellious. When he degradingly calls Hugo "Mr. May '68," he refers to the German student movement's interest in the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Panthers and idolization of African Americans as the ultimate revolutionary subject.¹¹⁶ While Ferguson felt oppressed by images of Black popular culture in Germany that have been recycled from the past, Youth seeks to take advantage of this past. Once again, the Narrator's Brechtian address to the audience undermines Youth's simulation of an authentic Black experience, for he reveals that neither Hugo nor Youth know the kind of poverty being described.

Youth takes the Narrator's advice that "...the only way to become your true self... [is] You gotta create your true self" (*PS* 64). The "self" that he creates in order to gain the collective's respect is an amalgamation of past performances of Black popular culture – a punk-inspired bricolage of past artifacts set to industrial music. He adopts the pseudonym "Mr. Middle Passage!", a name that invokes centuries of crosscultural exchange. Singing about the "chains of his identity," Youth dons a metal skirt of bananas. His spoken word is initially accompanied by a lone bass, slowly alternating between two notes. His performance likens a parody of Beat poetry with its characteristic monotone delivery and musical accompaniment. An example thereof can be found in the 1958 B-movie *High School Confidential*, directed by Jack Aarons. But when Youth sings of his "chains of identity" this is accompanied by loud electronic, rock music and followed up by avant-gardesque "eerie piano playing."¹¹⁷ Youth ends his song by expressing the angst caused by his difficult relationship with his mother. Here, Stew is clearly mocking a variety of past alternative cultures which have all grappled with these same questions of identity and paternal culture. While Ferguson sought to lay Josephine Baker to rest, Youth reawakens her, but with a degree of irony. His song "Identity" is followed by the song "The Black One" – a commentary by the Narrator on how Youth is capitalizing on Black essentialism.

Youth insists that his artwork is about "the limits of blackness" which does have some truth. What initiated his journey was his frustration with the limits of *middle-class* Black culture and those are the chains to which his performance *really* refers. As I mentioned earlier, while Youth sings "Identity," the voice of his mother can be heard interrogating his life choices:

MOTHER: Why don't you want to be around your own people?

YOUTH: *The key to the real is finally in my hand!*

And now your expectations are exiting my veins! [italics in the original]
(*PS* 77)

¹¹⁵ Stew might associate Youth with parts of the Barber of Seville which have been made famous by cartoons in order to poke fun at the wholesome background he attempts to hide.

¹¹⁶ Klimke addresses these views in Chapter Six of *A Breath of Freedom*.

¹¹⁷ This is how this music is described on the DVD release.

But the “expectations” to which Youth refers are not the same expectations of Black popular culture that plagued Ferguson in Germany, but the expectations of a mother that her son lead an upstanding, middle-class lifestyle. Does the identity Youth creates for himself merely create new limitations or does his insistence on an identity that is not real, but simulated, actually *free* him from any expectations? The narrator refuses to answer this question, but leaves it open for the audience to contemplate, “*Is he the post-modern lawn jockey sculpture? [...] Or just a soul on a roll exploding your culture?*” [italics in the original] (PS 80).

I believe Youth’s performance in Berlin suggests that he now understands there is no “Real” or authentic Black identity; rather it is constructed from images that have been in circulation for over a century and depending on Youth’s condition of possibility, he has access to and can use and undermine these images. During “The Black One,”¹¹⁸ Desi suggests that “*He’s dancing in a cage,*” to which Youth replies “*But I’m the one with the key*” (PS 80). The Narrator then claims that Youth is “...the real Voice of America” (PS 80). In the film, during this statement Stew looks into the camera while shaking his hand by his face and altering his voice to imitate Al Jolson’s blackface performance of “Mammy” in *The Jazz Singer*. This act alone has multiple layers. Voice of America is the official radio and television broadcasting service of the U.S. Army. During the Cold War, it was an important propaganda tool used to convince Germans in the West (and those secretly listening in the East) of the benefits of American democracy. As the Narrator of *Passing Strange* suggests, who better to speak on the subject of freedom than an African American who is often discriminated against in his own country – just like the guard of the *Amerikahaus* in *Slumberland*. But rather than being the “real” Voice of America, there is nothing real about the Black popular culture Youth puts on display. It can only be described as hyperreal.

Youth succeeds in fooling the Nowhaus collective enough that they believe he truly is from the ghetto. Reflecting on his performance, they conclude that:

MR. VENUS: Only the slums of America could produce such pain.
HUGO: His ghetto angst is far superior to ours.
[...]
MR. VENUS: We love you...like an anthropologist loves a tribe.¹¹⁹
YOUTH: Tribes must love the attention. I bet it makes them feel like stars! (PS 79)

In her analysis of the mainstream popularity of gangsta rap, bell hooks argues that consumers desire images of underclass or more specifically Black underclass culture, because it allows them to vicariously engage in Black culture, at least in the sensationalist form it takes in the media. But these consumers do not have to experience the physical hardships that normally go along

¹¹⁸ This song is set to the music of “One” from the musical *A Chorus Line* (1975); this underlines the connections between Youth’s performance, cabaret, and Berlin’s historical underground cultures reaching back to the 1920s.

¹¹⁹ According to Baudrillard, anthropology is the death of a “tribe” because it seeks to preserve people and culture and artificially shelter it from modern influences. One could equate this practice with the white jazz fan’s desire to “mummify” the genre and keep it from evolving in order for it to remain “authentic.” See Krin Gabbard, *Black Magic: White Hollywood and African American Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

with being poor and Black.¹²⁰ This thrill is precisely what the Nowhaus collective gets from Youth's performance of ghetto angst. Sudabey even tells Youth, "I envy you so much!!! I want to be re-incarcerated as a black man!!!" (PS 80). Her remark recalls my earlier discussion of the privileging of the Black male as a model for Black popular culture. Furthermore, this play on words (presumably she meant to say reincarnated) re-establishes the physicality of Black experience. If masquerading as a Black man gives Sudabey a certain amount of cool, in reality it would also increase her likelihood of going to jail.

Youth becomes so enthralled by the attention this identity draws, that he begins to forget that he is masquerading in Berlin as much as he was in LA. Desi is the only one who sees through his act and she reminds him of this fact, asking him: "... remember the story you told me about your grandma, the one who had to pass in order to get a job? Well, I think you are passing for ghetto" (PS 81). Just like Marianne in Amsterdam, Desi is aware of his mask and sees through his masquerade, which makes him feel uncomfortable.

The Death of the Essentialized Black Subject?

Both Ferguson and Youth attempt to challenge Germans' notions of Black popular culture. First of all, by traveling abroad, these characters reclaim a practice that is most often seen as the privilege of whites. Furthermore, these Black men reterritorialize what was once "white" not only through their mobility, but musical tastes as well. Once in Germany, Youth explodes the essential Black subject by recognizing that identity is a construct and by reclaiming his right to use and/or undermine past images of Black popular culture. While Youth embraces the past through citation, Ferguson, however, wishes to be unmarked. But can one say that one or the other of these approaches is more effective for challenging Black stereotypes?

Ironically, both Youth and the members of the Nowhaus simulate their identities, but neither is the wiser. Aside from Desi, the members of the Nowhaus view Youth's performance as authentic and real. Meanwhile, Youth might reject any essential *Black* identity, but he still believes the Nowhaus is the "Real." Youth thinks of LA as fake, plastic and constructed and he mistakenly thinks Berlin's war-torn streets are more "real." However, one could argue that the May Day riots, "battles" on the front of the Cold War, are just as much a simulation as Youth's ghetto identity. One sees especially in today's demonstrations that the May Day riots have become simulations of past riots – artificial and lacking meaning. Hence, the smooth transition in the musical from riot to spectacle: "the frontline of the uprising became a gilded stage" (PS 62). Rather than being a real experience, the May Day riot Youth witnesses is likely a cat and mouse game between protestors and police. The members of the Nowhaus perform the role of the revolutionaries, concealing their bourgeois sensibilities. This becomes clear to Youth on Christmas, when instead of "keeping it real," the members of the Nowhaus abandon him to spend the holidays with their families:

¹²⁰ hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*, 152.

SUDABEY: No one is here for Christmas.
 HUGO: We all go home for ze holidays.
 YOUTH: Home?
 SUDABEY: To our families in their sleepy West German villages.
 HUGO: I am missing my stupid old friends.
 SUDABEY: I cannot wait to lay around with my teddy bears.
 HUGO: I love the look on my father's face when he serves the blood sausages. He remembers how I loved them as a child. But forgets I'm vegetarian!!!
 (*Only Hugo laughs.*)
 SUDABEY: You know, absence really does make ze heart grow into a state of mind which somehow transforms what you once could not stand about your family into a somehow quaint, pleasure-giving construct. (PS 90-1)

Youth assumed that Berlin is the only place for “real” experiences and that the members of the Nowhaus have a stable identity – and these assumptions keep him from truly freeing himself. What starts out as artifice becomes *real* to him. He tells Mother he cannot return to LA because “Why leave a place where I can be myself to come back to a place where I can't” (PS 88). But there is nothing real about his identity in Berlin. It is a construct, it may intentionally consist of citations of past performances of Black popular culture, but it is still intended to fulfill the expectations of an audience, the Nowhaus collective. Thus, does Youth have no “real” identity at all?

Brandon Woolf argues that Stew's “real” is a “. . . Real—with a capital “R”—that is necessarily multiply defined, multiply located, unstable, in motion even.”¹²¹ Instead of a complete rejection of anything “real,” Stew's Real is different from narrow notions of an authentic Black identity because it is not anchored in one time or place, rather like in the case of Gunnar in Beatty's first novel, “For Stew, it is the movement between the poles that is productive. It is in and through his refusal to settle, to stop working, that identity is forged, that music is made, and that the – a – ‘Negro problem’ is both surpassed and further problematized.”¹²² So rather than finding the Real in Berlin or at home in LA, the Narrator, a now grown Youth, “*finally f[inds] a home, Between the clicks of a metronome, . . .*” (PS 95). The Real exists in the movement between performances, making it impossible to pin down.

Like Oskar in *Die Blechtrommel*, Ferguson is in search of music (and life) that is not determined by preconceived notions. However, while Oskar believed Black popular culture was the key to such freedom, Ferguson rejects the assumption that Black culture is necessarily innovative and that is why he wants to make “Blackness” passé. After reading a William Faulkner novel Charles Stone gives him for inspiration, Ferguson concludes that the key to freeing himself from essentialism must begin with removing any punctuation from his life and instead, committing to fluidity. Ferguson describes himself as standing at a tri-forked crossroads: three “life-altering” DJ gigs (SL 172). Ironically, the *left* fork is a neo-Nazi rally and the *right*

¹²¹ Woolf, “Negotiating The ‘Negro Problem’: Stew’s Passing (Made) Strange,” 194.

¹²² *Ibid.*: 195.

fork is the annual *Bundestreffen* (national meeting) for Afro-Germans. Because Ferguson sees himself as unmarked, he finds no problem in collecting Nazi-era recordings of military tunes, primarily to sell to record collectors. Ferguson's identification is first and foremost as a DJ, therefore he agrees to DJ at the Nazi rally purely for professional reasons. In fact, rather than fear for his well-being, he takes the rude comment of one of the female party guests as a compliment. When a "punk fraulein spat at [him] and ask[ed] to see his *schwanz*, [he] patted the knot of *deutschmarks* in [his] pocket and reminded [himself] that [he] knew which 'tail' she *really* wanted to see" (SL 175). In a situation where most people of color would be fearful for their lives, Ferguson reassures himself of his appeal to all Germans, especially women.

The path that leads straight ahead is a gig he DJs at the Free University. By the time he sets up his turntables, the only other person present is a "pretty, vaguely Mediterranean-looking woman" whom he describes as wearing a "powder-blue dress" (SL 181-2). Ferguson thinks about how people often torment him with the question "who is your audience?" This is an especially frustrating question for someone like himself, who does not want to categorize his music. He decides that on this particular evening, this woman is his sole audience. The fact that she is alone means he can craft each track for her as an individual, without trying to label her. After Ferguson had finished his set, "She stood up, looked at [him] meekly, and asked, 'Are you finished?'" (SL 182). When Ferguson nods in response, he realizes that this woman did not come to hear his set; rather she was the cleaning woman, wearing the typical powder-blue uniform, politely waiting to finish her duties. The fact that no one comes to this performance is actually not a disappointment. Ferguson revels in the idea that he literally has no audience and therefore, no expectations to fulfill. This is why Ferguson is so eager to make "Blackness" passé.

For Ferguson's final blow to Black essentialism, he hangs a banner with the phrase "Black Passé" when he and the long sought after Charles Stone finally collaborate, performing a Berlin Wall of sound. After their performance, Ferguson asks Stone:

"During that last solo, what were you thinking about?"

"I was thinking about the phrase on the banner, 'Black Passé.' How being passé is freedom. You can do what you want. No demands. No expectations. The only person I have to please is myself." (SL 230)

While Ferguson and Stone seem to feel they have achieved this state of being unmarked, evading anyone's expectations, Fatima dies trying to achieve an unmarked/featureless existence. Fatima commits suicide by dousing herself with gasoline and lighting herself on fire. By the time Ferguson arrives on the scene, all that remains of her is a charred corpse. Ferguson cannot bear to look at Fatima's corpse, but:

Every now and then, from behind [his] back, [he'd] hear a sharp crack that sounded like a potato chip being snapped in two and [he'd] know that a piece of burnt flesh or tuft of crinkled hair had peeled off [Fatima's] body and was tumbling in the street, being chased down by Klaudia. [He] suppose[d] ultimately that was what Fatima wanted, to be skinless and hairless. Featureless really. (SL 185)

The suicide note Fatima leaves behind is a poem by Afro-German poet May Ayim entitled “They’re People Like Us.”¹²³ The poem reads:

We really believe
That all people are the *same*.
No one should be discriminated against,
Just because he’s *different*. (SL 190)

The irony of these words relates to Charles Taylor’s essay “Multiculturalism.” Taylor suggests that one of the great challenges of a multicultural society is that “we all [as a society] *recognize* the equal value of different cultures; [but at the same time] that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their *worth*.”¹²⁴ Fatima’s decision to commit suicide testifies to her disbelief that such a society is possible in Germany.

Conclusion

Passing Strange leaves its audience with the idea that regardless of skin color, all identities are a construction and the “Real” can never be pinned down. While *Slumberland* attempts to make a similar argument, it still constructs a cultural hierarchy. In *Passing Strange*, all of the characters are unmarked and fluid, adopting identities depending on the circumstance. In *Slumberland*, the only characters who *really* achieve an unmarked existence are not only Black males, but musicians. *Slumberland* ultimately argues that a neo-Nazi can be “cured” of his or her racist thoughts, or at least become “blind” to color, if he or she encounters the *right* kind of music – music that no one can resist. The fact that this music is played by Ferguson and Charles Stone makes it seem like only a Black *male* musician can achieve this.

Ironically, Ferguson’s efforts to make “Blackness” passé actually achieve the reverse. This happens because “To many, the Schwa [Charles Stone] . . . was a well preserved mummy, a music primitive seemingly unspoiled by commercialism and modernity. Lars was the musical paleontologist and [Ferguson] his pickax-wielding native assistant” (SL 212). Ferguson tries to kill Lars’ essential Black subject with his beat, which consists of a diverse range of not only music, but everyday sounds. Ferguson and Stone’s collaboration is supposed to exemplify music that breaks with all categories – music that is not driven by any preconceptions, music without a specific audience, music that must not fulfill any expectations and music that is the embodiment of freedom.

For a brief moment, Ferguson believes his musical efforts have achieved this goal. In the Slumberland bar, as a crowd listens to his beat on the jukebox, a German student approaches him. She tells him “Today morning¹²⁵ in ethnography class my professor played an African chant, a Negro spiritual, a Robert Johnson ballad, some Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Marvin

¹²³ Ayim, born in Hamburg in 1960, wrote both poetry and essays which addressed racism in Germany. She committed suicide in 1996.

¹²⁴ Charles Taylor, ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 64.

¹²⁵ Beatty purposely uses this awkward formulation in order to mimic the kinds of mistakes a German speaking English might make. In this case, “today morning” would be a direct translation of the German *Heute morgen*.

Gaye, and Kool Moe Dee, and asked the class if we could hear the similarities” (SL 239). I believe a scholar of the African Diaspora like Paul Gilroy would argue that this professor of ethnography made two mistakes: she assumed there was a connection between these musical examples and she foreclosed any connection between this *Black* music and anything else. Despite the shortcomings of her professor, the German student shows some promise, for she does not necessarily hear any similarities. And when she hears Ferguson’s beat, she hears everything from her “grandmother raking the leaves”, to Sade and “her father cheering Borussia Dortmund” (SL 239). It initially appears that Ferguson has at least reached this student with his efforts to become not only an unmarked individual but create music that is neither Black nor white. Ferguson’s hopes are dashed, however, when the ethnography student begins feeling his face with her hands in order to “dissect” his features.

It appears that in Ferguson’s idea of a postunification, postmodern Germany divorced from the notion of the essential Black man, not only is the Black man not necessarily a rebel or *other* than German, but he can move through Germany freely, from a party for Afro-Germans to a neo-Nazi rally in Marzahn. At the rally, Ferguson questions the neo-Nazi Thorsten about a member of their gang who is clearly of African descent. Thorsten defends his “comrade,” claiming: “It’s the hate that’s important. It doesn’t matter who does the hating, but who you hate” (SL 175). Thus, in a world where everyone has the freedom to try on identities like clothing, Black men can be neo-Nazis and neo-Nazis can idolize Black musicians.

The lesson Youth learns in Berlin seems to offer a more viable solution for escaping essentialism. I believe Amy Robinson’s understanding of “passing” is useful for probing *Passing Strange*’s argument about identity. After all, its title certainly invites a reflection on the practice of passing. One could read the musical’s title as referring to Youth’s life in Berlin. Youth passes *as* strange; he pretends to be different from Germans and he believes they can only see value in this difference. Pretending to be from the “ghetto,” he attempts to hide the middle-class background that he actually has in common with his German friends. Robinson suggests that passing requires a “triangular theater of identity” where “Three participants—the passer, the dupe, and a representative of the in-group—enact a complex narrative scenario in which a successful pass is performed in the presence of a literate member of the in-group.”¹²⁶

According to Robinson, when a member of the in-group suspects someone is passing, the point is not in the *knowing* whether or not one is correct, but in the telling. In that moment, the member of the in-group does not recognize “a stable prepassing identity” but rather “the apparatus of passing that manufactures presumption (of heterosexuality, of whiteness) as the means to a successful performance.”¹²⁷ By witnessing the passing, the in-group witness realizes that one can never get to the real – there is no truth.

Presuming ontology, the dupe recognizes the pass within the terms of a mimetic paradigm of identity; presuming the simulacrum, or Brechtian drag, the in-group recognizes the pass as a strategy of en-trance into representation not unlike identity itself ... From the perspective of the in-group ...the femme reads masculinity as a butch code.

¹²⁶ Amy Robinson, “It Takes One to Know One: Passing and Communities of Common Interest,” *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 4 (1994): 723.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*: 721-2.

In contrast, the dupe presumes mimesis and reads identity (maleness) in the place of performance.¹²⁸

I believe it is the element of masquerade in *Passing Strange* that makes its conclusion, as opposed to *Slumberland's*, a more feasible way of battling the essential Black subject in Germany. In *Passing Strange's* spectral triangle, Youth is the passer, but he is not passing for white, he is passing for an essentialized notion of an African American. The dupes are the Germans [excluding Desi] who read his performance as authentic, as evidence of his real identity. In this triangulation, the in-group who witnesses the passing is the audience, who knows Youth's middle-class background. From the perspective of the in-group, the audience immediately reads Youth's tales from the ghetto as a performance. Meanwhile the dupes, the Germans, presume mimesis and read truth into the performance.

Nevertheless, how might one answer bell hooks' concerns about the shortcomings of this postmodern approach to identity, "Yeah, it's easy to give up identity, when you got one."¹²⁹ The concern raised by scholars like hooks, E. Patrick Johnson and Suzanne Moore is that it is easy to assign power to masquerade when the person who is doing so already had the power to begin with.¹³⁰ Robinson also admits that "As a correlative social practice, identity cannot be divested from a culture that is unrelentingly invested with the value of appearance."¹³¹ Although anyone can masquerade at any time, simulations can go wrong if everyone else insists on reading the scene ontologically.¹³²

Another of Marc Brandenburg's art pieces is *Ausländertarnpullover* (Camouflage Sweater for Foreigners) which addresses the very irony that we accept that identities are fluid enough to be modified by fashion, yet we still hold on to the belief that race is a stable entity that fixes identity. Jürgen Heinrichs describes the piece as follows:

the installation featured a series of torsos made of cardboard cutouts mounted to a wall. A variety of brightly colored sweaters from thrift stores could be attached to different heads and arms through knitting. Varying colors such as white, black, yellow and red matched their imaginary 'races' according to conventional associations of racial identities with colors. The camouflage sweaters playfully explored the idea that one could adjust to one's environment. For instance, if a black person traveled in East Germany, he or she would dress in a sweater identified with the codes of the 'white' population... The

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*, 28.

¹³⁰ "As a discursive practice [postmodernism] is dominated primarily by the voices of white male intellectuals and/or academic elites who speak to and about one another with coded familiarity." Ibid., 24.

¹³¹ Robinson, "It Takes One to Know One: Passing and Communities of Common Interest," 735.

¹³² Here Baudrillard's anecdote about the simulated bank robbery is useful. Baudrillard suggests "Go and organise a fake hold-up. Be sure to check that your weapons are harmless and take the most trustworthy hostage, so that no life is in danger (otherwise you risk committing an offence). Demand ransom, and arrange it so that the operation creates the greatest commotion possible – in brief, stay close to the 'truth', so as to test the reaction of the apparatus to a perfect simulation. But you won't succeed: the web of artificial signs will be inextricably mixed up with real elements (a police officer will really shoot on sign; a bank customer will faint and die of a heart attack; they will really turn the phoney ransom over to you) – in brief, you will unwittingly find yourself immediately in the real, one of whose functions is precisely to devour every attempt at simulation, to reduce everything to some reality – that's exactly how the established order is, well before institutions and justice come into play." Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 39.

sweaters, by virtue of being attachable or removable, highlight how clothes function to constitute, modify, or counteract identities...It explores how race is perceived as supposedly 'natural' and stable foundational entity, whereas fashion, by contrast, is seen as functioning to modify or supplement identity. *Ausländertarnpullover* ironically highlights the fact that racial identities – despite their seemingly stable, pseudo-biological appearance – are just as socially and historically constructed as fashion-based creations of the self.¹³³

When Ferguson encounters his first East Germans, his remarks confirm the identity-shaping qualities of fashion. What strikes him most about East Germans is “how incredibly un-eye-catching they [a]re. Not to say they [a]re unappealing” (SL 110). The reason why all East Germans look inconspicuous to Ferguson is because they have not had access to the range of self-modifying styles that are available in the capitalist West. With their welcome money, these future citizens of a unified Germany can construct a brand new identity to help them integrate in their community of choice. But Ferguson laments, “There is no camouflage for being black” (SL 188). Only in an art piece, like Brandenburg’s *Ausländertarnpullover*, can a Black person don a white sweater and thereby become inconspicuous to a potential racist mob. The reality is that a Black man *cannot* put on a Lonsdale sweatshirt and attend a neo-Nazi rally in Marzahn intending to “pass” as the majority. And the likelihood that a Black man could DJ such a rally, as in Ferguson’s case, is just as poor.

However, Robinson’s essay might have a solution regarding how postmodern notions of identity could help Black individuals escape the ties of essentialism. As she remarks:

...the social practice of passing must always be understood in relation to the ‘problem’ of identity, a problem to which passing owes the very possibility of its practice. The limited subversion of the pass always requires that the terms of the system be intact. It is precisely the presence of rigid and artificial institutional binaries that not only produces the pass but also solicits the social practice of passing...¹³⁴

Thus, rather than erasing racial differences, the one victory which performance or passing can afford a Black person in Germany is undermining essentialist notions of Black popular culture; hence Youth’s comment that he might be in a cage, but unlike the Blacks on display in the *Völkerschau* or the Black security guard at the *Amerikahaus*, he has the key. Germans might read authenticity into his performance, but as long as there is a member of the in-group who recognizes his passing, then such a performance is a subversive act that can function as an individual form of resistance to the hegemony in the sense of de Certeau’s tactics.

Ferguson’s desire to be unmarked is quite different from Youth’s ephemeral passing. Ferguson’s aspiration to solve the “Negro problem” of essentialism by achieving an unmarked state seems more naïve. He would like for all people to have the luxury of being a blank slate capable of anything. Being unmarked does not require a dupe. It is not about revealing and

¹³³ Heinrichs, “Mixed Media, Mixed Identities: The Universal Aesthetics of Marc Brandenburg,” 324-5.

¹³⁴ Robinson, “It Takes One to Know One: Passing and Communities of Common Interest,” 735-6.

undermining the apparatus but disregarding it. Thorsten the neo-Nazi does not misrecognize Ferguson as white. For Thorsten, Ferguson and Charles Stone remain Black men. His acceptance of them is *despite* race, it does not challenge the very notion of race as a stable signifier within a reliable system of knowledge. Ferguson and Charles Stone are seen as unmarked, because their status as knowledgeable Black male musicians gives them a position of authority. Fatima, however, shows how difficult it is to achieve this status. Even if race is disregarded, who achieves an “unmarked” status might still be influenced by tangible factors like gender and class. Fatima, a Black woman, could only achieve her unmarked state of being in death, by literally burning off her features. Though fictional, Fatima’s death gives us a glimpse of the real, physical violence at stake in a Germany where Black culture and race in general continues to be understood as a natural, stable entity. In the next chapter I will look at Turkish German author Feridun Zaimoğlu’s response to what it feels like to belong to marginalized group and watch Germans mimic your experience.

Chapter Six

Ali's Got Attitude¹

The protagonists at the focus of the last chapter challenged the notion that African American culture is inherently different and rebellious. For Ferguson and Youth, African American culture of the 1970s and 1980s was a stifling matrix of stereotypes and American middle-class sensibilities. These protagonists also drew attention to the fact that whites are not the only ones susceptible to becoming bored with their environment and seeking excitement elsewhere. While Norman Mailer's "white Negroes" might have ventured to Harlem for their "Saturday night kicks," Beatty and Stew's Black protagonists headed to Germany – participating in a century-old tradition of African Americans seeking freedom in Europe. Ferguson with his racially unmarked beats and Youth in his ironic skirt of metal bananas both stood in Germany's capital and defiantly returned the gaze of the white men who had been borrowing their "clothes" for over a century. More so than in *Passing Strange*, Black masculinity plays particular importance in *Slumberland*, where Black men appear to be worshiped as the representatives of Black popular culture. In Germany, Ferguson is not chastised for his sexual exploits, but downright celebrated. Between repressed Afro-German women, former *Veronikas*² and right-wing skinhead girls, Ferguson cannot escape the many women waiting to consume him.³

For Oskar, Rull, Edgar and Schultze, Black popular culture was enticing not only for its general Otherness, but also because it offered models of masculinity that diverged from a seemingly narrow German ideal, dominated by strength, work and discipline. For these white protagonists, identifying with Black popular culture and masculinity allowed them to "drop out" of German society and reject more traditional paths to manhood. In particular, they chose a manhood that lacked the kind of brutality which had become associated with German men since Nazi dictatorship. Instead, they sought manhood that did not need to be proven through the domination of racial Others.

Nevertheless, as we saw in Chapter Three, the strategy of rejecting a violent, militaristic and oppressive German masculinity by identifying with African Americans became more complicated when the image of the African American man shifted from oppressed victim to powerful revolutionary. *Whity* represents the moment Germans were introduced to a Black male who, though oppressed, was not entirely innocent of supporting the system. One could certainly contextualize *Whity* during a period when the sexist and anti-feminist rhetoric of some leading African American revolutionaries, such as Eldrige Cleaver (*Soul on Ice*, 1967) and George Jackson (*Soledad Brother*, 1970), made Germans realize that the patriarchal masculinity they detested in their fathers and grandfathers was also practiced by their "chosen" Black father

¹ The use of the name "Ali" in this chapter heading is a conscious reference to German-Turkish author Feridun Zaimoğlu's use of "Ali" as a generic label for a Turk.

² This is a derogatory term used in postwar Germany for prostitutes but it more loosely signified German women who slept with American GIs. The name Veronika was chosen for the purpose of the acronym *Veronika, Dankeschön* which could be shortened to VD and thus serve as a warning to soldiers that they be mindful of venereal disease. See Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins*.

³ For a discussion of how white German women's preference for Black men relates to the notion that German men are less exciting and less comfortable with their bodies, see Partridge, "We Were Dancing in the Club, Not on the Berlin Wall: Black Bodies, Street Bureaucrats, and Exclusionary Incorporation into the New Europe."

figures. Nevertheless, Germans did not necessarily reject Black masculinity as an alternative model altogether. Rather, in leftist circles and among other practitioners of alternative lifestyles, Germans widely accepted the argument that such sexism was a symptom of years of emasculation tied to racial oppression. For example, in Lothar Lambert's *I Berlin Harlem*, the protagonist is a Black GI named John who was recently discharged from the US army in Berlin. The film's narrative suggests that John's upward battle against racism is what leads him to make fatal life choices, including raping a young woman – a crime for which he is found not guilty thanks to the help of a white male lawyer who seeks his affection.

Some Germans might have agreed with the rationalization that African American male patriarchy and violence are symptomatic of racism, but it still became difficult to identify with the Black man as purely innocent victim as African Americans gained more civil rights and continued to support not only patriarchal masculinity but the corrupt capitalist economy they had criticized earlier.⁴ I believe that after the Black Power movement died down, for Germans, the purpose of identifying with Black men shifted away from a desire to sympathize with oppressed victims. Instead, embracing Black male virility, and hypersexuality in particular, helped Germans reject what they perceived to be a rigid, conservative German masculinity.⁵

Fear of a Kanak Planet⁶

While *Slumberland* and *Passing Strange* gave us *some* insight into what the Other thinks about German Blackophilia and Blackophobia, yet another voice has been missing from this discussion – that of the Turkish German minority. From 1955 until 1973, West Germany recruited guest workers to counter a labor shortage in industry – a shortage that was exacerbated when the refugees from the East who had been migrating West since the end of WWII were cut off by the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. During this period of recruitment, manual laborers came from several southern European countries: Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Turkey and Yugoslavia. However; of all the groups who have since migrated to Germany, the Turkish population is the largest with 2.5 million. The main focus of this chapter is the role of Black popular culture in the construction of Turkish German masculinities among the second- and

⁴ See hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, 18.

⁵ In Damani Partidge's interviews with white German mothers of Afro-German children, they describe their motivation for seeking out Black men as longing for something other than the "boringness and inactivity of German men." Damani James Partridge, "Exploding Hitler and Americanizing Germany: Occupying 'Black' Bodies and Postwar Desire," in *Germans and African Americans: Two Centuries of Exchange*, ed. Larry Greene and Anke Ortlepp (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 203.

⁶ This subtitle quotes Hannes Loh and Murat Güngör's seminal work on hip hop in Germany which bares the same name. See Hannes Loh and Murat Güngör, *Fear of a Kanak Planet: Hip-hop Zwischen Weltkultur und Nazi-Rap* (Höfen: Hannibal, 2002). As for the term *Kanak*, Deniz Göktürk gives an extensive etymology of this word in the essay "Postcolonial Amnesia? Taboo Memories and Kanaks with Cameras." Göktürk writes "Considered highly pejorative in German, the term is used in popular speech to refer either to a foreigner (often a Turk) or to an 'uneducated, simple person,' according to the *Duden Konversations-Lexikon* (1983). The etymology of *Kanake/Kanak* reveals the term's origin in the islands of the South Pacific. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines *Kanaka* in English as: 'A native of the South Sea Islands, esp. one employed in Queensland as a labourer on the sugar plantations.' The Hawaiian-English dictionary lists 'human being, man, person, individual, party, mankind, population' as the first meaning of 'kanaka.' The word's widespread occurrence throughout Oceania as a designation for natives points to its circulation through colonial contact and traffic. This region in the larger sense, however, was one of the places on the globe where; for a brief period in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Germany competed with French and British colonial interests for economic and commercial power." Deniz Göktürk, "Postcolonial Amnesia? Taboo Memories and Kanaks with Cameras," in *German Colonialism, Visual Culture and Modern Memory*, ed. Volker M. Langbehn (New York; London: Routledge, 2009), 290. In German, the plural form of *Kanak* is *Kanaken*.

third-generation.⁷ My focus on Turkish Germans is motivated in part by their strong presence in the German public – among Germany’s 7.3 million “foreign”⁸ residents, Turks and Turkish Germans make up the largest minority group and between 3.8% and 4.2% of the German population.⁹

Aside from their significant presence, what further motivates my focus on Turkish Germans is the fact that when one examines present debates about the failure or success of multicultural and integration policies in Germany, Turks tend to be at the forefront. “Statistically and symbolically, Turks have shouldered the greater burden of the imagined bridge for migrants¹⁰ in Germany, as they trigger fears of a ‘clash of civilizations’ (Huntington) or spark hopes for a ‘dialogue of cultures.’”¹¹ In these debates on integration, a lot of focus is placed on Turkish masculinity, oppressed Turkish femininity, and how these gender roles do not fit into the German mainstream. Due to a presumed connection to Muslim culture, to most Germans, Turkish models of masculinity present an alien model that fits neither with the traditional benevolent German patriarch nor with the new “Softie” of the feminist movement. Although there are certainly aspects of patriarchal masculinity in Turkish and Muslim households that agree with a prevailing Christian German patriarchy, Germans’ perception that Islam is not European has helped maintain prejudices against Turkish culture.¹² Negative German assumptions link Turkish masculinity to patriarchy, the oppression of women, (domestic) violence, homophobia and crime. It is important to keep in mind that these assumptions are embedded within a larger European discourse which promotes a very homogenous understanding of “fortress Europe.”

Until recently the term ‘European’ has retained in the popular imagination its associative affinity with Christianity and whiteness despite the fact that Europe’s population has been ‘hybridized,’ ‘creolized,’ and ‘colored’ by waves of non-white non-Christian migrants throughout its history. Today as well, Europe’s traditional resistance to nonwhite migrants, its racial selectivity, is tainted by religious tones. Post-9/11 and -7/7 anti-Muslim sentiments characterize the current European zeitgeist, feeding and nurturing the

⁷ “Broadly speaking, Turks who came to Germany as children or youths are defined as ‘second-generation,’ and those born in Germany, ‘third-generation.’” Moray McGowan, “Multiple Masculinities in Turkish-German Men’s Writing,” in *Conceptions of Postwar German Masculinity*, ed. Roy Jerome (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 309 note 17.

⁸ In this statistic, “foreign” designates residents of Germany who are not German citizens.

⁹ Gökce Yurdakul, “Juden und Türken in Deutschland: Integration von Immigranten, Politische Repräsentation und Minderheitenrechte,” in *Staatsbürgerschaft, Migration und Minderheiten: Inklusion und Ausgrenzungsstrategien im Vergleich* ed. Gökce Yurdakul and Y. Michal Bodemann. (Wiesbaden: Verlag Sozialwissenschaften, 2010), 139.

¹⁰ Tom Cheesman observes that “the term ‘Migrant’ is used as a self-description among young people whose parents or grandparents migrated to Germany.” Tom Cheesman, “Akçam – Zaimoğlu – ‘Kanak Attak’: Turkish Lives and Letters in German,” *German Life and Letters* 55, no. 2 (2002): 181.

¹¹ Leslie Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 6. “If we were to speculate as to why the rhetorical conceit situating Turkish migrants ‘between two worlds’ has so much purchase in Germany, we might note that this historical incarnation of the cultural fable coincided with West Germany’s ongoing attempts—in the aftermath of the Third Reich, the Holocaust, and a war of the worlds—to situate itself in relation to the First and Second Worlds of the Cold War and the so-called Third World in the age of postcolonialism.” *Ibid.*, 7.

¹² Kanak Attak, a group Elisabeth Loentz describes as a “cross-ethnic anti-racist network” (Loentz 2006: 50), even addresses such similarities between Christian and Muslim treatment of women in a video filmed at an event celebrating 40 years of Turkish migration to Germany held at the Philharmonic in Cologne in 2001. Members of Kanak Attak catch German attendees who think Islam is oppressive to women off guard, when they ask them to read passages from the bible which attest to the need for men to dominate their wives. This video can be viewed with English subtitles at the Kanak Attak website, <http://www.kanak-attak.de>.

emergence of a new cultural racism, very often disguised as a war against terror and crime.¹³

Thus, despite similarities between Muslim and Christian patriarchies – similarities that have even made the Christian Democratic Union political party rather popular among conservative Muslims in Germany – many Germans insist that Turkish masculinity is especially oppressive, non-Western and not German. These views have been supported by such public personalities as German feminist Alice Schwarzer and Turkish German sociologist Necla Kelek. At the pinnacle of the feminist movement, one would have never expected Schwarzer to ever collaborate with the sensationalist press *Bild* which is known for its sexist photos of women. However, critiquing the treatment of Muslim women is a practice that has at times united conservatives and feminists in Germany. For example, the *Bild* has featured several articles of Schwarzer's that condemn Muslim women's wearing of the headscarf.

Germans' criticism of Turkish patriarchy might lead one to assume that in contrast to the Turkish patriarch, all German men have become "Softies" since the feminist movement of the 1970s. More accurately, however, a variety of male roles exist side-by-side in Germany, including the traditional German patriarch. Nevertheless, the apparent *strangeness* of Turkish masculinity has made it a target in the German media for decades. Victim narratives like Tevfik Baser's film *40 Quadratmeter Deutschland* (40 Square Meters of Germany, 1986), which portrays a Turkish bride who is brought to Germany and imprisoned in her apartment by her husband, or Feo Aladag's more recent film *Die Fremde* (When We Leave, 2010) about an attempted honor killing in a Turkish German family, have been very popular among the German public. In addition, the German press often reports on honor killings, forced marriages and violent male Turkish German youth gangs. These images confirm Germans' ideas of Turkish masculinity as inherently violent, sexist and patriarchal. Furthermore, the belief prevails that while Turkish girls are expected to remain repressed virgins until marriage, Turkish boys are free to have sexual conquests with German women.¹⁴ This popular image of the Turkish woman as victim has been countered by several prominent German intellectuals who signed an open letter written by journalist and migration researcher Mark Terkessidis and social scientist Yasemin Karakoşoğlu and printed in the German newspaper *Die Zeit*.¹⁵

Sandro M. Moraldo claims most Turkish Germans "live within the German community but they are strangers to it. Born or brought up in Germany, the Kanaken have, nevertheless, the status of foreigners, due only apparently to ethnic and cultural differences, but, more probably,

¹³ Yosefa Loshitzky, *Screening Strangers: Migration and Diaspora in Contemporary European Cinema* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 4.

¹⁴ McGowan points out that among the older generation of Turkish males who came to Germany as guest workers there was a notion that German women were sexually freer than Turkish women. See McGowan, "Multiple Masculinities in Turkish-German Men's Writing." The scenario of the lonely Turkish male guest worker who misreads the behavior of a German woman which leads to rape is portrayed in Aras Ören's novel *Bitte nix Polizei* (Please No Police, 1981). The stereotypes of the virginal Turkish girl vs the nymphomaniac German woman and the Turkish man who has affairs with German women and marries a Turkish bride have been reproduced and undermined in several cultural productions. To name a few of the characters who challenge and mock this notion are Sibel and Cahit in *Gegen die Wand* (Head On, 2004), Ibo in *Kebab Connection* (2004), Yeter in *Auf der Anderen Seite* (The Edge of Heaven, 2007) and several characters in Zaimoğlu's *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (Head Stuff: Kanaki Speak from the Margins of Society, 1999) and his play *Schwarze Jungfrauen* (Black Virgins, 2006).

¹⁵ This letter has been reprinted in the following form: Yasemin Karakoşoğlu and Mark Terkessidis, "Gerechtigkeit für die Muslime!," in *Transit Deutschland: Debatten zu Nation und Migration*, ed. Deniz Göktürk, et al. (Paderborn: Konstanz University Press, 2011).

the expression of a political, social and legal difference.”¹⁶ I would, however, like to stress that Turkish Germans are not strangers to the German community in the sense that they do not understand it or cannot function within it; rather the German community more often than not *perceives* them as strangers. If Black masculinity has served as an alternative for Germans who felt strange or have been made to feel like outsiders by their society, how might it be helpful for Turkish Germans who experience something similar?

In order to examine how masculinity is constructed among second- and third-generation Turkish Germans, I will address stereotypes of Turkish masculinity as they are portrayed by Turkish German author Feridun Zaimoğlu in his first book *Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (Kanak Speak: 24 Dischords from the Margins of Society, 1995). Zaimoğlu takes issue with Germans’ image of Turks as somehow ignorant and therefore unable to assimilate. He sarcastically states, “...the Turks aren’t able to adapt themselves. Are they too dumb to adapt themselves?! Are Turks too stupid...or what? This is the starting point of my work.”¹⁷ Zaimoğlu’s *Kanaken* are not incapable of assimilating because they lack the linguistic, educational or social skills; rather they *refuse* to assimilate, that is to say they refuse to join the ranks of the middle-class. Their rejection of the German mainstream is a refusal to participate in or let themselves be objectified by the often demeaning and exclusionary discourse on integration in Germany. An example of the belittling tone discussions of integration can take in Germany is the fact that the *Institut für deutsche Sprache* (Institute for German Language) in Mannheim has chosen the labels “ghetto-oriented” and “ghetto-runaways” to explain the “linguistic-communicative behavior of the (mostly) young people who inhabit the multiethnic migrant context.”¹⁸

Moraldo describes the “ghetto-oriented” as “those who are interested in neither school nor job training, [people who] contribute to [an] improper way of speaking because of their lack of education.”¹⁹ This definition, provided by the institute and not Moraldo, ignores the fact that *Kanak Sprak* (Kanak speak) can be performed by anyone.²⁰ Reading *Kanak Sprak* as merely a symptom of poor education and disinterest in work training takes away the subversive power *Kanaken* have and blames migrants for a situation that could just as well have been produced by a lack of opportunities and systemic discrimination.

Remarkably, the term “ghetto-runaways” is supposed to be read positively as those who “aim at being high-achievers, in order to provide the Germans with a positive image of the ‘integrated, respectable Turks.’”²¹ Moraldo does not acknowledge the doubly negative connotations of this term. Not only are these young people described as being from the “ghetto,” thus inherently outside of the mainstream, but they are “runaways” which leads one to conclude

¹⁶ Sandro M. Moraldo, “Kanak Sprak: The Linguistic Features of Turkish Migrants’ Communicative Style in Feridun Zaimoğlu’s Works,” in *Language and Verbal Art Revisited: Linguistic Approaches to the Study of Literature*, ed. Donna R. Miller and Monica Turci (London; Oakville: Equinox, 2007), 238.

¹⁷ Zaimoğlu quoted in Josefine Huber, “Öder Betroffenheitsblödsinn,” *Audimax* 7/8 (2002). Zaimoğlu’s sarcastic comments are reminiscent of the arguments made by Social Democrat politician Thilo Sarrazin, who in his recent book *Deutschland schafft ab* claimed that Muslims were less capable of integrating than others.

¹⁸ Moraldo, “Kanak Sprak: The Linguistic Features of Turkish Migrants’ Communicative Style in Feridun Zaimoğlu’s Works,” 239.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

²⁰ While originally associated with Turks, this ethnolect has since been adopted by other minorities in Germany as well as white German youth. For a more extensive linguistic analysis of *Kanak Sprak* in Zaimoğlu’s works, see *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

that they were never expected to leave their poor circumstances and succeed in the first place. These are the kind of narrow and condescending labels to which Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken* respond. However; rather than rejecting both labels, they embrace a "ghetto-oriented" identity. In order to explain this choice, I will compare the *Kanak*'s experiences with that of African Americans in post-Soul America.

One of the points I hoped to demonstrate in the last five chapters is how much the reception of Black popular culture has changed in Germany in the 20th century. In the 1930s and 1940s, the National Socialists condemned Black popular culture as "degenerate." In the 1950s, Black popular culture was viewed with skepticism by those Germans fearful it would change their traditions and make their children rebellious. In the 1960s and 1970s, Black popular culture was a sign of oppression but also a hopeful symbol of struggle for liberation. German students in particular eagerly sought to join ranks with Blacks in solidarity in the fight against racial discrimination and Western imperialism. By the 1980s, Black popular culture had officially arrived in mainstream American and German culture. This shift is conveyed in Zaimoğlu's *Kanak Sprak*, when a 24-year-old rapper named Abdurrahman compares Germans' feelings towards Turks with their feelings towards other minorities and he insists African Americans have a special status. "Having a Kanake as a friend ranks at the absolute bottom of the multiculti list. A Jamaica nigger with a dreadlock wig would be better. Even better would be a schmaltzy Latino and the really hot, ultimate crown is the Yankee nigger whom the native cunt-monopoly is really into."²²

Despite the shift in Germany from perceiving Black popular culture as frighteningly different to viewing it as relatively commonplace, when one considers the reception of hip hop in Germany, one recognizes the same age-old binaries we encountered in jazz's reception: white/Black, bland/rebellious. For example, the title of one of the first rap compilations produced in Germany is *Krauts with Attitude* (1991) which both references the American rap group N.W.A. (Niggaz with Attitude) and suggests that German rap is a unique phenomenon, because Germans normally would not have "attitude." Just like their jazz, rock and Blues enthusiast predecessors, white German rappers have also compared their situation to that of African Americans. An example thereof is the rap crew *A.N.T.I.* who, echoing Ferguson's claims, likened their situation as East Germans in postunification Germany to that of Blacks in the U.S. "They call us all East-niggers/ our skin-colour may be white/ but in Germany we're the last shite."²³ But in today's multicultural Germany, the identification with African Americans is no longer a phenomenon reserved solely for Germans. The predecessors of *Cartel*, a popular Berlin-based Turkish hip hop group, had originally formed a group called *White Nigger Posse*. "As a reason

²² "... 'n kanake als freund rangiert ganz unten auf der multikultiliste, besser is 'n jamaikanigger mit zottelperücke, noch besser 'n schmalzlatino, und die ganz heiße oberfesche krone is denn 'n yankee-nigger, auf den das einheimische mösen-monopol abfährt." Feridun Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 2010), 22.

²³ "Ostnigger hiessen wir am Stück/ die Farbe unserer Haut ist zwar weiß/ doch in Deutschland sind wir der letzte Scheiß." Tom Cheesman, "Polyglot Politics. Hip Hop in Germany," *Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 6, no. 2 (1998): 207. Heike Raphael-Hernandez compares the state of alienation, hopelessness and economic trouble experienced by Blacks in America's ghettos with the experiences of neo-Nazis in Eastern Germany postunification. See Hernandez, "Niggas and Skins." For a description of the use of hip hop by German neo-Nazis see Loh and Güngör, *Fear of a Kanak Planet*.

for their collaboration [the group] claimed that music in Germany was ‘too white,’²⁴ an opinion that supports the established binaries I mentioned above. Anthropologist Ayse Caglar also observes that “especially at Turkish German rap concerts in Berlin you hear fans now and again who call themselves the ‘Blacks of Germany’ or ‘German Niggers.’”²⁵

But such comparisons between Turks and African Americans did not start in the hip hop community. In 1971, journalist Paul Klee called guest workers the “Niggers of Europe,” a title he gave to an entire book investigating the troubled lives of these migrants.²⁶ Under the subtitle *Negersklaven* (Negro Slaves), Klee set up the following comparison between the transatlantic slave trade and Germany’s guest worker program: “One must wonder whether a human being [in Germany] isn’t just seen as an object, as a factor of production. We rip people away from their homeland, give them transportation and regulate the market value.”²⁷ Klee’s comments seem to confirm the notion that racist discourses in Germany, which had shifted from a focus on Jews to a focus on Blacks during the immediate postwar years, eventually targeted guest workers.²⁸

Zaimoğlu’s *Kanak Sprak* is a collection of monologues of young Turkish German men. Scholars have previously pointed out several references to African American culture made by narrators in the text. For example, Sandra Hestermann states that in *Kanak Sprak*, “Three recurrent central subjects around which the formation of the Kanakster identity is constructed are music, comparison and identification with American blacks, and sexuality.”²⁹ And Moraldo remarks how often the appellation “Bruder” (brother) is used by the narrators, insisting that, “This style is not simply a superficial appropriation of African-American language practice, but also stresses the similarity between the Kanaken ethnic minority’s context and political orientation with those of the Black Consciousness Movement.”³⁰ In contrast to the earlier investigations of the role of African American culture in *Kanak Sprak*, I intend to compare notions of Black masculinity in hip hop culture to the Turkish masculinity presented in the text. I ask how the narrators’ identification with African American culture, Black masculinity and in

²⁴ “Als Anlaß für den Zusammenschluß gab man an, die Musik in Deutschland sei ‘zu weiß.’” Ayse Caglar, “Verordnete Rebellion: Deutsch-Türkischer Rap und Türkischer Pop in Berlin,” in *Globalkolorit: Multikulturalismus und Populärkultur* ed. Ruth Mayer und Mark Terkessidis (St. Andrä/Wörtern: Hannibal, 1998), 45.

²⁵ “In deutsch-türkischen Rap-Konzerten gerade in Berlin hört man immer wieder Fans, die sich als ‘die Schwarzen von Deutschland’ oder ‘deutsche Nigger’ bezeichnen.” Ibid.

²⁶ According to Yasemin Yildiz, two years later an article in the magazine *Spiegel* also proclaimed that German cities with high populations of migrants were turning into “Harlem.” Yildiz goes on to note that since then, the American culture is often used as a site of projection for Germans to determine how to best deal with how migrants have changed German society. Yasemin Yildiz, “Kritisch ‘kanak’: Gesellschaftskritik, Sprache und Kultur bei Feridun Zaimoğlu,” in *Wider den Kulturreiz: Migration, Kulturalisierung und Weltliteratur*, ed. Özkan Ezli, Dorothee Kimmich, and Annette Werberger (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009), 197.

²⁷ “Man wird Sätze dieser Art nicht lesen, ohne sich darüber Gedanken zu machen, ob hier der Mensch nicht als Ware, als Produktionsfaktor, gesehen ist. Man entreißt die Leute ihrer Heimat, besorgt den Transport und regelt den Marktwert.” Klee, *Die Nigger Europas. Zur Lage der Gastarbeiter* 20.

²⁸ Maria Höhn also proposes this in the conclusion of *GIs and Fräuleins*.

²⁹ “Kanakster” is a variation of “kanak” which Zaimoğlu also uses. Sandra Hestermann, “The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity: Hyphenated and Alternative Discourses of Identity in the Works of Zafer Şenocak and Feridun Zaimoğlu,” in *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments*, ed. Monika Fludernik (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2003), 362. This is one link to Black culture Moraldo misses. Moraldo reads “Kanakster” as a neologism that combines “Kaname and youngster.” But Tom Cheesman points out that it is a combination of “Kanak” and “gangster” to “emphasize the ‘fight’-aspect of this identity.” Cheesman quoted in Frauke Matthes, “Was ist deutsch, Bestimmen Wir’: Definitions of (Turkish-) Germanness in Feridun Zaimoğlu’s *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff*,” *Focus on German Studies: A Journal on and Beyond German-Language Literature* 14 (2007): 21.

³⁰ Moraldo, “Kanak Sprak: The Linguistic Features of Turkish Migrants’ Communicative Style in Feridun Zaimoğlu’s Works,” 243-4.

particular hip hop masculinity express Turkish Germans' alterity and helps Turkish German males rebel against hegemonic German masculinity.

The final issue I will take up in this chapter is how Turkish Germans' identification with African Americans might add to or complicate the practice of Germans' identifying with Black victims in order to reject German guilt over the Holocaust. In the 1970s, when Klee compared guest workers to African Americans, a comparison was also made between the experience of Turks and Jews in Germany. As Leslie Adelson argues,

While there are some good reasons for understanding the referential status of Turkish figures in Germany today against the background of the ongoing traumatic history of the Holocaust, it is not at all clear in any given instance what it might mean to do so, or even whose traumatic history is most palpably present in the warp and woof of any given narrative. References to Turkish figures in German culture of the 1990s at times bear traumatic traces of genocidal history in Germany, but Turkish figures do not merely stand in for Jewish ones.³¹

In her discussion of Turkish German author Zafer Şenocak's novel *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (Perilous Kinship, 1998), Adelson suggests that the Turkish German authors' engagement with the Holocaust and anti-Semitism in their works turns the dialogues between Germans and Jews and Germans and Turks into a trialogue involving all three groups. This trialogue can possibly free each group from the seemingly rigid categories of victim and perpetrator. I wonder, what happens when African Americans are introduced to the dialogue between Germans and Turks? Can it have a similar effect?

The white protagonists discussed in the first four chapters were Germans who, explicitly or implicitly, disassociated themselves with Germany's Nazi past and aligned themselves instead with the victims of oppression – whether Jewish victims of the Holocaust or Black victims of slavery, imperialism and racial discrimination. But what happens when Germans, who have sympathized with African Americans but condemned Turks, are faced with Turks who compare themselves to African Americans? Can appropriating African American culture help integrate Turkish Germans into a Germany where “Black is in”? Or does identifying with Blacks only underline Turks' difference, solidifying their role as victims?

From Brooklyn to Berlin: Hip Hop in Germany

In the past three decades, one of the ways people of color in Germany have dealt with racism and discrimination is by expressing themselves through hip hop. However, having a voice in German mainstream society has certainly been a struggle for ethnic minorities.

³¹ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration*, 88. Adelson discusses explicit invocations of the Third Reich in Zaimoğlu's *Kanak Sprak*, as well as Yiddish words used and instances where speakers compare themselves or are compared to Jews. Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration*, 100-4.

In the early 1980s, mainstream German literary culture began to notice the emergence of work by writers who were migrant labourers, or who wrote about migrant labour, or who were simplistically associated with the latter through their ethnicity. Inevitably perhaps, this writing initially attracted the label *Gastarbeiterliteratur*, though this was as inaccurate and discriminatory as the label *Gastarbeiter* itself and for essentially the same reasons: it ignored the fact that many of these writers were not *Gastarbeiter*, and it marginalized this writing outside of the mainstream culture, implicitly or explicitly declaring it to be primarily of sociological rather than aesthetic interest.³²

It took Germanists working outside of Germany like Deniz Göktürk, Leslie Adelson, Kader Konuk and Tom Cheesman, as well as “scholars of non-German descent working in Germany”³³ to argue for the relevance of writing by migrants.³⁴ In addition to literature, numerous films from the 1970s and 1980s portrayed the lives of migrants, but as Deniz Göktürk argues, these films often presented victim narratives of migrants who are trapped between two worlds and unable to adapt to life in Germany.³⁵

This victim narrative was typically used by Germans attempting to articulate the experience of migrants on their behalf. Günter Walraff’s exposé, *Ganz Unten* (At the Very Bottom, 1985), a book based on his time disguising himself as a Turkish guest worker in order to reveal the discrimination and exploitation these workers suffered, is a testament to Germans’ paternalist relationship to ethnic minorities. As Noah Sow argues in *Deutschland Schwarz Weiss* (Germany in Black and White), Germans have a tendency to believe that while minorities’ own accounts of racism and discrimination can be influenced by their hypersensitivity, when a white

³² McGowan, “Multiple Masculinities in Turkish-German Men’s Writing,” 295-6. This literature is sometimes referred to as “*Betroffenheitsliteratur*” (‘literature of the affected’), which was often interpreted as symptomatic of Turkish inability to integrate and adjust to German culture... Most of this literature was originally written in Turkish and then very often translated into German by dilettante translators, so that its significance related mostly to its biographical content and sociopolitical implication rather than its literary value... It served to inform mainstream Germans about the economic misery, the crisis of identity and the cultural confusion experienced by the Turkish migrant worker.” Hestermann, “The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity: Hyphenated and Alternative Discourses of Identity in the Works of Zafer Şenocak and Feridun Zaimoğlu,” 346-7.

³³ Katharina Gerstenberger, “Writing by Ethnic Minorities in the Age of Globalisation,” in *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, ed. Stuart Taberner (Birmingham, UK: The University of Birmingham, 2004), 211.

³⁴ In *Multiculturalism*, Charles Taylor acknowledges the problem that arises when one judges an aesthetic work created by a foreigner as good or bad merely because the artist is foreign. Taylor claims it is not patronizing, rather it is respectful, to consider the product of a culture of worth, even if you do not like it. He recognizes that there is a school of thought that disagrees with him. “Deriving frequently from Foucault or Derrida, they claim that all judgments of worth are based on standards that are ultimately imposed by and further entrench structures of power [. . .] to be an object of such an act of respect demeans. The proponents of neo-Nietzschean theories hope to escape this whole nexus of hypocrisy by turning the entire issue into one of power and counterpower [. . .] But this is hardly a satisfactory solution, because in taking sides they miss the driving force of this kind of politics, which is precisely the search for recognition and respect” Taylor, ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 70. For Taylor, recognition is not about taking sides. “For real judgments of worth suppose a fused horizon of standards, as we have seen; they suppose that we have been transformed by the study of the other, so that we are not simply judging by our original familiar standards. A favorable judgment made prematurely would be not only condescending but ethnocentric. It would praise the other for being like us” (71). When Emine Sevgi Özdamar won the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize for her German novel *Das Leben ist ein Karawanserei*, she was criticized for her work not being good enough for the prestigious prize. Her critics felt she was awarded the prize based on a multicultural celebration of her difference. This criticism is best demonstrated by Jens Jessen’s article “The Tempting Call of Vanity (1991)” which is reprinted in Göktürk et al. *Germany in Transit*. Jessen describes Özdamar’s novel degradingly as “the helpless text of a German-writing Turkish woman, which plays on folkloristic elements from the fairy-tale tradition of her homeland . . . which the jurors good-naturedly viewed as surrealism” (Göktürk et al. 2007: 397). Taylor and Fredrich Jameson might accuse Jessen of “unfairly judging Özdamar’s writing according to a German, perhaps even male, standard, instead of trying to recognize the merit of her work. See also Jameson’s essay “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism.”

³⁵ See Deniz Göktürk, “Beyond Paternalism: Turkish German Traffic in Cinema,” in *The German Cinema Book*, ed. Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter and Deniz Göktürk (London: British Film Institute, 2002).

German reports about the same problems it is more objective and believable.³⁶ The fact that this notion continues to prevail twenty-four years after *Ganz Unten* is evident in Walraff's most recent exposé *Schwarz auf weiss* (Black on White, 2009), a film in which he disguises himself in blackface as an African immigrant in order to reveal persisting racism and discrimination in modern-day Germany.

Despite these instances of Germans speaking on minorities' behalf, there have also been attempts by minority groups to speak for themselves. In 1984, African American feminist, political activist and author, Audre Lorde was key in helping Afro-Germans gain a sense of community. Lorde taught a course on African American female poets and led a poetry workshop in English at the *Freie Universität* (Free University) in Berlin, in which several Afro-German women participated. Lorde encouraged these women to document their experiences of living in Germany and this motivated several of the participants to collaborate and publish the book *Farbe bekennen* (published in English as *Showing Our Colors*) in 1986.

The Afro-German movement of the mid-1980s helped Afro-German women position themselves within the international feminist movement, the African Diaspora and German society. Through their connection to local and international networks, Afro-German women gained a sense of community and could demand a public voice for their past experiences and the problems they continued to face in German society. Meanwhile, young Afro-German and migrant women *and* men pursued similar goals in the hip hop cipher. As musicologist Andy Bennett puts it, in Europe, "Hip hop is primarily used as a medium to express issues in combination with racism and questions of national identity – problems that the younger members of ethnic minorities often experience in Germany."³⁷

Hip hop developed in the boroughs of New York City in the late 1970s. Similar to how jazz was introduced to Germany after WWI, Black GIs brought hip hop to American bases in Germany in the 1980s. In a study on local hip hop in Frankfurt, Bennett observed:

Frankfurt had a special advantage as the location of the American Forces Network (AFN), the radio and television station that provided US soldiers stationed in Germany with a program... Similarly, the presence of a large military base in the center of Frankfurt as well as the corresponding infrastructure meant local citizens had steady contact to many aspects of American pop culture.³⁸

While youth in cities with large US bases likely encountered hip hop sooner than others, film productions about hip hop like *Wild Style* (1982) and *Beat Street* (1984) and MTV, which

³⁶ Sow, *Deutschland Schwarz Weiss: Der Alltägliche Rassismus*, 45.

³⁷ "Hiphop wird vor allem als Medium benutzt, um Themen im Zusammenhang mit Rassismus und der Frage der nationalen Identität auszudrücken – Probleme, die gerade die jüngeren Mitglieder der ethnischen Minderheiten in Deutschland öfters erleben." Andy Bennett, "Hiphop am Main: Die Lokalisierung von Rap-Musik und Hiphop-kultur," in *Hiphop – Globale Kulturen, Lokale Praktiken*, ed. Jannis Androutsopoulos (Bielefeld: transcript, 2003), 26. According to Tom Cheesman, migrant rappers in Germany "resist the norms both of the 'host culture' and of the 'parental culture' by constructing a sub- and/or counter-cultural blend of elements of both, and of a transnational youth culture born of the 'Black Atlantic.'" Cheesman, "Polyglot Politics. Hip Hop in Germany," 191-2.

³⁸ "Frankfurt [hatte] einen besonderen Vorteil als Sitz des American Forces Networks (AFN), der den in Deutschland stationierten US-Streitkräften mit einem Programm beliefern sollte... Ähnlich hatte auch die Präsenz eines größeren militärischen Sitzpunktes im Zentrum Frankfurts sowie die mit der Basis verbundenen Infrastruktur zu Folge, dass die ortsansässigen Bürger ständigen Kontakt zu vielen Aspekten der US-amerikanischen Populärkultur hatten" Bennett, "Hiphop am Main: Die Lokalisierung von Rap-Musik und Hiphop-kultur," 26.

launched *Yo! MTV Raps* in 1988, helped bring hip hop to German youth across the nation. It just so happened that hip hop reached Germany “at the very moment when, in many cities, the first large cohorts of children of ‘Gastarbeiter’ were reaching an age where they needed to find a youth culture to participate in.”³⁹ These young people viewed hip hop as a medium through which they could express themselves, and as a megaphone with which they could make mainstream society aware of their reality. Bennett explains the draw of hip hop for German youth by way of their identification with suffering. He refers to Ralph Ellison’s claim in *Shadow and Act* that it is suffering which unites the African Diaspora: “Generally speaking one could argue that Frankfurt’s rappers were initially motivated by a similar identification with suffering; their attraction to hip hop was combined with an imaginary cultural affinity to African Americans.”⁴⁰ These young German rappers’ turn to African American culture in the form of hip hop can be aligned with the other instances I have discussed thus far of Germans who feel alienated in mainstream society and whose suffering makes them feel akin to African Americans. However, until now, the German rebels in question have been white. In contrast, the German hip hop community of the 1980s provided a platform for both white and non-white Germans to rebel.

In the 1980s, hip hop in Germany was largely ignored compared to genres that appealed to the masses like German new wave. And according to Elizabeth Loentz, white German youth quickly lost interest in breakdancing, until the early 1990s, shortly after reunification, when German hip hop attained commercial success and national recognition.⁴¹ Record labels began marketing hip hop as a national youth style in the tradition of an older genre, *Sprechgesang* (roughly translated as “speak singing”).⁴² Thinking of German hip hop in terms of *Sprechgesang* was part of a broader effort of indigenizing hip hop, and stressing the legitimacy of white, middle-class *Deutschrap*. Loentz includes the compilation *Krauts with Attitude* in this phenomenon. She refers to how the liner notes:

...express German rappers’ desire to distance themselves from the implied tyranny of African-American musical forefathers...By positioning white *Deutschrap* against black or ethnic American and British rap, Reinboth [the producer] also obscures the existence in Germany of Rap by migrants or minorities, as well as the German ghettos (literal and figurative) from which it emerged.⁴³

Loentz goes on to describe how the commercially successful *Deutschrap*, which was dominated by male, middle-class white Germans, differentiated itself from the hip hop of migrants which was “pigeon-holed as *Betroffenheitsrap* (rap that is an expression of concern or

³⁹ Cheesman, “Polyglot Politics. Hip Hop in Germany,” 196.

⁴⁰ “Im Großen und Ganzen könnte argumentiert werden, dass die Frankfurter Rapper anfänglich durch eine ähnliche Identität der Leidenschaften motiviert wurden, in der sich die Aneignung von HipHop mit dem Sinn einer imaginären kulturellen Affinität mit Afroamerikanern verband.” Bennett, “Hiphop am Main: Die Lokalisierung von Rap-Musik und Hiphop-kultur,” 31.

⁴¹ In the 1980s in East Germany, however, breakdancing continued to be popular among white Germans. See Nico Raschick’s documentary *Here We Come* (2006).

⁴² See Elizabeth Loentz, “Yiddish, Kanak Sprak, Klezmer, and Hiphop: Ethnolect, Minority Culture, Multiculturalism, and Stereotype in Germany,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 25, no. 1 (2006): 56. See also Dietmar Elflein, “From Krauts with Attitudes to Turks with Attitudes: Some Aspects of Hip-Hop History in Germany,” *Popular Music* 17 (1998).

⁴³ Loentz, “Yiddish, Kanak Sprak, Klezmer, and Hiphop: Ethnolect, Minority Culture, Multiculturalism, and Stereotype in Germany,” 56-7.

consternation), or *Multikulturap*.⁴⁴ The marginalization of hip hop by migrants can be compared to the same trend I discussed in literature. A great example thereof is in 1992, when *Die Fantastischen Vier* (The Fantastic Four), a hip hop group of four white Germans from the suburbs of Stuttgart, gained instant success with their non-political, pop-influenced single “Die Da” (Her over there). In comparison, the very same year, *Advanced Chemistry*, a group consisting of two Afro-Germans and the son of an Italian guest worker, released a political song about racism in Germany called “Fremd im eigenen Land” (Foreign in my own Country). Despite sales that “reached five figures,” “Fremd im eigenen Land” did not attain the financial and commercial success that *Die Fantastischen Vier*’s more light-hearted song did.⁴⁵ As a result of the record industry’s preference for fun hip hop by white German rappers, migrant rappers mostly performed in the underground scene where they could address more political issues that were of little commercial interest. This exemplifies the larger phenomenon of depoliticizing music that originated in the African Diaspora in order to attract a larger audience.⁴⁶

Much has changed since the early days of German hip hop. Hip hop performed by white and non-white German rappers has been indigenized and has successfully conquered mainstream music – at least among young people. Tom Cheesman believes that “In Germany, the ‘homeland’ of European classical music, American rap and the hip hop subculture seem to have been received and adopted more enthusiastically than anywhere else in Europe.”⁴⁷ He suspects Germans’ draw to rap might also have to do with its use of electronic “Krautrock” – a key component to early East Coast rap.⁴⁸ Instead of viewing hip hop culture as a nuisance, today local governments actively seek to facilitate hip hop culture, especially in migrant communities. “Courses, workshops and competitions in rapping, breakdancing, graffiti and DJing are funded by local authorities, often in conjunction with record labels and other private companies, including savings banks anxious to recapture some of the publicity garnered by state banks through public funding schemes.”⁴⁹

The Turks’ Malcom X⁵⁰

Feridun Zaimoğlu, a second-generation Turkish German, has caused quite a controversy shaking up the German literary world, which has warranted him, among other labels, the title of “*l’enfant terrible* of contemporary German literature.”⁵¹ Zaimoğlu was born in Bolu, Turkey in 1964, and a year later he immigrated to West Germany with his mother where they were reunited

⁴⁴ Ibid. “...journalists intent on reading young white German rappers from middle-class backgrounds as part of a ‘new culture of poets and rhymes,’ traced the lineage of *Deutschrapp* from *Die fantastischen Vier* directly to American HipHop, again glossing over the place of migrants and minorities in the history of German HipHop.” Ibid., 58.

⁴⁵ Cheesman, “Polyglot Politics. Hip Hop in Germany,” 196. *Die Fantastischen Vier* also got the first ever number one for a hip hop song in 1991.

⁴⁶ See Gilroy, *Small Acts*.

⁴⁷ Cheesman, “Polyglot Politics. Hip Hop in Germany,” 194.

⁴⁸ Ibid.: 204.

⁴⁹ Ibid.: 198. Ayşe Caglar seconds this sentiment. Caglar, “Verordnete Rebellion: Deutsch-Türkischer Rap und Türkischer Pop in Berlin,” 45.

⁵⁰ This is the nickname a German newspaper gave Zaimoğlu in 1996. See Cheesman, “Akşam – Zaimoğlu – ‘Kanak Attak’: Turkish Lives and Letters in German,” 84.

⁵¹ Hestermann, “The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity: Hyphenated and Alternative Discourses of Identity in the Works of Zafer Şenocak and Feridun Zaimoğlu,” 351.

with his father.⁵² He grew up in Ludwigshafen, Berlin and Munich and has since then made Kiel his home.⁵³ As a young man he studied art and medicine, before directing his attention to writing which today encompasses fiction, plays, essays and film scripts. His contentious writing, which is often categorized as pop literature, especially addresses topics concerning issues of multiculturalism, racism and discrimination in Germany – in particular regarding the experiences of Turks and Muslims.

Besides his biting critique of mainstream German society, that which has brought Zaimoğlu the most controversy is his deliberate use of derogatory terms and swear words as well as his direct attacks on how the discourse on minority literatures has been conducted in Germany over the past fifty years. Jochen Rull, the fictional protagonist of *Ich bin ein Elefant, Madame*, was described as an “elephant in a china shop” because his critique of German culture left his forefathers’ cultural possessions in ruins. Likewise, Zaimoğlu has been described as the “bull in the Paul Celan shop” because he rejects the delicacy with which “questions of citizenship and belonging, migration, integration, xenophobia and racism” have been approached since the Holocaust.⁵⁴

Zaimoğlu invites everyone, not just Turks, to rebel “against structural ethnicization and social marginalization”⁵⁵ and his efforts have long branched out beyond the literary world. Around 1997/1998 he co-founded *Kanak Attack*, which Tom Cheesman describes as:

a multi-ethnic group of cultural activists, predominantly the offspring of migrant workers...This loose national network sometimes involves Zaimoğlu in its projects. Members stage infotainment club nights in cities all over Germany, using cabaret, film, video, performance, readings, discussions, and music, in order to raise awareness of issues of ‘race’ and other axes of ‘othering.’⁵⁶

Zaimoğlu’s connection to hip hop culture is reflected in his language, style, engagement with hip hop artists and themes.⁵⁷ Descriptions that label him a “rapping herold” with “street credibility” who brings the bad news straight from the ghetto seem to make Zaimoğlu out to be a hip hop artist in his own right.⁵⁸ It is precisely Zaimoğlu’s hip hop style – his bravado, rejection of binaries like high and low culture, his cutting, pasting and sampling and the many “creative” hats he wears – that upsets his critics. Zaimoğlu’s critique of identity politics is not surprising considering his own public experiences with being forced into distinct categories. In a television

⁵² Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration*, 96.

⁵³ Philipp Ostrowicz and Stefanie Ulrich, “‘Wer Augen hat, der sehe, und das Wissenswerte wird einem dann kundgetan.’ Interview mit Feridun Zaimoğlu,” in *Wider den Kulturrenzwang: Migration, Kulturalisierung und Weltliteratur*, ed. Özkan Ezli, Dorothee Kimmich, and Annette Werberger (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009), 177.

⁵⁴ Cheesman, “Akçam – Zaimoğlu – ‘Kanak Attak’: Turkish Lives and Letters in German,” 84.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 90.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 91. Deniz Göktürk notes that since the group’s founding, “Zaimoğlu had a falling out with the network in 1999, partly for using the collective name for the feature film *Kanak Attack!* (2000), based on his novel *Abschaum* (*Scum*, 1997). Göktürk, “Postcolonial Amnesia? Taboo Memories and Kanaks with Cameras.”

⁵⁷ Hip hop is also used frequently by Kanak Attak and Tom Cheesman states that Zaimoğlu also collaborated with the rap group Da Crime Posse. Cheesman, “Polyglot Politics. Hip Hop in Germany,” 203.

⁵⁸ Jamal Tuschick, “‘Bruder, du bist Meine Stimme’: Feridun Zaimoğlu, Kombattant im Kulturkampf,” in *Aufgerissen: zur Literatur der 90er*, ed. Thomas Kraft (München; Zürich: Piper, 2000), 107.

debate in 1998 featuring Zaimoğlu and several German politicians and intellectuals, Heidi Simonis, who was then the Minister President of the German state Schleswig-Holstein (and a member of the Social Democratic Party), chastised Zaimoğlu for denying his Turkish heritage. In their conversation, Zaimoğlu attempts to validate his critique of German culture by stressing that although he was born in Turkey, he grew up in Germany and is therefore quite familiar with German culture. Simonis interrupts Zaimoğlu, however, saying “You have a heritage [Erbe]. Just as I drag a different heritage around with me, you're dragging the Turkish one around with you. I'm sorry, but that's how it is.”⁵⁹ Tom Cheesman interprets Simonis's response as perpetuating the:

notion of objectified heritage as a burdensome prosthetic attachment signifying a national body, indissolubly attached to the individual body, [and this notion] indicates why so many Germans cannot conceive of dual citizenship, or, indeed, conceive of the adoption of a different citizenship as anything but a masquerade. No body can possibly schlep two such nation-bodies around with it. Nor is it possible to sever oneself from a national heritage once acquired.⁶⁰

It is precisely this kind of essentialization that Zaimoğlu attacks in *Kanak Sprak* and its “sister text” *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft* which features monologues of Turkish women.

Loathing and Longing for the Middle (Class)

If we recall, in *Passing Strange* one of the turning points in Youth's life is when Mr. Franklin asserts that they are both “just two brothers...passing ...Like your high yellow grandma back in the day, only we're passing for black folks. Good, lawn trimmin', tax payin', morally upstanding, narrow-minded Christian black folk!” (PS 25). Mr. Franklin's statement refers to the Gramscian notion that once a minority group is made complacent by having received a degree of recognition from the hegemony, e.g. civil rights, the group is subsumed into the hegemonic culture. According to this model, a minority community does its best to integrate and not attract negative attention. Thus, although adolescent rebellion might have been an accepted stage of development in Youth's environment of 1970s Los Angeles, as a Black teenager he is barred from this experience and his rebellious tendencies are condemned as “white” by his mother and the Black middle-class community. Youth's mother and other matriarchs and patriarchs of the Black middle-class are too fearful that the hard-won for accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement will be lost if the young people do not conform and serve as good examples for “the race.”

As I mentioned in the last chapter, Mark Anthony Neal warns that the African American community's preference for a solely “‘positive’ historical read of the black experience” will run

⁵⁹ Cheesman, “Akçam – Zaimoğlu – ‘Kanak Attak’: Turkish Lives and Letters in German,” 96.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Zaimoğlu's insistence in this conversation that he is capable of speaking about German culture and from the perspective of a German is an example of how ethnic minorities writing in Germany today have taken a “stance against German ethnic homogeneity and ... [how they] challenge...nineteenth-century notions of literature as a national institution.” Gerstenberger, “Writing by Ethnic Minorities in the Age of Globalisation,” 210.

the risk of denying “a full exploration of the humanity of black folks.”⁶¹ As Neal argues, in post-Soul Black America there is a belief “among some that the real political and social change would occur when blacks gained an economic foothold.”⁶² Thus, Youth’s mother has no patience for his soul-searching and experimentation with music if these things cannot help him succeed in the places that count in middle-class America: education and the workplace.

Conforming to conservative middle-class values is exactly what German politicians expect of immigrants. According to Gökce Yurdakul, “in theoretical discussions, the integration of immigrants is frequently measured by their economic and social participation in mainstream society...in the most successful cases of integration, the status of the immigrant communities corresponds with the middle-class and upper-class of the mainstream.”⁶³ Often, young migrants and others perceived as strange interpret this integration into the middle-class as corresponding to good behavior. This is why, in the song “Fremd im eigenen Land,” an Afro-German member of Advanced Chemistry is astonished that he gets a lot of trouble from authorities, even though he drives according to the speed limit and does not get drunk.⁶⁴ He concludes that the cause of his problems must be his dark skin and kinky hair which make others not accept his belonging to the German community.

Ironically, the “good” behavior this rapper practices is the opposite of stereotypes one expects of Germans. The image of the German who speeds down the Autobahn and drinks a lot of beer is much more prevalent. Thus, is this Afro-German viewed as strange only because of his appearance or also because of his “good” behavior? And if bad habits like speeding and getting drunk are universally accepted as German, why do “foreigners” get chastised for their bad behavior? Furthermore, there are many Germans whose appearance conforms to the “norm,” but their behavior does not. Does that mean they are not German? When determining belonging, citizenship and integration, does appearance outweigh behavior? Advanced Chemistry’s lyrics reveal how arbitrary a notion such as Germanness is. One of Zaimoğlu’s narrators in *Kanak Sprak*, a mechanic’s apprentice named Hakan, also points out how mainstream society’s insistence that as a Turkish German, he be on his best behavior, is an attempt to enslave him: “So, who wants to try and tell me you’re a temporary-guest here, so you shouldn’t behave like you’re a free man, otherwise the German’ll get wind of it, and can break your neck. I am a free man, and only a slave before God the father...”⁶⁵

Aside from reaching the middle-class, another proposed “strategy of integration” is naturalization. According to statistics, “German citizens of Turkish heritage perform better in the school system than Turks who do not have a German passport...Although the exact numbers are not known, it can be assumed that almost a quarter of the Turkish population in Germany, about

⁶¹ Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*, 9.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶³ “In theoretischen Diskussionen wird die Integration von Immigranten häufig anhand der wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Partizipation in der Mehrheitsgesellschaft gemessen...In den erfolgreichsten Fällen von Integration entspricht der Status von Immigrantengemeinschaften dem der Mittelklasse und der Oberschicht der Mehrheitsgesellschaft.” Yurdakul, “Juden und Türken in Deutschland: Integration von Immigranten, Politische Repräsentation und Minderheitenrechte,” 133-4.

⁶⁴ “ärger hab' ich zu Hauf /obwohl ich langsam Auto fahre und niemals sauf.” Lyrics to “Fremd im eigenen Land” by Advanced Chemistry. <http://www.lyricstime.com/advanced-chemistry-fremd-im-eigenen-land-lyrics.html>. Accessed 25 February 2011.

⁶⁵ “Also, wer will mir hier was einreden von wegen du bist hier'n fuer-ne-weile-gast, also fuehr dich man hier nicht wie'n freier auf, sonst kriegt der alemanne wind von, und kann dir den kragen knacken. Ich bin'n freier, und knecht nur vor gott dem herm...” Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 86.

500,000 people, have German citizenship.”⁶⁶ Yurdakul goes on to argue that the same hindrances to integration for *Ostjuden* (Eastern Jews) living in Germany in the 19th century are now hindering Turkish Germans. She believes these factors are religion, a difference in appearance (e.g. wearing headscarves), settlement in “ghettos” and most importantly, the failure to move up into the middle class.⁶⁷ Yet another similarity Yurdakul finds between *Ostjuden* and Turkish Germans is that “just as the German Jews looked down on *Ostjuden*, secular members of the Turkish middle-class look down on guest workers.”⁶⁸ And it is the expectations of these secular, middle-class Turks, along with the expectations of the German majority, against which Zaimoğlu rebels. In this way, Zaimoğlu is similar to Ferguson and Youth who both refused to let the Black middle-class box them into an “acceptable” identity with which mainstream America is comfortable.

The issue of minorities who feel obligated to conform to middle-class values is also important regarding the history of hip hop. Hip hop emerged at a time when disco dominated the American airwaves. As I mentioned in the last chapter, Alice Echols describes disco as characterized by commercial and catchy dance beats and self-referential lyrics which both have a “colorless,” universal appeal. For the Black middle-class who wished to enjoy the accomplishments of integration and move away from the raw music rooted in the working-class community, crossover music like disco was very appealing. Music critic Nelson George suggests that during the 1970s, in the minds of the record industry’s uniformly white employees, the more political genre R&B became interchangeable with the poppier, non-political disco genre. George suggests that record companies seeking to make the most profit pushed for “crossover artists” who could appeal to both Blacks and whites. “Calculated crossover, the obsession with disco, and the increasing corporate control of American music spoke to its insularity and narrowmindedness.”⁶⁹

According to George, Black and Latino youth felt increasingly alienated from the music dominating the mainstream i.e. disco and hip hop’s development came out of their feeling of alienation and experience of being ignored by mainstream music companies. However, Echols complicates Nelson’s reading of disco. She points out that disco has falsely been characterized as music of the white, middle- and upper-class. Rather, Echols stresses disco music’s importance for the working-class, racial minorities, women and gays. Echols states, “If going to the disco was a way that working-class blacks and Latins could reclaim the body as an ‘instrument of pleasure rather than an instrument of labor,’ then for gays it was a way to assert an identity often hidden during the day.”⁷⁰ According to Echols, the backlash against disco from white *and* Black men had more to do with homophobia and the resistance to disco’s commercial, seemingly plastic and hedonist exterior, as well as disco’s emphasis on strong female voices and female

⁶⁶ “Tatsächlich legen Statistiken nahe, dass deutsche Staatsbürger türkischer Herkunft im Bildungssystem besser abschneiden als Türken ohne deutschen Pass (Alber 2008)...Obwohl die genauen Zahlen nicht bekannt sind,18 kann davon ausgegangen werden, dass fast ein Viertel der türkischen Bevölkerung in Deutschland, etwa 500.000 Personen also, die deutsche Staatsbürgerschaft besitzt.” Yurdakul, “Juden und Türken in Deutschland: Integration von Immigranten, Politische Repräsentation und Minderheitenrechte,” 139-40.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 141.

⁶⁸ “...gerade so wie deutsche Juden auf die Ostjuden herab blickten, schauen säkulare Mitglieder der türkischen Mittelschicht auf Gastarbeiter herab.” Ibid.

⁶⁹ Nelson George, *Hip Hop America* (New York: Penguin, 1998), 9.

⁷⁰ Echols, *Shaky Ground*, 181.

pleasure. “What put disco beyond the pale for many rockers and some blacks – its promotion of upward mobility and a softer masculinity, the prominence of women, and the lack of racial otherness – reassured white Middle Americans.”⁷¹

Because of this association between disco and white Middle America, hip hop critics tend to view hip hop as part of a backlash against middle-class America, and Black America’s complacency with the middle-class. Although hip hop, in Echols words “grew up alongside disco,” and borrowed several components from disco like the seamless sounding music of DJs and the massive beat, Nelson still reads hip hop as a rejection of disco and an attempt to reintroduce “real” or “street” life and reassert a more conventional, patriarchal Black masculinity.⁷² In that case, perhaps the young men in *Kanak Sprak* embrace hip hop for similar reasons: to counter middle-class Germans *and* Turks and counter a softer, upwardly-mobile masculinity.

Like the mute Turk of guest worker literature, one speaker in *Kanak Sprak*, Ali, a rapper from *da crime posse*, also describes African Americans as having lacked a voice. He says “in yankee land, reading and writing was a luxury for most of those in the ghettos” until “Grandmaster flash took the first step towards politics, towards content, with ‘the message,’ that was the beneficial breakthrough, absolute. With public enemy, the true epoch of culture glimmered. i call it culture, because the information went to the people directly via vocal testimony.”⁷³ Breaking the silence of the oppressed, hip hop became the “direkte draht zum schwarzen mann” (direct wire to the black man).⁷⁴ Hip hop’s capacity to share counter-hegemonic ideas is why rapper Chuck D once called it “black folks’ CNN.”⁷⁵

During the Civil Rights movement and the Afrocentrism of the 1960s and 1970s, Blacks attempted to free themselves from the binds of an essential identity and place the reality of their lives front and center. In the introduction to *Kanak Sprak*, Zaimoğlu sees the same potential in *Kanaken*, “In correspondence with the Black consciousness movement in the USA, individual Kanak subidentities will become increasingly aware of overlapping contexts and contents. The demystification has been introduced; the path to a new realism has been laid.”⁷⁶ One of Zaimoğlu’s narrators, 24 year-old rapper Abdurrahman, draws a distinction between hip hop and pop. He claims pop “creates a kind of equality where everyone is the same and no one needs any fine-tuning, just a thousand dreams of knights, kissing the old virgin awake.”⁷⁷ As “die große hure babylon” (the big whore Babylon), pop promises only fantasy while hip hop can bring real change.

⁷¹ Echols, *Shaky Ground*, 188.

⁷² Echols, *Shaky Ground*, 187-8.

⁷³ “Grandmaster flash tat den ersten schritt zur politik, zum inhalt, mit ‘the message,’ das war der segensreiche durchbruch, absolutes kultanliegen. Mit public enemy glomm die wahre kulturepoche auf, kultur deshalb, weil die information an das volk über die mundaussage ging, der direkte draht zum schwarzen mann... im yankeeland [ist] lesen und schreiben schon’n luxus für die moisten in den ghettos...” Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 27.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Cheesman, “Polyglot Politics. Hip Hop in Germany,” 17.

⁷⁶ “Analog zur Black-consciousness-Bewegung in den USA werden sich die einzelnen Kanak-Subidentitäten zunehmend übergreifender Zusammenhänge und Inhalte bewußt. Die Entmystifizierung ist eingeleitet, der Weg zu einem Neuen Realismus gelegt.” Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 17. A shortened version of Tom Cheesman’s translation of this introduction can be found in Göktürk, Gramling, and Kaes, eds., *Germany in Transit : Nation and Migration, 1955-2005*

⁷⁷ “Es schafft ne egalität, wo jeder gleich is und keinen feinschliff braucht, nur tausend träume von rittern, die olle jungfrauen wachküssen...” Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 19.

An essay that is an excellent example of how Zaimoğlu uses hip hop aesthetics and culture to attack assimilated middle-class Turks, whom he often calls *Assimil-Kümmel* (assimilated cumin seeds), is the essay “Gastarbeiterliteratur: Ali macht Männchen” (Guest worker literature: Ali acts like a Human, 1998). While this essay might primarily target Turkish German authors, as is clear from the title, Zaimoğlu still makes several statements that can be understood as a general critique of the conformity demanded from migrants in Germany. First of all, in the title, the name Ali stands in for all Turks. Here, Zaimoğlu references the German stereotype that “all Turks are named Ali,” which was actually the original title for Fassbinder’s *Angst essen Seele auf*.⁷⁸ Zaimoğlu’s reference to this stereotype highlights one of several arguments he makes in the essay: Turks have no individual identity for Germans. Yet another argument, Zaimoğlu makes is that in Germany, assimilation does not make Turks equals, rather assimilation means having Turks conform to a certain image of the Other that Germans find acceptable.

Zaimoğlu’s criticism of assimilation recalls Homi Bhabha’s essay on mimicry to which I referred in the introduction. As the dominant group, Germans encourage Turks to mimic their ways, but the assumption prevails that the two groups can never be the same. Although Bhabha suggests a solution exists in the Other’s mimicry of those in power, Zaimoğlu does not see this as possible. “The assimilated always wants to become, but inevitably he is only a representation of what he will never become.”⁷⁹

The phrase “Männchen machen” in the title of the essay is actually a dog trick: the equivalent to teaching a dog how to stand up on its hind legs and therefore mimic a human. Thus, Zaimoğlu’s use of this dog trick in combination with his discussion of assimilated Turks suggests that in Germans’ eyes, Turks are not human beings and that the “tricks” one must learn in order to be accepted by the German hegemony are degrading.⁸⁰ Like Mark Anthony Neal’s critique of the Black middle-class, Zaimoğlu suggests that if the Turkish middle-class limits the representation of Turks and Turkish Germans to only “positive” examples or examples that do not make Germans uncomfortable, this runs the risk of denying Turks and Turkish Germans full exploration of their humanity. Just like Germans have faults, the same is true for Turks and holding Turks to a specific standard separate from the majority is discriminating.⁸¹ Furthermore, the question of who determines how to define “positive” examples of integration is inevitably a question of power dynamics. As Frauke Matthes points out, the *Kanaken* see themselves as:

united in the struggle against cultural hegemony which gradually transforms a negative self-perception into a positive one. Stuart Hall points out that “it is always about shifting

⁷⁸ In the film, the protagonist is really named El Hedi ben Salem M'Barek Mohammed Mustapha, but people refer to him simply as Ali.

⁷⁹ “der assimilant will immer werden, und ist doch nur die darstellung dessen, was er nie sein wird.” Feridun Zaimoğlu, “Ali macht Männchen,” in *Globalkolorit: Multikulturalismus und Populärkultur* (Andra/Wördern: Hannibal, 1998), 90.

⁸⁰ By describing assimilation in these terms, Zaimoğlu’s title recalls earlier such comparisons between the assimilation of a foreigner and the act of domesticating or changing an animal; for example Güney Dal’s *Der enthaarte Affe* (The de-haired Ape) and Franz Kafka’s “Der Bericht an eine Akademie” (A Report to an Academy).

⁸¹ For example popular opinion believes that foreigners who are convicted of committing a crime should be deported. In the famous case of Muhlis A., known in the German press as Mehmet, the 14 year-old Turk was deported to Turkey without his parents on November 14, 1998. Although Mehmet had been born and raised in Germany, he was not a German citizen and therefore the foreign national’s office could choose not to renew his residence permit because of his juvenile record. http://www.migration-info.de/mub_artikel.php?Id=990105. Accessed 4 March 2011.

the balance of power in the relations of culture; it is always about changing the dispositions and the configurations of cultural power, not getting out of it" (468)...The *Kanaken* therefore criticize homogenizing tendencies amongst both the mainstream and any subculture.⁸²

In the essay on guest worker literature, besides *Assimil-Kümmel* and "Ali," another degrading word Zaimoğlu uses to refer to Turks, or perhaps migrants in general, is "bimbo," which in Germany is actually a derogatory word for a Black person. Here, Zaimoğlu appears to open up his criticism to include the treatment of all dark-skinned people in Germany. He may also be building on the comparison between the treatment of Blacks in America and Turks in Germany. Zaimoğlu uses the term "bimbo" throughout the essay and this would be offensive to most, especially the intellectuals and members of the literary elite he is inevitably attacking. His purposeful repetition of this word and the overall style of his text mimic something one would expect in a battle rap. While one might be familiar with aesthetic and ideological arguments between intellectuals and artists that are waged in a debate or in the press, one does not expect such a "battle" to include a threat like:

whoever sets their heart on feuilleton sentiment and whomever the lordly bourgeois rags commend in their foreign face with a German vaginal flatus, whether you're a flunky in the worst case scenario or an awkward goat herder in the less worst case scenario, you've earned yourself nothing more than to be done for. you're finished, motherfuckers!⁸³

The last line, which could either be a threat concerning his opponent's career or a threat of physical harm, seems like it is ripped right out of a battle-rap lyric. It is its violent nature and ambivalence which makes such language so threatening to the literary status quo. By using this language, Zaimoğlu represents the Turkish Germans on the margins who are more likely to talk about their experience in these terms. It is more probable that Turkish German youth will turn to the radio station for their news rather than check the Feuilleton. By aligning himself with *Kanaken*, Zaimoğlu effectively tells the German and the Turkish middle-class that the voices from the margins are valuable and cannot be ignored.

Appropriately, Zaimoğlu precedes this essay with the statement "diese schrift ist eine kampfhandlung" (This text is an act of combat). Thus, Zaimoğlu consciously appropriates hip hop style and its disregard for convention (like writing in all lowercase letters) in order to stress the urgency and earnest nature of his argument. His directness and his description of his words as an act of violence are meant to counter the Turkish German authors he criticizes, who he believes "don't contribute shit, theoretically or practically, to the social struggles of the present

⁸² Matthes, "'Was ist deutsch, Bestimmen Wir': Definitions of (Turkish-) Germanness in Feridun Zaimoğlu's *Kanak Sprach* and *Koppstoff*," 22.

⁸³ "wer sich aufs feuilleton-sentiment kapriziert und von den bourgeois staatsragender hochherrschaftspostillen mit einem toitschen flatus in die fremdenfresse bedacht wird, hat es als lakai im schlimmsten und täppischer ziegentreiber im weniger schlimmen falle nicht anders verdient als erledigt zu werden. ihr seid erledigt, motherfuckers! Feridun Zaimoğlu, "Ali macht Männchen," 97.

and the near future.”⁸⁴ Perhaps he thinks of his writing as a form of Sartrean *littérature engagée* with hip hop flair.

It is an understatement to say that Zaimoğlu’s rebellious and confrontational hip hop style has upset some of the German elite. In the television debate I mentioned above, Heidi Simonis not only considers Zaimoğlu a traitor to Turkish culture, she also takes offense with his language. Her reaction to Zaimoğlu’s “excitable speech” recalls the introduction to *Kanak Sprak*, where he warns of those Germans who will accuse him of “playing into the hands of the xenophobes.”⁸⁵ Simonis argues that if she were to encounter some of Zaimoğlu’s narrators on the street using such derogatory language, she would intervene and call them “arseholes.” Tom Cheesman explains Simonis’s unusual remark as the following:

Simonis is troubled that Zaimoglu's work may legitimize disrespectful and abusive speech... Her use of ‘you arseholes’ is a bizarre instance of a citation of obscene language, as spoken by oneself, in objection to others’ use of obscene language. It illustrates neatly the absence of any fixable difference between the dominant, middle-class, respectable culture [Leitkultur] on behalf of which she speaks, and its ‘others’: scratch the surface of the respectable, controlled self and the injurious, uninhibited ‘other’ becomes manifest.⁸⁶

Zaimoğlu’s use of derogatory speech like “bimbo” or “*Kanak*” is not just an attempt to shock, but both a deliberate appropriation of youth speech and hip hop culture and an effort to challenge comfortable binaries like respectable culture/pop, standard German/*Kanak Sprak* and racist/liberal.⁸⁷ Similar to bell hooks’ arguments that situate gangsta rap violence and misogyny in the middle of mainstream America, Zaimoğlu demonstrates that beneath Germany’s well-polished surface, everything corresponds to gangsta culture.⁸⁸ For example, Germans’ might accuse Muslims of oppressing women, but one also finds sexist and patriarchal tendencies in mainstream German culture.

Sounds of Dissonance

Kanak Sprak presents what Zaimoğlu refers to as protocols of Turkish men from Hamburg’s more dangerous milieu.⁸⁹ In the book’s introduction, Zaimoğlu fashions himself as a pseudo-ethnographer, brave enough to penetrate the dark, secret lives of Turks; lives about

⁸⁴ “menschen, die theoretisch und praktisch und ästhetisch zu den sozialen kämpfen der gegenwart und der nahen zukunft einen scheißdreck beitragen.” Ibid.

⁸⁵ “...arbeitete den Fremdenhassern in die Hände.” Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 17.

⁸⁶ Cheesman, “Akçam – Zaimoğlu – ‘Kanak Attak’: Turkish Lives and Letters in German,” 95.

⁸⁷ With this last binary I refer to the fact that Simonis indirectly calls Zaimoğlu a racist because he uses the term “*Kanak*” and in the same breath she expresses xenophobic discomfort with having to see Turkish women wear headscarves. Cheesman describes this as “the culturalist position on German xenophobia and racism: understanding for violent perpetrators ‘provoked’ by the sight of the Other.” Ibid.

⁸⁸ See chapter eleven in hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*.

⁸⁹ Gary Schmidt gives an excellent overview of the different ways previous scholars have interpreted *Kanak Sprak* with emphasis on Zaimoğlu’s “subversive performance of an ethnic identity.” Gary Schmidt, “Feridun Zaimoglu's Performance of Gender and Authorship,” in *German Literature in a New Century: Trends, Traditions, Transitions, Transformations*, ed. Katharina Gerstenberger and Patricia Herminghouse (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 197.

which Germans fetishize and wonder, but have no access to. He claims to have worked hard to gain the men's trust in order to have such unprecedented access. Despite Zaimoğlu's attempts to shroud the text in authenticity, most scholars would agree that these are constructed texts, some of which might be based on original interviews. Each protocol is preceded by the name, age and profession of the narrator. Zaimoğlu's play with notions of authenticity defiantly speaks back to the paternal literature of victimhood I mentioned earlier, especially Walraff's exposé *Ganz Unten*. I agree with scholars who read *Kanak Sprak* "as consistently bespeaking a creative product made in Germany by Zaimoğlu."⁹⁰ On the surface, the title *Kanak Sprak* refers to the ethnolect spoken by many second- and third-generation Turkish Germans.⁹¹ However, rather than a real representation of the language or culture of Turks in Germany:

Zaimoğlu's strategy involves the invention of a pseudo-ethnicity, Kanak, with a stylized language, 'Kanak Sprak,' which disrupts the state-sanctioned dialogue between 'Germans' and 'Turks.'... This 'Kanak Sprak' is a customized German, featuring rap rhythms and verbal riffs, using international English phrases, and deploying a vast vocabulary of German dialect and slang terms, with frequent fresh-minted compounds.⁹²

According to Zaimoğlu, the mysterious underground scenes and hidden milieus his narrators inhabit are important spaces for Turkish *masculinity* in particular. He explains that there are only male voices represented, because "in the scenes of Kanak ghettos the man is primarily the one to participate in public life."⁹³ His focus on a particularly strong, rebellious and sexual Turkish masculinity at the margins of both German and Turkish society is an attempt to counter the prevailing literature of Turkish migration that he degradingly refers to as "whiny, kiss-ass and state-supported 'Gastarbeiterliteratur.'"⁹⁴ In Adelson's words, the men in *Kanak Sprak* are "at agitated odds with middle-class values and ideals (German and Turkish),"⁹⁵ just like Ferguson and Youth were at odds with middle-class values and ideals (American and African American).

In the introduction, in the style of a true ethnographer, Zaimoğlu not only describes his subjects and the dark spaces they inhabit, but he explains why he chose *Kanaken* in particular for this project. Zaimoğlu claims that in Germany, "the Kanake only exists as a self-conscious individual in his passport photo."⁹⁶ This remark recalls the incident in *Passing Strange*, when Youth is asked for his passport – his identity – at Checkpoint Charlie. When entering Germany, each individual Turk must have documentation and when he presents a passport to border guards, it will not only declare his nationality, but provide details like a name, birth date, birthplace, gender and the most personal of all – a photo with an indexical tie to the individual.

⁹⁰ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration*, 97.

⁹¹ Hestermann, "The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity: Hyphenated and Alternative Discourses of Identity in the Works of Zafer Şenocak and Feridun Zaimoğlu," 360-1.

⁹² Cheesman, "Akçam – Zaimoğlu – 'Kanak Attak': Turkish Lives and Letters in German," 83.

⁹³ "Am öffentlichen Leben in den Szenen der Kanaken-Ghettos nimmt hauptsächlich der Mann teil..." Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 15.

⁹⁴ "Eine weinerliche, sich anbietende und öffentlich geförderte 'Gastarbeiterliteratur'" Ibid., 11.

⁹⁵ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration*, 96.

⁹⁶ "Als selbstbewußtes Individuum aber existiert der Kanake auch nur auf dem Paßfoto." Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 11.

Once within Germany; however, all Turks are lumped into a faceless, anonymous mass characterized solely by their nationality.

In Germany, one option for Turkish men is to assimilate, which Zaimoğlu describes as “wander[ing] into the closed department, a sick exotic specimen: [giving oneself to the] impotence of voluntary self-mutilation, depression and schizophrenia.”⁹⁷ The self-mutilation he refers to is castration; for like the “castrated” models of integration played by Sidney Poitier, the Turk must deny his sexuality and his strength, become impotent, in order to be accepted as a (non-threatening) part of the community. Those men who decide not to assimilate and remain on the outside are collected into the “Märchen von der Multikulturalität” (fairy tale of multiculturalism). Akin to Ferguson’s comparison between emperor penguins and Black men in Berlin, Zaimoğlu views Germany’s display of multiculturalism as a zoo. “In this case, the Kanake is good for being a model member in the big zoo of ethnicities. He can allow himself to be observed and gawked at.”⁹⁸

Masculinity and Gangsta Culture

From the very beginning of *Kanak Sprak*, Zaimoğlu suggests a connection between the African American experience and that of Turkish Germans. His claim that “one assigns conventions and rites to the Kanakes like a Black Peter”⁹⁹ suggests that like with Blacks, Germans use Turks as a site of projection. Thus, in line with Richard Dyer’s remarks in *White*, because Germans consider the Turk the Other, they feel entitled to construct the Turk’s identity and more often than not assign him negative traits. By associating the Turk with a negative figure like the Black Peter, the Turk becomes the boogey man upon whom Germans can displace their own negative traits. The Turk is then the keeper of everything that Germans fear or dislike.

Akay, a 29-year-old flea market vendor, remarks on how embodying Black popular culture, or what he calls “nigger sein” (being a nigger), is about more than just a skin color. Akay’s statement recalls Stuart Hall’s observations on how who is or is not considered Black depends on historical and local context.¹⁰⁰ Akay describes being Black as a social situation. He states: “we’re all niggers here. we have our ghetto...our sweat is nigger, our life is nigger, the gold chains are nigger, our teeth and our mugs and our style is so goddamned nigger that we scratch at our skin like crazy and only then realize that being a nigger is not just about the ol’ pitchblack skin. being a nigger is about the whole experience of being different and living differently.”¹⁰¹ His description of how the exaggerated style of *Kanaken*, like their gold chains, makes them “niggers” relates to Deborah A. Thomas’s description of the “radical

⁹⁷ “Manch einer wandert als krankes Exotikum in die geschlossene Abteilung: Impotenz als freiwillige Selbstverstümmelung, Depressionen, Schizophrenie.” Ibid.

⁹⁸ “Der Kanake taugt in diesem Falle als schilderndes Mitglied im großen Zoo der Ethnien, darf teilnehmend beobachtet und bestaunt werden.” Ibid.

⁹⁹ In German, the phrase “Jemandem den schwarzen Peter zuschieben” (to give someone the black Peter) means to assign them the guilt. “Den Kanaken schiebt man Sitten und Riten zu wie einen Schwarzen Peter.” Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁰ See Hall, “New Ethnicities.”

¹⁰¹ “wir sind hier allesamt nigger, wir haben unser ghetto...unser schweiß ist nigger, unser leben ist nigger, die goldketten sind nigger, unsere zinken und unsere fressen und unser eigner stil ist so verdammt nigger, daß wir wie blöde an unsrer haut kratzen, und dabei kapiieren wir, daß zum nigger nicht die olle pechhaut gehört, aber zum nigger gehört ne ganze menge anderssein und andres leben.” Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 75.

consumerism”¹⁰² that is a trait of contemporary Black culture; hooks would subsume this under gangsta culture. When the *Kanak* returns to his “shitty cattle village and struts around like the king of the province, every one believes [him] down there”¹⁰³ and this is what Akay calls the “niggernummer” (nigger number). I will return to minorities’ tendency to feign power and wealth through a display of consumer goods when I discuss Zaimoğlu’s critique of subculture below.

The common use of words like “motherfucker” and “nigger” and the battle rap style used by Zaimoğlu and his narrators invoke a performance of masculinity with which we are most familiar in hip hop. Zaimoğlu describes his narrators’ monologues as being related to the “Free-Style Sermon i[n] Rap.”¹⁰⁴ The narrators’ notions of masculinity conform to the stereotypes of Turkish patriarchy which I discussed earlier. Nevertheless, Zaimoğlu’s narrators decidedly differentiate themselves from their father’s and grandfather’s generations. Among second- and third-generation Turkish Germans, one cannot assume these men will conform to the same model of masculinity as their fathers. Nor can one assume that they will necessarily represent a more “westernized” stance in opposition to their “Islamic” fathers. Rather, the masculinity performed by some second- and third-generation Turkish Germans can take on a form that is different from both the masculinity of their father’s generation and different from hegemonic German masculinity:

While the children’s sometimes fluent German and ease with Western consumer culture may destabilize and threaten the fathers’ patriarchal identity, the children themselves also may invoke Islamic values or practices, whether as a deliberate provocation, as a cultivation of ethnic pride against German discrimination, or as a critique of their fathers’ double standards and even, in their eyes, their fathers’ ethnic betrayal... Overall, therefore, the younger generation of Turks in Germany express a complex spectrum of different combinations of Western attitudes and values, as well as Turkish ones, both acquired in the family and adopted independently or even in provocation of the family. Turkish rap, for example, blends these elements with Western pop, hip-hop, and African-American street slang.¹⁰⁵

Just as McGowan suggests, rather than focusing on religion, several of Zaimoğlu’s *Kanaksters* strongly orient themselves towards hip hop culture and define their masculinity accordingly – though there is one devout Muslim, 22 year-old Yücel. Therefore, in order to better understand the forms of masculinity the *Kanaken* in Zaimoğlu’s text perform, I believe it is first necessary to

¹⁰² According to Thomas’s investigation of modern-day Jamaican culture, “radical consumerism” describes how some members of minority groups use consumption as a “creative and potentially liberatory process” (Thomas 2002: 43). “However, taking ‘radical consumerism’ seriously may reveal that the lower-class black Jamaican man driving a ‘Bimma’ has more on his mind than individualist conspicuous consumption. Instead, he is refashioning selfhood and reshaping stereotypical assumptions about racial possibilities through—rather than outside—capitalism.” Deborah A. Thomas, “‘Modern Blackness’: What We are and What We Hope to Be,” *Small Axe* 6, no. 2 (2002): 44-5.

¹⁰³ “...in seinem verschissenen kuhdorf den ganz großen provinzmacker zu mimen, und das nimmt dir ja jeder ab da unten... Das ist die niggernummer.” Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 26.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁵ McGowan, “Multiple Masculinities in Turkish-German Men’s Writing,” 294.

think about how masculinity is presented in contemporary African American, or particularly, hip hop culture.

Here we actually pick up where we left off in Chapter Three, where we witnessed the deviating paths of two Black men in revolt: Sweetback and Whity. As I mentioned in that chapter, as opposed to Whity who dies in the desert, Van Peebles' protagonist Sweetback escapes and carries his rebellion forward. I believe the triumph of individualism in *Sweet Sweetback* versus its failure in *Whity* may point to the forthcoming divergence between the Black political movements in the United States and Germany. In Germany, the 1980s were the pinnacle for Afro-Germans and guest workers' cooperation and community building. Alliances were being formed between dark-skinned Germans, anti-racists, feminists, migrants and asylum seekers – Germans and non-Germans. In the United States; however, the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power and Afrocentrism gave way to Black commercial culture, individualism and “romanticized ghetto entrepreneurs.”¹⁰⁶ As bell hooks describes it, African Americans who during the 1960s “turn[ed] away from capitalism in disgust,” now proceeded to “turn toward it, eager to participate in a corrupt economy, willing to stand among those who exploit rather than with the exploited.”¹⁰⁷ hooks attributes this change to those “newly educated in the white school [universities]” and to the aftermath of integration: “A shift in class values occurs in black life when integration comes and with it the idea that money is the primary marker of individual success, not how one acquires money.”¹⁰⁸

The fathers of African American baby boomers had still believed that attaining a respectable job would be their path to patriarchal masculinity. Due to meager opportunities for education and high unemployment rates among Black men, however, this was an impossible or at least extremely difficult goal to reach for most.¹⁰⁹ “As long as the stakes were respectable jobs, work that would lead into the mainstream, black men did not stand a chance at beating the odds. When money became the goal, black men had a chance.”¹¹⁰ When the African American man's path to patriarchal masculinity shifted from a focus on work to money, the “gangsta lifestyle” was embraced. The reason even one-time revolutionaries were not immune to the attraction of the gangsta lifestyle was their failure to break with patriarchal masculinity; “patriarchal manhood was the theory and gangsta culture was its ultimate practice.”¹¹¹ As long as Black men viewed patriarchy as the only way toward meaningful manhood, they would be caught up in a capitalist, individualist system, even if they “dropped out” of the standard workforce by pursuing money in sport, music or “hustling.” And in a “system that value[s] the acquisition of money as the standard of patriarchal male value” Black men often resorted to “taking money from wives and

¹⁰⁶ Quinn, “‘Tryin’ to Get Over’: *Super Fly*, Black Politics, and Post-Civil Rights Film Enterprise,” 104.

¹⁰⁷ hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, 18.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Finzsch, “‘Gay Punk, White Lesbian, Black Bitch’ Zur Konstruktion des schwarz Männlichen Revolutionärs durch die Black Panther Party - 1966 bis 1982,” 215.

¹¹⁰ hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, 18.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 25. One might also add that there has been proof since 1975 that the FBI's COINTELPRO made attempts to infiltrate the Black Panthers and lead them into the criminal underground. See Finzsch, “‘Gay Punk, White Lesbian, Black Bitch’ Zur Konstruktion des schwarz Männlichen Revolutionärs durch die Black Panther Party - 1966 bis 1982,” 210.

girlfriends, or [to making money] by pimping women,”¹¹² which is an example of how violence and oppression are used against women to uphold patriarchal rule.

Just like the Black youth of post-Soul America, today’s second- and third-generation Turkish Germans find that the jobs of their parents and grandparents are no longer available.¹¹³ Likewise, one finds that the experiences and opinions of the narrators in *Kanak Sprak* correspond to the history of post-Soul Black masculinity and to the ideas of masculinity propagated in hip hop. According to Ali, the rapper from *da crime posse*, there are only two forms of masculinity available to Turkish men in Germany: the “lovely little ali” or the “dashing desperado...a real man’s man.”¹¹⁴ Thus, like African American men who for decades were portrayed either as the Uncle Tom or the Anti-Tom, Turkish men in Germany are faced with similarly confining masculinities.¹¹⁵ And just like African American men of post-Soul America, Turkish German males of the second- and third-generations opt to embrace “the Beast” and express their masculinity through gangsta culture.

29 year-old poet Memet describes the situation as the following:

That’s what goes on in a lot of Turkish families; people call it the generational conflict. It’s more than that. It’s metamorphosis. The old ones are being crushed and the young ones commit violence against themselves, on the one hand, so that they can be like the natives, on the other hand, so that they can preserve themselves in this madhouse.¹¹⁶

The reason why Memet does not label this a generational conflict is, this is not solely a back and forth power struggle between two sides: young and old. There may be a struggle between the elders and the sons within the Turkish family, but an outside force exercises power upon them as well – and that force comes from mainstream German society. The second- and third-generation *Kanaken* despise their fathers’ weakness in the face of German violence, but they also suffer a similar fate and act out by committing violence against themselves and others.

Memet believes that the violence Turkish German males direct inwards and outwards is a direct result of how they have been treated in Germany. The Turkish German is “forced, therefore he wants to force others down. It affects our women especially bad.”¹¹⁷ This “force” carried out on Turkish Germans does not just refer to Althusserian ideological state and repressive apparatuses, such as the schools, police and immigration officials that police their

¹¹² hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, 21.

¹¹³ “Nach 1989 wurden die in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren als Arbeiter nach Deutschland gekommenen Immigranten in zunehmendem Maße abhängig von Sozialleistungen” (After 1989, many of the immigrants who had come to Germany as workers in the 1960s and 1970s became dependent on social welfare in increasing numbers). Yurdakul, “Juden und Türken in Deutschland: Integration von Immigranten, Politische Repräsentation und Minderheitenrechte,” 139. When the Berlin Wall fell, cheap labor from East Germany led to massive unemployment in the West. The industrial jobs which guest workers lost have not necessarily been replaced, considering that, Germany continues to transition from an economy based on manufacturing to one based on service. In recent years, there have been fewer and fewer apprenticeships available and more competition between over- and under-qualified pupils.

¹¹⁴ “lieb-alilein...[oder] den part des verwegenen desperados...ein richtiger mannskerl eben.” Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 31-2.

¹¹⁵ Paul Klee also suggested West Germans expected guest workers to accept their oppression and become “Uncle Toms” Klee, *Die Nigger Europas. Zur Lage der Gastarbeiter* 21.

¹¹⁶ “So etwas spielt sich in vielen türkischen familien ab, man nennt es hier den generationskonflikt. Es ist mehr als das. Es ist metamorphose. Die alten werden zerdrückt und die jungen tun sich gewalt an, zum einen, um so zu sein wie die eingeborenen, zum anderen, um sich zu bewahren in diesem tollhaus. Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 112.

¹¹⁷ “ein gezwungener, deshalb will er niederzwingen. Ganz schlimm trifft es unsere frauen.” Ibid., 111.

bodies, but also the force exercised on them in popular discourse.¹¹⁸ Part of willingly taking on the identity of a *Kanak* is accepting Germans' misrecognition of Turkish masculinity. This same phenomenon occurs among African American males: "In actuality many black males explain their decision to become the 'beast' as a surrender to the realities they cannot change. And if you are going to be seen as a beast you may as well act like one."¹¹⁹ When Germans use descriptions like "ghetto-oriented" and "ghetto-runaways" to describe Turkish Germans, this extremely negative discourse makes it very difficult for either these young men themselves or others to view them as anything positive. As Memet says, "The kanak is something like a synthetic product that hates itself and the factory which produces it."¹²⁰

Memet's comments about where violence originates among *Kanaken* and how this negatively effects women is very reminiscent of bell hooks' discussion of violence among African American men. Like the former slave mimicking the slave master, *Kanaken* who have been oppressed by the German mainstream learn to oppress women in return. One of the ways the men in *Kanak Sprak* express their strength over women is in their discussions of sexuality. Sandra Hestermann observes:

The importance of sexuality is illustrated in no fewer than five testimonials – by Büyük (a self-proclaimed sex machine), by Dschemaledin (a male prostitute), by Azize (a transsexual), by Lem, a pimp and by Ercan, a gigolo. Their testimonials celebrate sexuality as an expression of virile masculinity. Such a concept is vital for asserting a particular 'Kanakster' sexual identity. Its male chauvinism ridicules German men's apparent failure to satisfy the sexual needs of their women.¹²¹

Hestermann fails to mention Tarkan, a 28 year-old garbage man who frequents prostitutes because the stigma of his job makes it impossible for him to get a "normalolady" and Tolga, the revolutionary against whom rape was used as a political weapon in a Turkish jail – a trauma which has since resulted in erectile dysfunction.

When Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken* talk about sex, the language is often violent. This conforms to the dominant idea of sexuality promoted to and by African American males, especially within gangsta rap. For Tolga, it is difficult to divorce the experience of being sexually violated in prison from his life after incarceration and this is an experience many African American men have as well.¹²² Furthermore, most of the narrators in *Kanak Sprak* are either unemployed or work low-paying jobs that give them no respect. As a result, instead of identifying with their jobs they equate masculinity with domination. This phenomenon was also prevalent among African American males in the 1960s and 1970s, when sexuality "became the site for black males to openly boast that they were more sexually competent than white males, that while white men

¹¹⁸ Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1976), 15-20.

¹¹⁹ hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, 49.

¹²⁰ "Der kanake ist so etwas wie ein synthetisches product, das sich und die fabrik haßt, in dem es gefertigt wurde." Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 110.

¹²¹ Hestermann, "The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity: Hyphenated and Alternative Discourses of Identity in the Works of Zafer Şenocak and Feridun Zaimoğlu," 364.

¹²² George Jackson's *Soledad Brother*, a collection of letters from prison to his mother, addresses how (sexual) violence in jail affects Black men in their relationships outside of jail.

might dominate them in other spheres of power, when it came to sexuality black men ruled.”¹²³ In *Kanak Sprak*, whether the gigolo, the pimp or the “John,” these narrators can only feel powerful when they dominate women.

In the essay “Patriarchal Sex,” Robert Jensen claims “the ‘curriculum for sex education for a normal American boy’ simply teaches males that they must ‘fuck women’ or fuck somebody.”¹²⁴ Moray McGowan points out that many young Turkish men share this need to penetrate other’s territories and bodies:

The tender, often erotic physical exchanges – embracing, kissing, hand-holding – between group members are defined as ‘friendship’ and never linked to being *ibne* [faggot], a term of abuse reserved for those who do not defend their own territory, that is, those who let themselves be penetrated. The decisive structural opposition is then not male/female or hetero/homo, but penetrator/penetrated. The penetrator’s heterosexual honour is not compromised by his participation in a mimed same-sex act, but indeed is confirmed by the role in it for which his greater manliness qualifies him.¹²⁵

McGowan therefore argues that while some behavior among Turkish males might be perceived by Germans as homosexual – embracing, kissing and hand-holding – these actions do not fall within Turkish males’ understanding of homosexuality. A German might think of any male-male intimacy as homosexual, while in McGowan’s opinion, Turkish men define homosexuality according to penetration. He who is penetrated is a homosexual because he has not defended his body (his territory). He who penetrates preserves his manhood because he is still in the dominant role. One finds extreme homophobia in *Kanak Sprak*. For example, Büyük boasts about his dominance, his “kanonending zwischen den beinen” (canon between his legs), and his love of female genitalia is contrasted with his hatred of homosexuals:

hey, how about a man’s ass, whoever says shit like that, i’ll tap him and leave him lying in a fizzy pool. i’m not a fag, man. and the homos don’t come within an inch of me, i’m telling you. are you gay or something, man? Tell me, are you like that? then you better get lost quick, before i scorch off your dick. no? then fuck off!¹²⁶

In his later comments, Büyük also shows disrespect for his parent’s generation. His lack of respect for guest workers is perhaps due to what he perceives as “weakness” – their having allowed themselves to be violated by Germans. Yet, surprisingly, despite his macho posturing, Büyük is just as critical of his own peers:

¹²³ hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, 74-5.

¹²⁴ Jensen quoted in *Ibid.*, 71.

¹²⁵ McGowan, “Multiple Masculinities in Turkish-German Men’s Writing,” 295.

¹²⁶ “hey, wie wars mal mit’m mannarsch, der so’n kack sagt, den zapf ich an und laß liegen in der sprudeligen lache, ich hab’s nich tuntig, mann, und die umgepolten kommen mir nich’n zoll ran, das sag ich dir, biste’n schwuler, mann? Sag man biste so ne type, dann zuckel man hier schwer ab, bevor ich dir den schnauzer seng, also nich, dann lausch man schön!” Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 43-4.

our ol' fathers gamble in bars, or have beards or go to the mosque, our mothers get fat and make food, and we, if you ask me, most of us have our finger on the trigger and shove snow into our noses and become rambos and just bring about shit and shit and more shit, until a cop picks them up and then you've got your fucking name in the register, and that doesn't make you famous, i'm tellin' you, a bunch of alis who're pretendin' to be gangsters, and have 'hoods, as if a mouse didn't have a mouse hole that you can plug with the right gun.¹²⁷

What Büyük describes here are different ways Turks and Turkish Germans cope with marginalization. The elders escape their problems in Germany by turning inwards, turning to religion or escapism (gambling). The youth cope with drugs or seek their fortune as gangsters fighting over insignificant territories. Despite his conformity to a violent, hypermasculine image, Büyük's critical reflections on *why* he and his peers are "pretendin' to be gangsters" suggest this behavior is a conscious performance rather than something natural.

I do not propose that the hypermasculinity found in Zaimoğlu's works – e.g. chauvinism, celebration of male virility and equivalence between penetration and strength – is necessarily *alien* to Turkish culture and imported from hip hop culture. Rather, I believe that this type of masculinity aligns comfortably with hegemonic African American masculinity and this might be a further reason why hip hop and an identification with African American culture have appealed to Turkish youth. For those Turkish Germans with "weak" father figures at home, identifying with African American masculinity might allow them to simultaneously be critical of their violated fathers, as well as reject the German "Softie" and strong models of German masculinity, ranging from the soldier to the skinhead, which are likely alienating for them. Furthermore, mimicking masculine roles presented in hip hop is a performance both Germans and ethnic minorities can participate in. From the *Kanakster* and the African immigrant to the East German hooligan, hip hop style like baggy pants, brand name sweatshirts and baseball caps seems agreeable to most young men in Germany today.¹²⁸

One Nation Under a Groove: Hip Hop and Conformity

The final issue I would like to address in this chapter is how helpful hip hop has been for empowering Turkish Germans. At the beginning of this chapter I posed the following questions: Can a dialogue between Germans, Turks and African Americans free each group from the rigid categories of oppressed and oppressor? Can appropriating African American culture help integrate Turks into a German mainstream that eagerly consumes it? Or does identifying with African Americans only underline Turkish Germans' alleged difference, solidifying their role as

¹²⁷ "unsere ollen väter zocken in den kneipen, oder tragen'n bart und gehen in die moschee, unsere mutter werden fett und basteln an'm essen, und wo sind wir, wenn du schon fragst, die meisten haben den fingen um'n abzug und trieben schnee in'n riechkolben und sind dann rambos und quirlen nur scheiße und scheiße und wieder scheiße, bis'n bull sie aufließt, und du hast deinen verfickten namen im register, was nich berühmt is, das sag ich dir, lauter alis, die den gangster machen, und'n olles revier haben, als hätte nich ne maus 'n mauseloch, das man stopfen kann mit'm richtigen kaliber." Ibid., 44-5.

¹²⁸ For a discussion of the popularity of hip hop style in Germany see Waegner, "Rap, Rebounds, and Rocawear: The 'Darkening' Of German Youth Culture."

victim in German society? In order to address these questions, I have to acknowledge some of the dangers posed when Turkish Germans view Black culture, or specifically hip hop, as a means of rebelling against mainstream German culture. But first, I would like to address some of the problems of viewing hip hop as an inherently rebellious genre. Then I would like to explore the concerns Zaimoğlu raises with hip hop and subcultures in general.

In his essay “‘After the Love Has Gone’: bio-politics and etho-poetics in the black public sphere,” Paul Gilroy acknowledges hip hop’s shift from the margins to the mainstream and the global capital which has become the driving force behind this shift. Gilroy criticizes academics’ insistence that hip hop is inherently rebellious and political:

Where the unseasonal fruits of counterculture become popular and the marginal moves into the mainstream, it would be absurd to expect to find politics programmatically constituted... [the] inflated uniqueness [of Black vernacular] is punctured when underground phenomena appear amidst the brightness and glamour of the cultural industries and their insatiable machinery of commodification... Those who assert the marginality of Hip hop should be obliged to say where they imagine the centre might now be. Hip hop’s marginality is as official, as routinised, as its overblown defiance; yet it is still represented as an outlaw form. This is a mystery that aches to be solved. Further clues may be furnished by delving into uncomfortable issues like Hip hop’s corporate developmental association with the “subcultures” that grow up around television, advertising and cartoons or by interrogating the revolutionary conservatism that constitutes its routine political focus but which is oversimplified or more usually ignored by its academic celebrants.¹²⁹

The assumptions about hip hop which Gilroy addresses mirror claims that were once made about rock ‘n’ roll. As Ayse Caglar notes, German rappers might see rap as rebellious in contrast to pop which is commercial, yet “ironically, in the 1960s pop represented the epitome of youth, emancipation, progress and subversion. But today it represents the ‘center,’ against which rappers position themselves.”¹³⁰ But even decades before the rock revolution of the Sixties, in the 1930s Adorno suspected that contrary to its promises of freedom, popular music (what was jazz at the time) could potentially be (mis)used by the culture industry to enforce conformity among the masses. One could argue that subsequently rock ‘n’ roll (including its many mutations) as well as hip hop have been co-opted in the same way.

In line with Anglo-American academics’ assertions about hip hop’s rebellious character and the assumptions about African American culture and music which I have explored throughout the last five chapters, writings about the role of hip hop in German society often follow a savior-rhetoric. Hip hop is portrayed as the Black cultural tool that redeems and liberates German youth, especially Germans of color who are not included in or do not wish to be included in a notion of German identity that is dominated by the white, Christian middle-class. Studies in popular culture paint a picture of alienated wayward youth who are jolted into

¹²⁹ Paul Gilroy, “‘After the Love Has Gone’: Bio-Politics and Etho-Poetics in the Black Public Sphere,” *Public Culture* 7 (1994): 50-51.

¹³⁰ Caglar, “Verordnete Rebellion: Deutsch-Türkischer Rap und Türkischer Pop in Berlin,” 43.

action when they encounter hip hop and can identify with their African American counterparts across the Atlantic.

I do attribute some truth to this reading of hip hop as savior. Certainly, when hip hop first emerged in the 1980s, it was unlike anything America or Germany had seen. As I mentioned above, in America, hip hop was crafted by those inner-city African American and Latino youth who felt ignored by the Reagan era's yuppie culture of excess and supposedly superficial disco music. These young people turned inward, crafting their own art (graffiti), style and music that was heavily influenced by Caribbean culture – many of the first African American hip hop artists were from the Caribbean or of Caribbean descent. While mainstream America initially found hip hop youth's postmodern pastiche of scratching, sampling and spraying more criminal than artistic, what many studies attesting to hip hop's rebelliousness in Germany fail to acknowledge is that today hip hop has become an established part of American society. Conservatives may continue to take issue with the genre's violence and sexism, but as bell hooks states, hip hop and its more abrasive subgenre gangsta rap are merely a reflection of the violence and sexism imbedded in American society. As Mark Anthony Neal states, "While two decades ago critics already predicted that hip-hop was going to be the 'surf music' of the 1980s, it is virtually impossible to imagine the contemporary world without its presence, in no small part due to the control and distribution of hip-hop music and culture by transnational conglomerates."¹³¹

Today, hip hop artists are not mere rappers, but multi-million dollar moguls who market a lifestyle along with their music. In an age where rappers are professionally engaged to encourage young voters to "rock the vote" and even President Obama admits to being a fan of hip hop – something betrayed in his language as well as his mannerisms – one cannot solely view hip hop as a rebellious tool or the mouthpiece of the oppressed or alienated. While hip hop has not yet reached this level of normality in Germany – I have yet to hear a German politician confess an affinity for the genre – hip hop is still promoted on the local and national level as having educational merit. For example there is a hip hop institute in Hamburg which Chancellor Angela Merkel has visited.¹³²

Certainly, there are parts of the world, including the U.S. and Europe, where hip hop is still used as an instrument for political and social change, for example in the unrest in the Middle East in 2011. Much has been written about hip hop's importance for France's minorities. The Parisian riots of 2005 testify to the fact that this kind of youth revolt is still alive in Europe. During the riots in the banlieues, the German press speculated and feared that something similar could happen in Germany. However, despite a few minor copy-cat incidents of arson and vandalism, nothing of the sort took place on German soil. Is hip hop's role in Germany perhaps not as rebellious as some might think?

In her dissertation, "Kulturdämmerung: The Influence of African American Culture on Post-Wall *German* Identities," Leslie Webster Batchelder begins a chapter on hip hop with a quote from German musicologist Dietrich Diederichsen. Diederichsen describes hip hop's importance for Germany in the following words: "Hip Hop is *the* music of youth and minorities

¹³¹ Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*, 11.

¹³² The website Rap.de reported on this visit under the title "Kanzlerin besucht Hip Hop Academy" (Chancellor visits Hip Hop Academy). <http://rap.de/news/5356>. Accessed 22 April 2011.

who hope to overcome contradictions, and hope for revolution and utopia.”¹³³ Batchelder juxtaposes this statement with one from Günther Jacob who challenges Diederichsen’s overly positive, perhaps even naïve, expectations for hip hop: “Aside from the fact that I reject the equation between ‘youth’ and oppressed minorities, these claims also annoy me because of the assumption that all kinds of people are permanently striving for a revolution or that they would be depressed if there was none in sight.”¹³⁴

Jacob’s astute comment exposes many of the assumptions found in Diederichsen’s and others’ claims about hip hop. First of all, one cannot equate hip hop fans with “youth.” The fifty years young President Obama would likely take issue with being included in the demographic “youth,” and nevertheless he is a hip hop fan. Secondly, equating youth with ethnic minorities and equating hip hop fans with ethnic minorities is problematic. Yes, there is a segment of hip hop fans in Germany who belong to a minority group, but that does not mean they can relate to white German hip hop fans. Furthermore, one cannot equate all young minorities with hip hop fans. This assumption forecloses that Turks, Afro-Germans and other minorities in Germany listen to anything other than hip hop. Thirdly, not all hip hop fans are looking for a revolution. And finally, not only is it wrong to assume that “all kinds of people are permanently striving for a revolution,” Korean German philosopher Pyöng-ch’öl Han’s recent book *Müdigkeitsgesellschaft* (Society of Weariness) actually suggests the opposite – whether in Germany or the US, Westerners have become complacent.

Although Batchelder does not unpack Jacob’s statement, her juxtaposing his against Diederichsen’s remarks suggests she herself is not easily drawn into the naïve notion that hip hop is always already youthful, marginal and political. Like my readings of jazz, Blues, rock and zydeco in the last five chapters, Batchelder reads Germans’ interest in hip hop as an attempt to rebel against traditional German culture:

... Germany’s predominantly “white” hip hop stars and their fans seem to seek a “black” subject position within German culture. On one level the latter phenomenon can be read as a disavowal of a traditional Germanness; on another level it can be seen as an attempt to update an old German identity (Kulturturnation) with a new hip form which is both acceptable and marketable in the 1990s.¹³⁵

I agree with Batchelder that the way hip hop has been described by many German rappers fits this idea of hip hop freeing Germans from more conservative norms. For example, controversial German rappers like Bushido and Sido appear to hide their middle-class backgrounds so that their real biographies do not interfere with their public “gangsta rapper” personas.

¹³³ “HipHop ist *die* Musik der Jugendlichen und der Minderheiten nach der Hoffnung auf Überwindung von Widersprüchen, auf Revolution und Utopie.” Diederich Diederichsen, *Freiheit macht Arm: Das Leben Rock 'N' Roll 1990-93* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1993), 53.

¹³⁴ “Abgesehen davon, daß ich diese Gleichsetzung von ‘Jugendlichen’ und unfreiwilligen Minderheiten ablehne, stört mich an solchen Behauptungen auch die Unterstellung, alle möglichen Leute würden permanent irgendeine Revolution anstreben oder seien deprimiert, weil keine in Sicht sei.” Günther Jacob, “HipHop, Rassismus und die Krise der Pop-Subversion: Ein Interview mit Günther Jacob,” in *Rap-Revolution: Geschichte, Gruppen, Bewegung*, ed. David Dufresne; Günther Jacob; Jutta Schornstein (Zurich and Mainz: Atlantis Musikbuch Verlag, 1997), 420.

¹³⁵ Leslie Webster Batchelder, “Kulturdämmerung: The Influence of African American Culture on Post-Wall German Identities,” (Davis: Diss. University of California, Davis, 2001), 65.

Nevertheless, Batchelder seems to suggest that fans of hip hop seek a stable, albeit alternative, identity, distinctly separate from a German one. For example, she falls prey to the notion that Turkish German rappers “Azziza A, Islamic Force and other ‘Oriental hip hop’ artists are literally trapped between two cultures, Turkish and German, while striving to build their unique identities and a sense of community, separate from and yet enmeshed within, these dominant cultures.”¹³⁶ For Batchelder, hip hop provides a third option, “in *every* case hip hop artists in Germany are, as [Olivia] Henkel suggests, in search of identity” (italics in the original).¹³⁷ This statement suggests that for say Azziza A, neither a German nor a Turkish identity feels right, but hip hop can provide yet another, solid identity. And according to Batchelder, this identity is modeled on “American urban centers” which for the German hip hop fan have become “an imaginary utopia of resistance, struggle and vitality.”¹³⁸ But the notion that individuals who feel confined by a stock German identity would merely opt for an American identity instead does not push the possibilities of hip hop far enough.

The first five chapters of this dissertation testify that hip hop was not the first American music to conquer German airwaves. What set it apart from Blues, jazz and rock ‘n’ roll is hip hop’s postmodern aesthetic, its sampling, cutting and pasting. Why would fans of such patchwork music conform to an either/or kind of identity politics? I believe hip hop initially appealed to Zaimoğlu in his writing, because instead of forcing someone to choose a German, Turkish or Turkish German identity, it had the potential to explode these categories. At the core of hip hop is sampling, taking from a variety of sources irrespective of age or cultural origin or “right.” Potentially, hip hop fans could approach identity with the same kind of fluidity and rejection of “roots.” But according to Tom Cheesman, “Zaimoglu insists he is not interested in the questions of divided, mixed and multiple ‘identity’ posed by multiculturalists and hybridity researchers: he is concerned with socioeconomic problems exacerbated by political and social ethnicization. ‘Identity’ belongs to the vocabulary of oppression.”¹³⁹

Subculture or Lifestyle? Nein Danke

A further argument Zaimoğlu makes in the essay “Ali macht Männchen” is that sometimes those on the margins are given attention by the mainstream, but this comes with the requirement that they fulfill what is expected of them. A Turkish German youth from Kreuzberg who raps might find a state-sponsored workshop to support his dreams of becoming a hip hop star. However, what if that youth wanted to express himself outside of the confines of hip hop culture? Would he find as much support? Zaimoğlu suggests whether they are at the center or on the margins, as long as Turkish Germans only have two “identities” to choose from, the obedient Ali or the ghetto-oriented youth (Uncle Tom or Anti-Tom), they are not really free or treated as equals.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 66.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 76.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 77.

¹³⁹ Cheesman, “Akçam – Zaimoğlu – ‘Kanak Attak’: Turkish Lives and Letters in German,” 87.

Zaimoğlu's criticism of sanctioned difference relates to his condemnation of subculture. In the essay, "sicarim süppkültürünüze züppeler!": Ich scheiße auf eure Subkultur, ihr Schmöke!"¹⁴⁰, Zaimoğlu adopts the role of ethnographer once again, but this time to "gawk at the subculture."¹⁴¹ He describes belonging to a subculture as a kind of privilege given only to whites: "If it's the case of a migrant, then people like to talk about the Turks or the Blacks. But if they [presumably white Germans] are talking about themselves, then they expect subtle differences. And especially if subcultures are involved" (italics in the original).¹⁴² Echoing bell hooks claims in "Postmodern Blackness" Zaimoğlu argues that subculture, like postmodern fluidity, is a liberty accessible to those who have had the luxury of having a distinct identity to begin with: "the straddling mainstream/subversive or whatever the fuck it's called, for the most part, it only exists in the heads of people who have the time to notice it."¹⁴³

White Germans have the freedom of belonging to unique categories irrespective of their ethnicity and they have the freedom to mimic another ethnicity. They have not only appropriated African American style, but even the constructed *Kanak* style. For example, German comedian John Friedman performs in "ethnic drag" as Erkan in the comedy duo Erkan and Stefan. Both he and his collaborator Florian Simbeck wear hip hop attire and speak *Kanak sprach*. "Their humor is in fact based on the use of nonstandard language and a caricature of migrant youth. In contrast to Zaimoğlu's powerfully eloquent figures, these [youths] are normally portrayed as linguistically and intellectually underdeveloped."¹⁴⁴ Theirs is not the only instance; "Over the past few years, this ethnic-social slang [kanak sprach] has been 'discovered' by the mass media; in particular, in communicative contexts such as song lyrics, comics, radio and TV programmes, movies and cabarets, everyday *kanak sprach* is frequently represented in a stylised form."¹⁴⁵

The subversive "goods" of marginalized people may migrate to the center and be appropriated by the mainstream, but those on the margins do not enjoy the same privilege. Migrants are still thrown into one pot, often with the flavor of hip hop alone. Perhaps one of the reasons Turkish Germans are not granted the same fluid identity is the assumption that because of their parents' conservatism and religious views, they do not rebel in the same ways as their German counterparts. Jamal Tuschick argues, "The things that defined the youth cultures of the Seventies – drugs, anti-authoritative mottos, an affinity to androgyny, exploration through all kinds of role playing – were censored from the codes of youth with foreign parents."¹⁴⁶ Tuschick's claim does not, however, explain why hip hop became so popular among migrant youth in the 1980s.

¹⁴⁰ I will refer to this essay as "I shit on your subculture."

¹⁴¹ "...um auf süppkültür zu glotzen." Feridun Zaimoğlu, "Sicarim süppkültürünüze züppeler!": Ich scheiße auf eure Subkultur, ihr Schmöke!," in *Mainstream der Minderheiten: Pop in der Kontrollgesellschaft*, ed. Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1997), 90.

¹⁴² "Wenn es um Migranten geht, dann redet man gerne von den Türken oder den Schwarzen. Wenn es um einen selbst geht, dann erwartet man allerdings feine Differenzierungen. Und ganz besonders dann, wenn es sich um Subkulturen dreht." Ibid., 86.

¹⁴³ "die grätsche mainstream/subversive oder was auch immer der föck heißen soll, sie existiert meist nur in den köpfen der leute, die die zeit haben, einen blick drauf zu werfen." Ibid., 91.

¹⁴⁴ "Ihre Komik beruht vielmehr auf der Verwendung von Nonstandardsprache und einer Karikatur von migrantischen Jugendlichen. Diese werden im Gegensatz zu Zaimoğlus wortgewaltigen Kanak-Figuren in der Regel als sprachlich und intellektuell unterentwickelt dargestellt." Yıldız, "Kritisch 'kanak': Gesellschaftskritik, Sprache und Kultur bei Feridun Zaimoğlu," 189 note 10.

¹⁴⁵ Moraldo, "Kanak Sprach: The Linguistic Features of Turkish Migrants' Communicative Style in Feridun Zaimoğlu's Works," 241.

¹⁴⁶ "Was die Jugendkulturen der Siebziger ausmachte – Drogen, antiautoritär Devisen, eine Affinität zum Androgynen, Erweiterungen bei sämtlichen Rollenspielen –, wurde von den Kodizes der Jugendlichen mit ausländischen Eltern indiziert." Tuschick, "Bruder, du bist Meine Stimme": Feridun Zaimoğlu, Kombattant im Kulturkampf," 111.

Tuschick seems to imply that migrants had a natural affinity for hip hop as opposed to rock and therefore when hip hop took over the countercultural realm, it was natural that migrants would do the same. Embedded within this assumption that migrants would obviously be drawn to hip hop is the idea that as the “Niggers of Europe,” of course migrants would be fans of African American music. Indeed, rock was an established mainstream genre when hip hop first emerged as the underdog and, as I pointed out in the last chapter, since the late 1960s rock was increasingly characterized as a white genre. Thinking of rock as white (German) and hip hop as Black demonstrates the kind of essentialism that skews the narrative of transatlantic cultural exchange. In Germany, positing rock as white *and therefore German* erases not only the genre’s African American roots but also the history of its initial reception in Germany when it was considered too Black for German youth.¹⁴⁷ The construction of these kinds of binaries in German society – rock/rap, mainstream/subculture, white/Black – shows how altering the true narrative of a cultural phenomenon can be used to maintain boundaries and establish new ones.

I am more prone to George Lipsitz’s theory of why hip hop conquered the youth of the Eighties. Situating hip hop within the postmodern era, Lipsitz points out that aside from its blending of Caribbean, African and American styles, what differentiated rap from other genres was that its use of digital sampling:

turn[ed] consumers into producers... Hip hop calls into question Western notions of cultural production as property through its evocation, quotation and outright theft of socially shared musical memories. Yet it also illumines the emancipatory possibilities of new technologies and the readiness of marginalized and oppressed populations to employ them for humane ends – for shedding restricting social identities and embracing new possibilities of a life without hierarchy and exploitation.¹⁴⁸

Hip hop is a suitable soundtrack for revolting youth, because through the art of sampling, hip hop enables any one to become a producer of music and spread his or her message. If rock requires expensive instruments – drums, guitars and a bass – hip hop’s minimalism makes it more accessible – all you need is a beat to rap over and a text to rap. This minimalism empowered migrant youth for whom the idea of becoming an artist might otherwise have seemed like a pipe dream. Nevertheless, this does not mean there were not migrants who listened to other musical genres. In the last chapter I mentioned Turkish German director Hussi Kutlucan who drummed for the German punk band Soilent Green. In her essay, “Sound Bridges and Traveling Tunes: Transnational Mobility as Ironic Melodrama,” Deniz Göktürk highlights how another Turkish German director, Fatih Akin, uses diverse kinds of music in the film *Gegen die Wand* (Head-On, 2004) to articulate the film’s and the characters’ internationalism and ties to a global pop culture. For example, its Turkish German protagonists listen to a variety of genres from (post)punk and 80s’ English-language pop to classical Turkish music. As Göktürk states:

¹⁴⁷ In *Fear of a Kanak Planet*, Hannes Loh and Murat Güngör reprint statements made in a right-wing forum on whether or not hip hop should or can be appropriated by neo-Nazis. One of the commentators makes a similar argument that not only hip hop, but rock and all of its subgenres – including heavy metal and skinhead Oi-rock – are in some way or another descendent from Black R&B. See Loh and Güngör, *Fear of a Kanak Planet: Hip-hop Zwischen Weltkultur und Nazi-Rap*, 291.

¹⁴⁸ George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (London; New York: Verso, 1994), 37.

Throughout the film, music is used very pointedly, reaching from major international hits...to pieces by Turkish stars...[like the activist group Kanak Attak] *Head-On* stages a similar critique of multicultural benevolence, incidentally in a conversation on English pop music, implying that shared points of reference can be found in the realm of traveling tunes rather than self-contained traditions.¹⁴⁹

This message is also conveyed in Akin's documentary about the diverse music scenes of Istanbul, *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005). Among the Turkish artists portrayed is Ceza, a rapper whose popularity has since then reached Germany. In the film's segment on Istanbul's hip hop scene, Ceza, who seeks to use hip hop as a means of addressing local issues, is juxtaposed with Turkish rappers who have a more commercialized and America-centered approach to the music.

Zaimoğlu seems to share the same frustrations as Ferguson and Youth who demand that whites stop chaining them to a single "natural" identity. Zaimoğlu feels Turks and other minorities in Germany are not allowed the right to experiment with their identity; rather their identities are viewed as being fixed to their ethnicity – like the piece of baggage which Simonis' comments invoke. Part of the impetus driving this dissertation has been the notion that African American culture has had a particular appeal for some Germans who are uncomfortable with the heritage they are "dragging around." Although the focus has been on fictional characters, there are plenty of historical accounts of Germans who have attempted to align themselves with the oppressed via their consumption of foreign, especially African American, culture. But does Simonis' statement suggest that such attempts are in vain? Merely masquerade? Or are we to believe that only Germans are allowed this kind of masquerading, while Zaimoğlu, as an ethnically marked Turk, is only allowed a single identity?

Simonis's statement seems to suggest that it is impossible to discard of one's inherited national baggage, but Zaimoğlu certainly disagrees. In "I shit on your subculture," he argues that young white Germans who search for clothes at second-hand shops and flea markets have the freedom to reject the goods their parents have offered them – goods that others perhaps cannot afford – out of pure desire to rebel against their parents: "that which was given to them in bucketfuls, shoveled into their cradles or put in their shoes on St. Nicholas Day, now they want to detest it."¹⁵⁰ This statement has several possible interpretations. These "presents" that Germans receive from their parents could be material goods. Rebelling against his parents, well-to-do Germans might detest material things because they do not value them. In *Kanak Sprak*, while observing a German bum who he believes is really a middle-class youth slumming, 27 year-old Halid poses his theory about wealth and appearance: "I've thought out my own hypothesis, and it says, luxury produces the opposite."¹⁵¹ Thus, a wealthy group would prefer to walk around "im

¹⁴⁹ Deniz Göktürk, "Sound Bridges: Transnational Mobility as Ironic Melodrama," in *European Cinema in Motion: Migrant and Diasporic Film in Contemporary Europe*, ed. Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 221.

¹⁵⁰ "was man ihnen schaufelweise gab in die wiege oder an nikoläusen legte ins kinderschuh, das mögen sie nun verabscheuen." Zaimoğlu,

""Sicarim süppkültürünüze züppeler!": Ich scheiße auf eure Subkultur, ihr Schmöke!," 87.

¹⁵¹ "Ich hab halt meine eigne hypothese mir zuedacht, und die sagt, daß'n luxus nen gegenzug aus'm hut holt." Ibid., 89.

armenfell” (in a pauper’s skin) so that “the neighborhood doesn’t catch on to their wealth and put a knife to their throats asking: your money or your throat.”¹⁵²

On the other hand, the goods put into Germans’ cribs could also refer to a German cultural legacy – one with which they have no problem, until they become older and more aware of their country’s and their family’s history. This kind of mass Oedipal rebellion refers back to the ’68 student movement. Zaimoğlu reminds us that seemingly oppositional people, like former revolutionaries Joschka Fischer and Horst Mahler, were at one time “the street kids of the culture industry, and if we briefly erase the right-left shift in this spot, we encounter burned mudfaces, who would now like to be included [in the state] for elderly care.”¹⁵³ The “right-left shift” Zaimoğlu refers to is likely the fact that irrespective of their radical left-wing past, Fischer and Mahler and the rest of their generation have now settled at opposite sides of the spectrum – Fischer is a member of the Green Party and Mahler is a spokesman for the right-wing National Party of Germany (NPD). The “burned mudfaces” could be a reference to the burnt cork once used in blackface. Thus, today members of opposing political factions who were once rebels who blackened up and attacked the state, now look to the state to protect them in their old age. Despite this transformation, the memories of Germany’s 1960s countercultures remain strong in the national conscience. Only now, the rebellion has been ripped out of its political context and marketed for consumption.¹⁵⁴

When older genres like jazz and rock ‘n’ roll first reached Germany, they were very different from Germany’s nationally accepted music genres. In the 1950s, a person’s musical taste said a lot about their age: did they belong to the Wilhelmine era of classical and military music or were they rock and jazz fans? Today, however, several different genres exist in the mainstream simultaneously and Germans of all ages listen to a variety of music. Despite the absence of *real* generational conflict within German pop culture, the older subcultures still persist; but some argue they have been stripped of their initial subversive nature and “the potential for style itself to resist appears largely lost.”¹⁵⁵ Zaimoğlu believes German rebels instinctively reject everything that stems from their parents, but this rebellion is conducted on the battlefield of fashion and music. Just like the May Day riot in *Passing Strange* is purely a simulation, the reality, the real revolution, scares Germans so much they run back to the safety of their origins: “all the slackers, or rightfully almost all of them, will end up in mama’s kitchen looking for chow-and-puke and shaking in fear of everything that’s lurking outside.”¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, the financially disadvantaged “Ali” who has not had the privilege to reject such German goods (both literally and figuratively), is still thirsty for (sub)cultural capital.

Earlier, I quoted a statement from 29 year-old Memet about the “generational conflict” between older and younger Turks and the vicious circle of violence in which they are often caught. When Memet says the young people resort to violence to “be like the natives” he does

¹⁵² “damit’s revier nich checkt, un denen man nich’n stiletto an’n kehlkopf setzen tut von wegen: geld oder gurgel.” Ibid.

¹⁵³ “die streetkids der kulturindustrie, und wenn wir an dieser stelle die rechts-links-verschiebung kurz auflösen, begegnen uns verschmockte matschbacken, die sich aus gründen der altersfürsorge gern vereinnahmen ließen.” Ibid., 90.

¹⁵⁴ See Rolf Sachsse, “Prada Meinhof. Die RAF als Marke: Ein Versuch in Politischer Ikonologie,” in *Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, ed. Wolfgang Kraushaar (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2006).

¹⁵⁵ David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl, ed., *The Postsubcultures Reader* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2003), 5.

¹⁵⁶ “in mutterns küche werden sie alle oder gerechterweis fast alle nach freß-und-kotz-leerläufen landen und bibbern vor Furcht vor dem, was sich da draußen herumbreibt.” Zaimoğlu, “Sicarim süppkültürünüze züppeler! : Ich scheiße auf eure Subkultur, ihr Schmöke!,” 88.

not just mean committing physical acts of violence (the slave imitating the master), but making changes to their appearance so that they look more like the Germans:

We want to decorate ourselves with the insignia of the blond supermen. Our own bad taste gets in our way as well as the imminent feeling, that we're inferior. That's why cumin-seed mamas dye their hair blond and wear pop-starlet blue or green contact lenses. That's why the Turko kid lusts after a Daimler [Mercedes-Benz].¹⁵⁷

The Turkish male who makes a show of his shiny luxury car is a common target of ridicule for German comedians. But why is the migrant mocked for purchasing such a *German* symbol of prestige? This phenomenon is best understood according to Pierre Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital, which Rupert Weinzierl and David Muggleton describe as "signs of distinction like language or dress codes, and actions of distinction such as the symbolic consumption of music" which are "as important for social stratification as the accumulation of economic capital."¹⁵⁸ While Germans may not value their cultural goods or go so far as to reject them, the *Kanak* who still values them is looked down upon. Twenty-seven year-old Halid confesses, "A poor kanak louse like me will never in his life want to walk around looking bitterly tragic. A louse doesn't want a lousy appearance... People shouldn't be able to read his poor-devil-identity from his tatters. They shouldn't be able to read my lameness like you read an electricity meter."¹⁵⁹ But it is precisely the *Kanak's* exaggerated masquerade of wealth, his "radical consumerism," that makes him an easy target for ridicule by the mainstream.¹⁶⁰

Those African American and Turkish German males who view money and consumer goods as their path to patriarchal masculinity, stress the importance of physical appearance. But as Halid continues, this puts them in a kind of double-bind. It is a fine line to walk between showing enough wealth and style (economic and cultural capital) to be accepted by the mainstream without attracting the envy of other marginalized people who would just as soon rob you of these goods so that they too can *outwardly* climb up the ladder of social prestige. Halid claims:

Brother, that's why I only show as much wealth as needed; enough that people don't start counting my pale ribs; just the right amount for me: gold on my finger, a gold chain around my neck and a gold watch. The crazy thing is, a dark manikin might get the idea:

¹⁵⁷ "Wir wollen uns mit den insignien der blonden übermenschen schmücken. Unser eigener schlechter geschmack kommt uns in die quere und das uns eingeflößte gefühl, daß wir minderwertig sind. Deshalb färben sich viele kümmelmammas ihr haard blond und tragen unsere pop-starletts blaue oder grüne kontaktlinsen. Deshalb giert das turcokid nach einem daimler." Ibid., 113.

¹⁵⁸ Weinzierl, ed., *The Postsubcultures Reader*, 9.

¹⁵⁹ "Ne arme kanakenlaus wie ich wird ja bis zum weldende nie und nimmer bittertragisch rumhumpeln wollen, ne laus will ne lausige erscheinung nich... Da soll das volk nich den schluckerausweis vonne fetzen ablesen können, mir nich ne lähmung wie vonnem stromzähler abschreiben." Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 89-90.

¹⁶⁰ In the U.S. in the nineteenth century, many European immigrants tried to assimilate through consumerism. "In the workplace, the differences between newcomers and citizens were often accentuated, as immigrants typically were pushed into, and congregated in, the least tolerable kinds of labor. Through the marketplace, however, newcomers had the opportunity almost immediately to adopt basic forms of life... Historians of the immigration of Italian and Slavic peasants have found these newcomers to have been motivated by a fierce commitment to the pragmatic goal of accumulating money and material possessions, both of which served as tangible signs that they had transcended the degradation of their material and social condition in Europe." Andrew R. Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance: Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 34.

Man, that guy who's walking by is a pure gold source. I'm gonna mess with him. And before I know it, my wealth is gone and I just think: shit that was too flamboyant.¹⁶¹

In this excerpt, Zaimoğlu's clever use of the word "männeken" (manikin) hints at several meanings. Manikin might refer to the more commonly spelled mannequin, which is normally referred to as a *Schaufensterpuppe* in German. "Männeken" is more typical of Northern Germany, where Zaimoğlu's narrators live. Nevertheless, this is not the sole reason why Zaimoğlu chose this word. Spelled "manikin," it can also mean pygmy. And Zaimoğlu does not refer to just any manikin, but a dark one. Thus, this envious person brash enough to steal the "kanak louse's" feigned wealth is racially marked. He is perhaps an African or a Turk, but the most important thing is he is dark and likely a marginalized figure. Thus, the irony is that while white Germans dress down to either rebel, try out new identities or hide their wealth, many dark-skinned poor people try to feign wealth and steal it from each other – the non-wealthy – instead of from the real source.

One might be tempted to argue that this is an example of the performative nature of identity in a modern society. The wealthy dress down, the poor dress up – everyone takes part in the game. However; in this case, the playing field is not equal. To recall challenges to Butler's theory of performance, "Theorists critical of Butler emphasize the context in which performances occur and the material conditions, including arrangement of space and relations of capital, which circumscribe the sphere of effectivity of such performances and hence limit their subversive potential."¹⁶² The reason white Germans can dress down, go "cultural slumming" and appropriate Black popular culture is because they form the white hegemony that can slip in and out of these exteriors like a suit. Middle-class white Germans can wear baggy pants, but it does not take away their economic and cultural capital. Furthermore, they are still in the position of labeling the Others. As 24 year-old Rahman says, "for them [Germans] you're nothing, just air and even less than damn air, ... like when they carry away some old corpse and they make an outline with a piece of chalk. When they carry the cadaver away, there's nothing left in the outline but a stick man made of carpet."¹⁶³

As an Other, the Turk is just an outline which Germans can fill with their own thoughts and projections. The imagery of death called upon by words like "corpse" and "cadaver" make one think of the guest worker who has given his or her life in the unhealthy conditions of German industrial factories. When this worker's body is carried away, all that remains is a stick man. Instead of using the standard German word for a stick man, *Strichmännchen*, Rahman calls this a *strichmänneken*. Once again, a *Männeken* can mean mannequin or pygmy – literally a little man, only this "little man" happens to be racially marked. This stick man is racialized not only

¹⁶¹ "Deshalb, bruder, zeig ich wohlstand wie's notut, daß mir die völker nicht anfangen, die blassen rippen zu zählen, und wie's mir gefällt: gold mal annem finger, gold anner kette um's gelenk, und gold fürs armband. Das ist nämlich meschugge, wenn'n dunkler männeken auf die idee kommt: Mann, die type, die hier vorbeilatscht, ist die reinste goldader, ich dreck ihn mal an. Und eh ich mich verseh bin ich mein wohlstand los, und ich denk noch: scheiße, das war überladen." Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 89.

¹⁶² Schmidt, "Feridun Zaimoglu's Performance of Gender and Authorship," 200.

¹⁶³ "für die biste gar nischt, luft und weniger als schnuppe luft, ... wie wenn ne olle leiche rumliegt, und die machen mit nem stuck kreide nen umriß. Im umriß is denn nix wenn se'n cadaver wegtragen, da siehste 'n strichmänneken aus teppich." Cheesman, "Akçam – Zaimoğlu – 'Kanak Attak': Turkish Lives and Letters in German," 95.

through the description *Männeken* but also because it has been filled in with carpet invoking the image of the quintessential Turkish carpet salesman.

While Zaimoğlu might reject the rigid structuralism of the binary subculture vs. mainstream, his interest in “socioeconomic problems exacerbated by political and social ethnicization”¹⁶⁴ makes him just as critical of postsubcultural “tribes” and “scenes.”¹⁶⁵ Zaimoğlu’s views seem to align with those of David Hesmondhalgh, who criticizes both “subculture” and its alternatives in his essay, “Subcultures, Scenes or Tribes? None of the Above.” Hesmondhalgh reinstates the importance of tangible factors like race, gender and class when discussing musical collectivities. First of all, Hesmondhalgh suggests there is not necessarily a link between music collectivities and youth, which corresponds to my example of Obama being a hip hop fan. But most important for Zaimoğlu’s critique of (post)subculture is the argument that the celebration of lifestyle can result in an uncritical view of consumerism. Hesmondhalgh asks, “But what of factors that might limit or constrain such choice: poverty, addiction, mental illness, social suffering, marginalization, disempowerment, unequal access to education, childcare and healthcare and so on?”¹⁶⁶ Zaimoğlu reminds us, these are the tangible factors which make *Kanaken* unable to help themselves to the “Supermarkt der Identitäten” (supermarket of identities) even if they wanted to.¹⁶⁷

Conclusion

By putting Zaimoğlu’s *Kanak Sprak* into dialogue with his essays on assimilation and (post)subculture, I sought to counter the savior-narrative in which hip hop is typically contextualized in Germany. Although several narrators in *Kanak Sprak* posit hip hop as the liberator of young Turkish Germans, I believe the path hip hop has taken in Germany since its arrival in the 1980s has diverged from Zaimoğlu’s own views on identity politics. In particular, while hip hop may have initially offered Turkish German men an alternative masculinity with which to identify that made it easier for them to reject hegemonic German and Turkish masculinities, hip hop brings its own dangers with it (e.g. its focus on patriarchal masculinity and radical consumerism) and there is still a risk that a “hip hop” identity can become yet another box for Turks to be placed in. Ayse Caglar expresses these fears in her essay “Verordnete Rebellion: Deutsch-türkischer Rap und türkischer Pop in Berlin.” According to Caglar, there were initially many positive expectations for Turkish hip hop culture in Germany:

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.: 87.

¹⁶⁵ The subculture studies made famous by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham followed a structuralist approach that pitted subcultures against parent cultures. At the CCCS, subcultures were understood to be homogenous and class-based. Furthermore, subcultures were championed as imaginary solutions to social subordination that were not influenced by, rather eventually co-opted by, the media. Since the 1990s, the field of postsubculture studies has challenged these earlier approaches. One strand of postsubculture studies rejects the usefulness of the term “subculture” altogether and opts instead for terms like “channels,” “neo-tribes” and “scenes” in order to express the role of an individual’s choice regarding whether or not s/he belongs to such a group. For more information see *The Subcultures Reader*, Sarah Thornton and Ken Gelder (eds.) and *The Post-subcultures Reader*, Weinzierl and Muggleton (eds.).

¹⁶⁶ David Hesmondhalgh, “Subcultures, Scenes or Tribes? None of the Above,” *Journal of Youth Studies* 8, no. 1 (2005): 25.

¹⁶⁷ Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak*, 12.

The marginalized social position of especially young German-Turks, who were for a long time pathologized as being ‘torn between two cultures’ in the debates on German-Turkish culture and identity construction, are suddenly seen positively regarding concepts like ‘hybridity’, ‘crossover’ and creativity. That means there has been a clear shift from culturalist and essentialist questions of belonging and identity (which has dominated the research on German-Turks for a long time) to new ideas of multiple, flexible and creolized cultures.¹⁶⁸

Caglar’s assessment of how hip hop challenged previous victim narratives of young Turkish Germans being “caught between two cultures” reflects some of the goals that postsubculture theorists have expressed. Nevertheless, one of the pitfalls of the genre is its dependence on the ghetto narrative, which Levant Soysal argues “assigns *authenticity* to the voice of rappers.”¹⁶⁹ Using the example of the multi-ethnic rap group Cartel, Soysal describes the group’s message as confused, primarily because its individual messages are affected by genre conventions.

Ghetto stories, bad streets, adolescent dreams, raw sexuality, moral indignation, and defiant politics are incoherently intertwined. Recklessness and heroic gestures go hand in hand with prudence and cool manners... What we have is a contentious enactment of ghetto narrative, which derives its potency and confusion from the conventions of rap as genre. In this sense, Cartel – the act and the posse – was nothing but an accomplished rap performance in the order of its counterparts in other places (e.g., in Istanbul, Paris, and Los Angeles)... Our analytical frames then recognize that the message of migrant hip hop is predicated on the constraints and possibilities of hip hop as a world-level, performative genre with an elaborate idiomatic vernacular, as well as on the confines of the available institutional resources and discourses that foster cultural particularisms and diversities.¹⁷⁰

Aside from constricting genre conventions, a further pitfall is that hip hop continues to be discussed as a subculture which poses many problems. For example, Batchelder uses Dick Hebdige’s thoughts on subculture, famously theorized in *The Meaning of Style* (1979), to describe hip hop. As several postsubculture theorists have pointed out, Hebdige’s notion of subculture is too structuralist to encompass today’s global and local hip hop scenes.

Aside from the limitations that structuralist theory imposes (mainstream/subculture, conformity/rebellion, German culture/hip hop culture, pop/rap, German/Turkish), such thinking also masks potential *counterrevolutionary* developments. Caglar claims, now that hip hop has been embraced by the state as a way to keep migrant youth out of trouble and off the streets it is

¹⁶⁸ “Die marginalisierte gesellschaftliche Position vor allem junger Deutsch-Türken, die in den Debatten um deutsch-türkische Kultur- und Identitätsfindung lange Zeit als ‘Zerissenheit zwischen zwei Kulturen’ pathologisiert wurde, wird nun über Konzepte wie ‘Hybridität’, ‘Crossover’ und Kreativität plötzlich positiv gefaßt. Das bedeutet eine eindeutige Verschiebung von den kulturalistischen und essentialistischen Fragen und Zugehörigkeit und Identität (die die Forschung über Deutsch-Türken lange Zeit dominieren) zu neuen Vorstellungen von multiplen, flexiblen Identitäten und kreolisierten Kulturen.” Caglar, “Verordnete Rebellion: Deutsch-Türkischer Rap und Türkischer Pop in Berlin,” 41-2.

¹⁶⁹ Levant Soysal, “Rap, Hiphop, Kreuzberg: Scripts of/for Migrant Youth Culture in the Worldcity Berlin,” *New German Critique* 92, no. Spring-Summer (2004): 73.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 75.

promoted by the media as an “Überraschungskarriere” (surprise career). The notion of a “surprise career” sounds like what Jo Littler explores in the article “Celebrity and Meritocracy,” which addresses how neoliberal ideas can be spread through a hip hop “rags to riches” narrative like that of Eminem.¹⁷¹ Thus, instead of aspiring to a career in civil service, which rapper Boulevard Bou argued would make a difference for integration,¹⁷² young Turkish Germans might instead dream that they too can become the next successful rapper. As Adorno and Horkheimer pointed out decades earlier in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, this “rags to riches narrative” is seldom achieved:

Fortune will not smile on all – just on the one who draws the winning ticket or, rather, the one designated to do so by a higher power – usually the entertainment industry itself, which presents itself as ceaselessly in search of talent. Those discovered by the talent scouts and then built up by the studios are ideal types of the new, dependent middle classes... Only one can draw the winning lot, only one is prominent, and even though all have mathematically the same chance, it is so minimal for each individual that it is best to write it off at once and rejoice in the good fortune of someone else, who might just as well be oneself but never is. Where the culture industry still invites naïve identification, it immediately denies it.¹⁷³

The one successful person who makes it is supposed to keep the rest of society complacent, always hoping that they might be next. Therefore, Caglar describes the state’s promotion of hip hop in migrant communities as ambivalent:

A central function of rap according to German-Turkish youth is the mediation of ‘social responsibility,’ a further even more important aspect is the chance for fame and success. Paradoxically, the means that were meant to give the marginalized in the ghetto a voice is simultaneously perceived as their ticket out of the ghetto.¹⁷⁴

On the one hand, one could argue that it is good that the state is investing *any* money into youth culture and activities. On the other hand, one wonders whether this money is used to promote hip hop instead of improving neighborhood schools or offering more job training. “In addition, this approach conceals the danger of perceiving minorities solely with respect to the ghetto (as a cultural space outside of the center) and with that it would revive culturalist positions that we

¹⁷¹ Jo Littler, “Celebrity and Meritocracy,” *Soundings: journal of politics and culture* 26 (2004).

¹⁷² “In 1995, a rapper associated with Advanced Chemistry, *Boulevard Bou*, sparked controversy within the hip hop ‘community’ with a funky song called ‘Geh zur Polizei’. The ‘common sense’ of hip hoppers is anti-police, like that of any urban youth subculture worth the name. But *Boulevard Bou*’s message is that ethnic minority youth facing police harassment should consider joining the police in order to bring about change in the culture that is oppressing them.” Cheesman, “Polyglot Politics. Hip Hop in Germany,” 210.

¹⁷³ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 116.

¹⁷⁴ “Eine zentrale Funktion von Rap laut deutsch-türkischen Jugendlichen ist die Vermittlung von ‚sozialer Verantwortung,‘ ein eiterer, ebenso wichtiger Aspekt aber ist die Erschließung von Ruhm und Erfolg. Paradoxerweise wird das Mittel, den Marginalisierten eine Stimme zu verleihen, gleichzeitig als Fahrkarte aus dem Ghetto wahrgenommen.” Caglar, “Verordnete Rebellion: Deutsch-Türkischer Rap und Türkischer Pop in Berlin,” 47.

believed to have overcome long ago”¹⁷⁵ – a danger present in terms like “ghetto-oriented” and “ghetto-runaways.”

In this chapter, the dialogue between Germans and Turks has been transformed into a triologue between Germans, Turks and African Americans. In the previous chapters, rebellious Germans identified with African Americans; placing themselves on the “right side of history”¹⁷⁶ in contrast to their more conservative, and often racist, fellow German citizens. With the arrival of hip hop, Turkish German youth identified with African Americans, viewing themselves on the margins of mainstream society. So what has come of the German-Turkish-African American triologue? What has happened now that German outsiders and Turkish outsiders have met on the common ground of the hip hop scene?

When Zaimoğlu crafted the pseudoethnicization *Kanak* in *Kanak Sprach*, according to Cheesman this was proposed as a political category, a “strategy [that]...effectively explodes the idea that any normative national culture exists as the objective correlative of such concepts.”¹⁷⁷ The *Kanak* identity was so radical because of its performative nature. The idea was that anyone could claim a *Kanak* identity and take aim at mainstream German society; similar to the way “Black” has been used as a political category in Great Britain¹⁷⁸ or the way Germans have been appropriating an African American identity to express their alterity for decades, only there was never a distinct term to express this phenomenon. In this way, *Kanak* is a universal identity that can combine everyone, from the Turkish migrant to the Black gangsta and beyond. In an interview in 1998 with Jamal Tuschick in the newspaper *junge welt*, when Tuschick asked what Zaimoğlu thinks about Germans with “traditional biographies who participate in Kanak Attack and call themselves Kanaksters,” Zaimoğlu responds, “Why not? Only the thwarted refer to someone’s ethnicity. The German-born Kanaksters are right when they say ‘I’d be crazy, if I were to look for the kitsch of the original, when I’ve got the big city stuff scattered right outside my front door.’ They say, ‘I’m a mixed Aleman [German], I loot all the depots, I’m a patron and not a hipster fucker with a season ticket and an obligation to vote for a particular party.’”¹⁷⁹

But in the essays I discussed in this chapter, it appears Zaimoğlu is less optimistic regarding this kind of subversive performativity, which is perhaps why as Frauke Matthes observes in 2007,

Nowadays, his [Zaimoğlu’s] impulse to ‘fight’ has calmed down tremendously, or rather he “fights” in commercial terms.... Zaimoğlu’s ‘Mißtöne’ [discords] seem to be out of fashion. Or are they not necessary anymore? The latter is unlikely but the margins have largely been silenced again or have silenced themselves. One explanation could be that

¹⁷⁵ “Außerdem birgt dieser Ansatz die Gefahr, Minderheiten ausschließlich im Bezug auf das Ghetto (als kulturellen Raum außerhalb des Zentrums) wahrzunehmen und dadurch längst bewältigt geglaubte kulturalistische Positionen wiederzubeleben.“ Ibid., 42.

¹⁷⁶ Broeck, “The Erotics of African American Endurance, Or: On the Right Side of History? White (West)-German Sentiment between Pornotroping and Civil Rights Solidarity,” 127.

¹⁷⁷ Cheesman, “Akçam – Zaimoğlu – ‘Kanak Attak’: Turkish Lives and Letters in German,” 84.

¹⁷⁸ See Hall, “New Ethnicities.”

¹⁷⁹ “Es gibt Deutsch mit überkommenen Biografien, die bei Kanak Attack mitmachen, sich *Kanakenter* nennen... Warum nicht? Auf die Ethnie beziehen sich die Ausgebremsten. Die deutschstämmigen *Kanakenter* sagen richtig, wenn die Großstadtartikel vor meiner Haustür gestreut sind, wär ich doch ein meschuggener Strizzi, suchte ich den Kitschmatsch des Ursprungs. Sie sagen, ich bin ein mischiger Aleman, ich plündere alle Depots, ich bin ein Patron und nicht ein Hipsterficker mit Abocard und Fraktionszwang.” <http://www.cikolata.de/feridun.htm>. Accessed 4 February 2011.

Zaimoğlu ... has grown older and more settled... he transformed from a *Kanake* to an “intellectual.”¹⁸⁰

In a more recent interview with Philipp Ostrowicz and Stefanie Ulrich, Zaimoğlu rants against postmodernism: “In my eyes, postmodernism was a big delusion. Nonsense. We only celebrated the crass absurdity. People juggled with terms taken from their sociology seminar and thought they were true. Suddenly it became true that things were neither solid nor fluid.”¹⁸¹

In “Ali macht männchen,” Zaimoğlu argues that the only way the *bimbo* (read Negro or Turk) can exist in the center is as a slave: “the slave seldom breaks out of such a nice fucking bracket... he is only agreeable on a leash... one enjoys seeing him when he’s constricted.”¹⁸² Part of this slave status has to do with the types of jobs the Other is allowed to do. The jobs Zaimoğlu lists are all manual labor or unrespectable and unattractive jobs – positions where the worker is not meant to be seen and certainly not heard: “a stranger is only imaginable and only noted in the public registry, if he tastes good and doesn’t hurt the eyes, if he hides credo and strength behind his waiter’s smock, a stranger serves or is a backdrop or something to fuck from Taiwan or a jazz nigger with an affordable offering of coke or with a headscarf as a cleaning rag for the parquet.”¹⁸³

If those who are assimilated and allowed to be a part of the middle are so constricted, one might expect that those on the margins are freer. However, Zaimoğlu rejects such simple binaries. As Ayse Caglar argues, “being marginalized and living in the ‘ghetto’ does not inherently keep one from getting caught up in the stream of commercialization.”¹⁸⁴ In Zaimoğlu’s eyes, those on the margins are not any freer than their assimilated brethren at the center. The Turks on the margins are allowed to be “colorful” or different, but only as long as it serves the system: “germany discovers foreign culture in the lowest box, and it is celebrated on every street corner at full volume. profit knows no exaggeration on its side, but borders upon borders: profit needs borders to create divisions, and then suddenly the nuisance is no longer social. Suddenly it’s nigger’s loud music this and kanak’s knife that and the german proletariat can’t allow that.”¹⁸⁵

In this last statement Zaimoğlu argues that in Germany, foreign culture, which only exists at the very bottom of the cultural hierarchy, is merely of interest to the hegemony when it can make a profit. In such cases, like the success of German hip hop, this culture is championed by

¹⁸⁰ Matthes, “‘Was ist deutsch, Bestimmen Wir’: Definitions of (Turkish-) Germanness in Feridun Zaimoğlu’s *Kanak Sprach* and *Koppstoff*,” 31.

¹⁸¹ “Die Postmoderne ist in meinen Augen eine große Verirrung gewesen. Ein Blödsinn. Eigentlich hat man ja nur den groben Unfug gefeiert. Man jogolierte mit Begriffen aus dem Soziologieseminar und dachte, das ist wahr. Plötzlich wird es wahr, dass es nämlich nichts Festes gibt und nichts Flüssiges.” Ostrowicz and Ulrich, “‘Wer Augen hat, der sehe, und das Wissenswerte wird einem dann kundgetan.’ Interview mit Feridun Zaimoğlu,” 184.

¹⁸² “aus so ner fucking nice klammer bricht der knecht selten aus... nur an leine isser verträglich... nur gut und gern gesehen innerhalb einer einschränkung.” Zaimoğlu, “Ali macht männchen,” 85.

¹⁸³ “n fremder ist denkbar nur und im öffentlichen register, wenns dem gaumen schmeckt und dem auge nix wehtut, wenn er kredo und kraft versteckt hinterm kellnerkittel, n fremder serviert oder ist kulisse oder is was zum ficken aus Taiwan odern jazz-neger mit günstigem koksangebot odern kopftuch zum feudeln des parketts...” Ibid., 87.

¹⁸⁴ “Marginalisiert zu sein und im ‚Ghetto‘ zu leben feit daher nicht grundsätzlich davor, in den Sog der Kommerzialisierung zu geraten.” Caglar, “Verordnete Rebellion: Deutsch-Türkischer Rap und Türkischer Pop in Berlin,” 45.

¹⁸⁵ “dtschland hat die fremde nature entdeckt in der niedersten kaste, unds wird um jeden hausblock gefeuert aus vollem rohr, profit kennt keine übertreibung auf seiner seite und doch grenzen über grenzen: die setzt er zur entzweigung, und der mißstand ist plötzlich nicht mehr sozial, er ist plötzlich niggers laute musik und *Kanaken* messer und der dtschprolet kanns nicht zulassen.” Zaimoğlu, “Ali macht männchen,” 87.

all. As long as a profit can be made, a German record company does not care about difference: it takes money from Germans and Turks alike. Furthermore, divisions can be useful for increasing profit; as Adorno and Horkheimer stated in regards to the culture industry: “The advantages and disadvantages debated by enthusiasts [of two products] serve only to perpetuate the appearance of competition and choice.”¹⁸⁶ It is the perpetuation of this notion of difference that leads to real, social, economic and often physical problems. Mainstream German society might enjoy Oriental hip hop, but if Turks are always portrayed as the Other, then one charismatic Turkish rapper will not erase Germans’ assumptions that Turkish youth are all thugs. Thus, while businesses capitalize on perpetuating difference, citizens sympathize with “violent perpetrators ‘provoked’ by the sight of the Other.”¹⁸⁷

Black popular culture has “arrived” in mainstream German society and this may have broken Blacks out of the role of victim, but it seems like not much has changed in terms of how Black popular culture is essentialized. Whether Germans love Black culture or condemn it, they still seem to view Black popular culture as *other than* German. Thus, Turkish German identification with Black popular culture will not necessarily help them break into the German mainstream; instead it might just confirm Germans’ assumptions that Turkish culture, like Black popular culture, is irreconcilable with German culture. So at carnival, rather than donning blackface, a German might now dress the part of the *Kanakster*. Instead of empowering Turkish German youth, hip hop seems to have become another form of confining them. One of the ways to liberate young Turkish Germans from their association with the ghetto and gangsta lifestyle might be to acknowledge hip hop culture, along with its negative aspects like violence, hypersexuality and radical consumerism, as a part of German culture.

Regarding the controversy of the hip hop song “Geh zur Polizei” (Join the Police), Tom Cheesman suggested that rapper Boulevard Bou’s contemporaries took offense to his song because most rappers are anti-police, like “any urban youth subculture worth the name.”¹⁸⁸ However, if one were no longer to think of hip hop in Germany as a subculture and therefore inherently marginal and against the mainstream, then there would be room for both anti-police and pro-police messages. For now, promotion of hip hop as a subculture might pacify Turkish German youth by 1) affirming they are different from the mainstream, which amounts to giving them recognition 2) proving that the state/mainstream is *still* interested in them, despite their difference, by supporting their hip hop efforts and consuming their music. But reiterating the narrative that Turkish Germans are always already non-mainstream just maintains old borders.

Furthermore, focusing on Turkish Germans’ opportunities in music (and sport like the national soccer player Mesut Özil) might take away from focusing on other areas pertinent to integration, such as citizenship, education reform and the availability of jobs and apprenticeships. In *Kanak Sprak*, Abdurrahman refers to pop as promising fantasies, like children’s fairy tales of knights and dragons. But in contemporary German society, hip hop also provides fairy tales, which is perhaps how the *Kanaken* are silenced and silence themselves. The *Kanak* not fortunate enough to become a “ghetto-runaway” remains in the “ghettos” hoping to be

¹⁸⁶ Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, 97.

¹⁸⁷ Cheesman, “Akçam – Zaimoğlu – ‘Kanak Attak’: Turkish Lives and Letters in German,” 95.

¹⁸⁸ Cheesman, “Polyglot Politics. Hip Hop in Germany,” 210.

the next one to get his big break. Ultimately, German rappers who glorify violence and mythologize “Robin Hood” narratives are not going to make a real impact on the immigration debate. Zaimoğlu focuses on the margins not simply in order to “give them a voice;” rather as a popcultural icon and intellectual at the center, he embraced the margins in order to “challenge and, consequently, redefine the ‘center’ of the German mainstream.”¹⁸⁹ When I suggest emancipating German hip hop from the designation of subculture, it is not the same as *Deutschrap*’s “emancipation of German HipHop from its socio-cultural origins and its political or socially critical function.”¹⁹⁰ One can still recognize hip hop’s origins while simultaneously acknowledging that both in the U.S. and in Germany it has exceeded its subcultural status and is no longer necessarily in opposition to the mainstream, or purely a youth phenomenon. Freeing German hip hop from the limitations of subculture would help counter the structuralist thinking that equates Turkish males with gangsta culture and forces young people into binaries like mainstream(center)/hip hop or German/Turkish.

¹⁸⁹ Matthes, “‘Was ist deutsch, Bestimmen Wir’: Definitions of (Turkish-) Germanness in Feridun Zaimoğlu’s *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff*,” 19.

¹⁹⁰ Loentz, “Yiddish, Kanak Sprak, Klezmer, and Hiphop: Ethnolect, Minority Culture, Multiculturalism, and Stereotype in Germany,” 59.

Conclusion

What I believe we can draw from my analyses in the last six chapters is that throughout the 20th century, Germans associated Black popular culture with a certain freedom. According to Paul Gilroy, this Western association between Black popular culture and freedom is based on Blacks' experience during chattel slavery and colonialism which had made the Black subject into a universal sign for enslavement:

Their [slaves'] hermeneutic agency grounded a vernacular culture premised on the possibility that freedom should be pursued outside of the rules, codes and expectations of colour-coded civilisation. The transgression of those codes was itself a sign that freedom was being claimed. It presented the possibility of an (anti)politics animated by the desire to violate - a negation of unjust, oppressive and therefore illegitimate authority. By breaking these rules in small, though ritualised ways it was possible to deface the clean edifice of white supremacy that fortified tainted and therefore inauthentic freedoms. Cultures of insubordination located more substantive and worthwhile freedoms in the capacity to follow moral imperatives in restricted circumstances. They were elaborated through the media of music and dance as well as through writing.¹

However, although “Blacks”² worldwide were oppressed during the postwar era, Germans seemed to prefer the liberation signified by African *American* culture, for reasons I articulated in the introduction. During the years of social unrest and global liberation movements following WWII, the icons of Black political struggle in Germany were more so African *Americans* like Angela Davis and Eldrige Cleaver, rather than Afro-Caribbean intellectuals such as Aimé Césaire or Frantz Fanon. In a few of the texts I discussed, Africa is mentioned briefly, such as in *Die Blechtrommel* or *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* However, African American culture clearly plays a greater role in postwar German rebellion.

This is not to say, however, that Africans and Africa did not play a role in protest movements in at least West Germany. In his article, “Dissident Guests: Afro-Asian Students and Transnational Activism in the West German Protest Movement,” Quinn Slobodian even argues that not *American* but Afro-Asian students were key in moving German students to political action in the 1960s. “The most visible Third World campaigns in West Germany in the early 1960s were directed against Portuguese colonialism [in Angola], South African racism, and political repression in Iran.”³ German students even drew comparisons between the Holocaust and Portuguese and South African violence against Blacks. Furthermore, it was the death of a German student at a protest against the Iranian Shah – said student, Benno Ohnesorg was shot in the head by a policeman on June 2, 1967 – that convinced many German students they were as much victims of violence as their Third World brothers and sisters.

¹ Gilroy, “‘After the Love Has Gone’: Bio-Politics and Etho-Poetics in the Black Public Sphere,” 70.

² Especially if you read the term Black loosely to include oppressed peoples throughout the Americas and Asia, see Hall, “New Ethnicities.”

³ Quinn Slobodian, “Dissident Guests: Afro-Asian Students and Transnational Activism in the West German Protest Movement,” in *Migration and Activism in Europe since 1945*, ed. Wendy Pojmann (New York: Palgrave, 1998), 34.

Despite the clear influence of African students on German student activism during this period, there are several reasons why I believe Africans did not become icons of the German protest movement. First of all, African culture was not as prominent in West Germany as, for example, in neighboring France. French intellectuals like Sartre were enthralled with the African-Caribbean Negritude movement, in part because as citizens of French colonies, the African and Caribbean intellectuals pioneering this movement represented the effects of colonialism coming home to roost in France. Having lost its colonies much earlier, Germany did not have such an intimate political and cultural relationship to Africa. In this respect, Germans certainly felt closer to African Americans and African American culture. Second of all, African students were subject to laws which West Germany put in place in order to hinder their political activity. In 1965, a foreigner law was passed which prohibited foreign students from any political activity that would interfere with German interests.⁴ Non-complying students could be deported immediately, without being able to appeal to courts. Slobodian even relates an incident where a Nigerian student was arrested and deported immediately, before his allies or the press could even inquire into the case. Aside from worries about foreign relations, West Germany also feared Afro-Asian students would create unrest among guest workers.

In contrast, the activities of African American GIs protesting for Civil Rights in Germany were under the jurisdiction of the U.S. military. Perhaps African Americans had more freedom to organize than the African students, many of whom faced discriminatory treatment from both West Germany and their home countries. More research is needed to follow up on these disparities and perhaps provide more examples of how African culture is represented in West and East German literature and film. Monika Albrecht touches on this subject in her study of West German discourses on postcolonialism, *Europa ist nicht die Welt*. In one chapter, she addresses engagements with colonialism in the writings of Max Frisch, Alfred Andersch and Uwe Timm among others. In Albrecht's words, "colonialism was seldom the focus of a text, but it was frequently included with varying emphasis."⁵

The texts Albrecht discusses are set in various locations, from South America to Asia. Only a few are set in Africa, such as Ernst Schnabell's *Großes Tamtam. Ansichten vom Kongo* (Big Tam-Tam: Pictures of the Congo, 1952) and Uwe Timm's *Morenga* (1978). These texts range from naïve praises of a mythical Africa that had little to do with the postcolonial present – such as Ingeborg Bachmann's poem *Liebe: Dunkler Erdteil* (Love: Dark Continent, 1957) – to narratives about sympathetic Germans who are appalled by the conditions in the colonies (see Schnabell). But are the Africans in these texts just represented as a mass of oppressed victims "best represented by the 'Nodding Negro' (*Nickneger*) donation boxes portraying begging black figures that sat in many West German churches into the 1960s"⁶ or are there also instances in postwar German film and literature where Africa(ns) are associated with freedom, rebellion and innovative culture? For example, in Timm's *Morenga* a German soldier serving in German Southwest Africa witnesses the Herero revolt. His horror over the Germans' rule makes him not

⁴ Ibid., 46.

⁵ "...der Kolonialismus [anvancierte] zwar selten zum Zentrum eines Textes, doch [wurde] häufig mit unterschiedlicher Gewichtung als Thema mitgeführt." Albrecht, "*Europa ist nicht die Welt*": (Post)Kolonialismus in der Literatur und Geschichte der westdeutschen Nachkriegszeit, 139.

⁶ Slobodian, "Dissident Guests: Afro-Asian Students and Transnational Activism in the West German Protest Movement," 38.

only sympathetic to the Herero; this experience combined with his personal interaction with Herero people leads him to conclude that in contrast to German Social Darwinism, the Africans' practice of mutual aid was by far superior. In Timm's novel, the Herero are not merely victims. Perhaps more research on this subject would reveal more such representations of colonialism in Africa.

Considering how small the presence of Blacks was in the German Empire, during Weimar and how much smaller it became under the Nazi regime, by the time *Die Blechtrommel* was published in 1959, Germany no longer needed to construct "Blackness without Blacks." By the late 1950s, Germans had grown accustomed to a Black presence – particularly African American GIs serving in West Germany and in West Berlin. In numerous accounts, Germans' recollections of their first encounters with Black GIs are sometimes intertwined with a bit of fear, but they are overwhelmingly positive.⁷ In happy memories, Black men are portrayed as benevolent, generous and always smiling. These Black soldiers might have impressed with their strength, tall stature and quintessentially well-fed American figures – doughboys – but from the beginning of postwar occupation, Black soldiers also embodied struggle, suffering and oppression. As I mentioned in Chapter Five, the army that occupied Germany was initially a Jim Crow army and it would stay that way until the early 1950s. Germans were used to witnessing as Black GIs were ignored, insulted and mistreated by their white peers and superiors and even refused service, room and board by some Germans who were pressured by white Americans to conform. Despite President Truman's order to desegregate in 1948, the US Army was not desegregated on all levels until 1954.⁸

Chapters Five and Six addressed the issue of what happens to Germans' idolization of Black rebellion, when Blacks, in particular African Americans, slowly gained more rights and began entering the middle-class in larger numbers in the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, Chapter Three even hints at what this change meant for Germans. The African Americans Germans encountered in the early 20th century were happy to get beyond America's segregated confines and be celebrated (albeit exoticized) and treated more like equals. This euphoria continued after WWII, when Black GIs reveled in the freedom they experienced in Germany – fleeting moments of dignity embedded in the overall degrading experience of serving in a segregated army. However, in *A Breath of Freedom*, Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke point out that by the 1970s, a different kind of Black GI came to Germany. This Black GI was not just happy to dance with white women, only to be turned down for an apartment in the same week. Affected by the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Panthers and Afrocentricism, the Black GIs who served in Germany in the 1970s wanted *all* of their freedoms recognized and equal respect by all. Furthermore, these more confident Black GIs no longer needed or wanted the empathy and solidarity of their white sympathizers of the German student movement. Perhaps this is why in *Whity*, Fassbinder might give us a Black protagonist who rebels, but his rebellion is very individualist and it is a rebellion the audience should be critical of.

Fast forward 54 years after desegregation. On July 24th, 2008, Barack Obama, then still a hopeful presidential candidate, delivered a speech to an audience of 100,000 people. Although he

⁷ See for example Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins*.

⁸ Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany*, 2.

followed in their footsteps, Obama certainly gathered a much larger crowd than his predecessors Martin Luther King Jr. and Paul Robeson – both of whom also attracted impressive crowds during the Sixties in East and West Berlin.⁹ Obama's American critics were confused and even upset that a US presidential candidate felt it necessary to address a foreign audience abroad instead of focusing solely on Americans' opinions of him. They were even more puzzled at the Obama-fever that seemed to captivate Germany. From those present at his speech to the teens and tweens that proudly hung his poster on their wall courtesy of the youth magazine *Bravo*, Germans were enthralled by this young, smart, handsome and Black presidential candidate. The fact that Americans had already been comparing Obama to Kennedy, perhaps the most loved American president in Germany, only strengthened this love affair.

If one were to hold up Obama's image against that of one of the many Black GIs photographed in Germany immediately after the war, the most obvious difference is how much *American* society has changed. Not only does racial discrimination no longer pervade the military, but Americans are prepared to and did vote for a Black president. If in Germany from the 1950s until the 1990s, the image of the Black man evoked such associations as oppression, suffering, struggle and rebellion, how might these associations now change in an age where a Black man leads the most powerful nation in the world? Considering not only the diversity of the Black experience in previous decades, but also the most recent accomplishments in the African Diaspora, I do believe that viewing Black culture as inherently rebellious and different merely propagates existing binaries and as a result solidifies hegemonic German culture. In reality, there are African Americans who can be as conservative or *spiessig* as the German middle-class. Not recognizing this fact limits the possibilities of Black popular culture and denies a long history of German rebellion.

Today, the Federal Republic of Germany is 62 years old. Of the rebellious rock 'n' roll and jazz fans of the 1950s, and the German student radicals of the 1960s, several have become prominent politicians. As representatives of the state, they are no longer fighting *against* the hegemony, rather they have inherited dominant rule. Thus, if these white Germans who once identified with oppressed minorities in order to counter hegemonic German culture were actually destined to become the hegemony all along, can their former actions really be considered rebellious? Regardless of where these rebels ended up today, they did effectively *change* German culture in many ways. Blues, jazz and rock 'n' roll culture are no longer perceived as alien and different than German culture; rather it is expected that contemporary odes to German unity be written in the form of a rock song.

There are certainly problems that occur when the children of the oppressors seek to identify with the oppressed. James Baldwin addressed this issue when he responded to Norman Mailer's "The White Negro." In Chapter Two, I mentioned Baldwin's essay "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy" – an essay in which he reflects upon his first encounter with Norman Mailer in France. Baldwin was very critical of Mailer's fascination with Black popular culture and expectations of Black masculinity which seemed largely based on Mailer's friendship with Black jazz musicians. Baldwin felt entrapped by Mailer's perception of Black masculinity. To

⁹ See *Ibid.*

Baldwin, the white man's fascination with Black popular culture has to do with a longing to recover an innocence which Black people know they must surrender in order to survive. But for Baldwin, the loss experienced by "white Negroes" is not even real, because it refers to a dream, a fantasy like that of George Shelby in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when he witnesses singing in the slave cabins only to go up to his comfortable estate house and express to his father his pain for "his people" being sold off. Baldwin says the reality of oppression, real loss, is not romantic and white Americans' refusal to face their own truth makes them incapable of facing the reality of Blacks' experience. In the context of my study, if Germans are not willing to face the horrors of their own legacy, they will not face the horrors of Blacks' legacy either.

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, Baldwin seems to agree with Mailer's argument that a Black man faces death every day. But while Mailer suggests the "White negro" can do the same in his engagement with Black popular culture, Baldwin disagrees. He argues that "... to become a Negro man, let alone a Negro artist, one had to make oneself up as one went along. This had to be done in the not-at-all-metaphorical teeth of the world's determination to destroy you."¹⁰ Baldwin's reflections remind us that white German rebels can always be made back into members of society, if they conform. They *can* assimilate. However, this task is not as easy for minorities in Germany.

In light of the fact that we currently live in an era of globalization that many argue weakens the concept of national culture, is there still even a hegemonic German culture to speak of? Mark Terkessidis, a leading researcher on the issue of migration in Germany and author of several influential books on the subject,¹¹ believes there is. As late as 1999, Germany's citizenship law was still based on blood; in order to qualify for German citizenship, an individual had to have at least one parent of German blood. The *Ausländergesetz* (Foreigner Law) of 1990 had introduced the stipulation that foreigners who had been living in Germany for 15 years could be naturalized. But only in 2000 was the law changed "such that children born on German soil to a non-German parent who resided legally in the country for eight years are now entitled to German citizenship."¹² The previous citizenship law was based on a law passed in 1913. The fact that it took so long for lawmakers to create a law that reflected a more heterogeneous German population reveals the persistence of Wilhelmine notions of an essential (white) German identity that could only be passed on through blood. According to Terkessidis, "after 2000, for many it was the first time that they had to realize that the 'foreigners' would not just eventually leave, but that they had long become a part of the German population. This was definitely an epochal moment. And it was at exactly this moment that people became afraid of the loss of control."¹³

This loss of control that Germans fear is the loss of a white, Christian hegemonic German culture. In order to uphold cultural hegemony, the acceptance of foreign residents has become

¹⁰ Baldwin, "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," 232.

¹¹ Terkessidis is the author of *Die Banalität des Rassismus: Migranten zweiter Generation entwickeln eine neue Perspektive* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2004) and *Migranten* (Hamburg: Rotbuch, 2000) as well as the co-author of *Fliehkraft: eine Gesellschaft in Bewegung – von Migranten und Touristen* (Cologne: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 2006) and co-editor of *Globalkolorit: Multikulturalismus und Populärkultur* (St. Andrä/Wördern: Hannibal 1994) and *Mainstream der Minderheiten: Pop in der Kontrollgesellschaft* (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1997).

¹² Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration*, 7.

¹³ "Nach 2000 mussten viele erstmals begreifen, dass die 'Ausländer' nicht mehr fortgehen würden und dass sie längst Teil der deutschen Bevölkerung geworden sind. Das war durchaus ein epochales Moment. Und exakt in diesem Moment setzte die Angst vor dem Verlust der Kontrolle ein." Mark Terkessidis, *Interkultur* (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 2010), 30.

dependent on the condition that they adopt a German *Leitkultur* (guiding culture). With the notion of *Interkultur* (interculture) Terkessidis suggests creating laws that serve German society as it currently exists and not according to white Germans' imagination of what it should be like. He is very critical of politicians' dependence on an essential Germanness that is vague and often does not reflect the values of many ethnic Germans. In his opinion, the term "integration" has been hijacked by the rigid notion that foreigners conform to an essential Germanness in order to become a part of society and that is why he prefers the term interculture.

The term integration is once again fashionable after 30 years. But it isn't very useful. Because in Germany all kinds of ideas are hidden behind this word; ideas about what it means to be German, how people should behave themselves in 'our' presence, and what they shouldn't do, who has the right requirements and who falls short, for whom the institutions have been created and who is actually just a guest. At the moment, the widespread ideas of being German are so antiquated that the native Germans can't even conform their lifestyles according to them. People still link being German to having a talent for organization, order, diligence, reliability and romantic reflectivity.¹⁴

Terkessidis' concept of interculture insists that Germans take "the plurality on the streets as a basis for a different idea of the German population."¹⁵ But he acknowledges that for most Germans, this idea is frightening. However; as frightening as such a change might be, German culture has changed over the years, people have just taken these changes for granted. For example, Terkessidis points out how the conservative party the *Christliche Demokratische Union* (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) insists that the "hard-earned position of women in our society' is a component of 'guiding culture.'"¹⁶ However, historically the CDU has been more of an opponent than a proponent of feminism; "[the party] was hitherto definitely not known as the party for emancipation."¹⁷ Nonetheless, since the second feminist movement of the 1970s, a woman's right to equal treatment has become such a fixed part of German identity that such conservative politicians do not acknowledge how relatively new this notion is; let alone that women still earn on average significantly less than their male counterparts. Thus, it is as deceitful for Germans to say that Muslim culture is naturally oppressive to women as opposed to German culture, as it is for Germans to pretend that the current form of their culture has always existed.

When it comes to rebellion and struggle between the hegemony and the subordinate, rather than there being one person or group in power and everyone else is powerless, power consists of a matrix. As Michel Foucault has demonstrated in *The History of Sexuality*, everyone

¹⁴ "Der Begriff Integration ist nach über 30 Jahren wieder in Mode. Sehr sinnvoll ist das nicht. Denn in Deutschland verbergen sich hinter diesem Wort allerlei unausgesprochene Vorstellungen darüber, was 'Deutschsein' bedeutet, wie Leute sich bei 'uns' benehmen müssen und was sie nicht tun sollten, wer die richtigen Voraussetzungen hat und wer Defizite, für wen die Institutionen gemacht sind und wer da eigentlich nur zu Gast ist. Nun sind die verbreiteten Ideen vom Deutschsein jedoch so altbacken, dass selbst die Einheimischen ihre Lebensweisen darin nicht mehr unterbringen können. Immer noch bringt man deutsch in Verbindung mit Organisationstalent, Ordnung, Fleiß, Zuverlässigkeit und romantischer Tiefe." Ibid., 7-8.

¹⁵ "die Vielheit auf den Straßen zum Ausgangspunkt zu nehmen für eine andere Idee der deutschen Bevölkerung." Ibid., 8.

¹⁶ "die... erkämpfte Stellung der Frau in unserer Gesellschaft' [ist] Bestandteil der 'Leitkultur.'" Ibid., 13.

¹⁷ "sie war zuvor sicher nicht als Partei der Emanzipation bekannt." Ibid.

has some kind of power and upholds the system in some way.¹⁸ White Germans' solidarity with oppressed groups means nothing, if they do not also acknowledge their own privilege and whiteness. For example, in his interviews with white Australian gospel singers, E. Patrick Johnson found that "Some [Australian] choir members link their history of descent exiled convicts to black Americans' history as descendants of slaves. For these singers, the music becomes a vehicle through which to express repressed sorrow and grief."¹⁹ Johnson notes, however, these singers' failure to recognize their own white privilege, the distinctions between the African American experience and theirs, and the irony of their mistreatment of the Aboriginal community.

In the West German Blues scene, some leftists tried to show how anti-essentialist they were by refusing to embrace *all* Black musicians and instead differentiating between artists who were truly political and those who embraced the Black Power movement out of purely commercial reasons, which they accused James Brown of doing. Historian Detlef Siegfried describes fliers distributed in the West Berlin Blues scene which had the title "Not all Pigs are Pink!" and referred to James Brown as a "black pig."²⁰ These young Germans believed that by criticizing James Brown for his commercialism they were being particular about which Black musicians they accepted, instead of arbitrarily embracing all Black musicians. What these Blues fans failed to understand was that in criticizing James Brown, they furthered the myth that the only acceptable Black popular music is "authentic," untouched and cannot be corrupted by capitalism. This viewpoint also confines and essentializes Black popular culture. In general, East Germany's position on rock n roll, that "Real Black popular music" was Blues and gospel, also shows how they policed the meanings of Black culture from a position of authority.²¹

Johnson reflected on his study, "On the one hand, these gospel singers identify with an oppressed group thousands of miles away, and they condemn their oppressors. On the other hand, they fail to acknowledge the ways in which they participate in the subjugation of 'the blacks' of their own country."²² The same could be said about the German student movement's lack of discussion about the discrimination against guest workers and Afro-Germans. Just like the German students who likely knew more about the African American Civil Rights Movement than Afro-Germans' century long history, Johnson found that "white Australian gospel singers seem to be oblivious to Aboriginal musical traditions. Instead, they cross-identify with a group of people thousands of miles from their shores."²³ Johnson argues, "The cross-identification with black Americans represents one instance of a denial of privilege."²⁴ Johnson's study also shows how the ways in which alliances are made between whites who feel oppressed and Blacks whose culture they treasure depends on the construction of Black popular culture and the varying meanings of Black. As a Black American in Australia, he was respected and encountered no instances of racism. On one occasion, a cab driver explained that Johnson had a hard time getting

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley. 3 vols. Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

¹⁹ Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*, 181.

²⁰ Siegfried, "Authentisch schwarz: Blues in der Gegenkultur um 1970," 219.

²¹ This is similar to how some of the *Hobbyindianer* Katrin Sieg spoke to also felt they had superior knowledge about Native American culture compared to many people who are of Native American descent.

²² Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*, 182.

²³ *Ibid.*, 186.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 183.

a cab at night because the drivers probably thought he was a “Black” – not the right kind of “Black” [African American] but the wrong kind [Aboriginal].²⁵

The tendency of white Germans to identify with African American suffering without considering their own position in hegemonic German society reveals both a failure to recognize their white privilege and a failure to recognize that Black popular culture does not only refer to a performance or fantasy, but also a tangible racial and often violent experience lived by Black people worldwide. When Germans equated the discrimination of African Americans in the US with the generational conflict they faced, for example being asked to leave an establishment because of having long hair,²⁶ this shows that these Germans were not aware of their white privilege. A Black man walking into a whites-only restaurant in the Jim Crow South most likely would not only be asked to leave, but possibly would have faced physical retaliation. For Black Americans, leading up to the Civil Rights Movement, lynchings, beatings and all kinds of physical acts of violence (and a lack of justice) were a daily reality. This is a part of the tangible Black experience that one does not share because of an interest in Black popular music or style. Germans’ acknowledgment of this fact is growing with the increasing importance of whiteness studies in the German academy (See Eggers et. al. 2005).²⁷

Furthermore, Chapter Six demonstrated that in our modern age of “cool hunting” and the co-opting of subcultures by the mainstream, aspects of a marginal culture might become a part of the hegemony and help change German culture, but it might not necessarily effect change in power relations. For example, Germans have become so accustomed to eating the Turkish *Döner* sandwich that it is practically a national staple. But despite their acceptance of Turkish *food*, there is still resistance to accepting Turkish culture as European or complimentary to German culture.

I do not believe it is necessarily essentializing when a German sees him- or herself in solidarity with a minority group, rather it depends on a number of factors. The questions Kobena Mercer raises regarding Jean Genet’s work with the Black Panthers, which I mentioned in Chapter Three, give us an example of how complicated this issue is.²⁸ I think the phenomenon of mimicking Black popular culture or feeling solidarity with Blacks would need to be treated on a case by case basis. I agree with Mercer and do not believe that the German leftists who acted in solidarity with the Black Panthers were necessarily essentializing Black culture. However, it is important to consider whether or not these Germans acknowledged the multiplicity of Black identities. Was every Black person to them always already a musically inclined, hypersexual revolutionary? Or did they acknowledge the difference between, for example, Malcom X and the more conservative, Christian Martin Luther King, Jr?

When it comes to the solidarity felt between the actors I have discussed and African Americans, another important thing to consider is whether this solidarity is based on mutual experience of oppression or merely an experience of having power enacted on them. As Peter

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “daß es dir mit dem langen Haaren plötzlich wie einem Neger gegangen ist” (suddenly you were treated like a Negro because of your long hair). Siegfried, “Authentisch schwarz: Blues in der Gegenkultur um 1970,” 222.

²⁷ Maureen Maisa Eggers, Grada Kilomba, Peggt Piesche and Susan Arndt, ed., *Mythen, Masken und Subjekte: Kritische Weißseinforschung in Deutschland* (Münster: Unrast, 2005).

²⁸ See also Sandarg, “Jean Genet and the Black Panther Party.”

Middleton stresses in his investigation of masculinity, *The Inward Gaze*, when power is enacted on someone, this does not necessarily mean the person is oppressed:

Power is a network of possibilities into which any individual may be able to place him or herself, but the entry restrictions are complex and exclusive. The weakness of the general concept of power is that it assumes that the possession of power is equivalent to the intention to abuse it...Adults have power over children but this does not mean that children are directly oppressed by adults (although there is a case for arguing that some oppression does result).²⁹

Middleton's remarks beg me to question whether all of the younger rebels I discussed only felt oppressed because of their age. How would these actors have behaved as adults? Would they still have felt like outsiders or just have become integrated into the mainstream? Oskar's self-inflicted dwarfism and Edgar's premature death foreclosed these possibilities. But Rull could have eventually allowed himself to be integrated, like the rebel turned Minister for the Interior Joschka Fischer. In contrast, Fassbinder and Zaimoğlu represent oppressed minority groups; even if their professions afford them certain privileges. When it comes to solidarity between Germans and African Americans, I find it is most important that the monologue about Black popular culture becomes a dialogue with Blacks. As Bernhard Waldenfels argues, it is impossible to speak for ourselves and for others simultaneously.³⁰

Masculinity Revisited

One of the starting points for this dissertation was the notion that throughout postwar Germany, a particular Black masculinity offered an alternative model for those who did not conform to hegemonic German masculinity. The desire to be or be like a Black male is also something that white Americans like Jack Kerouac, Lou Reed and even Donald Trump have expressed. Thus, this is neither solely a German nor American desire; nor is it solely a desire of artists and rebels – unless one could consider Donald Trump a rogue in the business world. Bakari Kitwana, author of *Why White Kids Love Hip Hop*, points out that Trump's fantasy in particular does not reflect the reality of Black men in America. In fact, while covering Barack Obama's presidential campaign in 2008, the German magazine the *Stern* pointed out that despite African Americans' accomplishments since the Civil Rights-era, there are staggering differences in statistics regarding poverty, unemployment and incarceration in the Black community in contrast to the rest of America:

²⁹ Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), 152.

³⁰ "The expression 'I are we all' or better 'I is one of us' is invalid because with this sentence, we talk about a general I-function, but we do not say 'I' and naturally we don't say 'you' either. The me that says 'we all are' is a me that belongs to what is said, not to who said it." "Die Äußerung 'Ich sind wir alle' oder besser 'Ich ist jeder von uns' krankt daran, daß wir mit diesem Satz über eine allgemeine Ichfunktion sprechen, aber nicht 'ich' sagen und natürlich auch nicht 'du.' Das Ich, das 'wir alle sind,' ist ein Ich, das dem Gesagten angehört, nicht dem sagen." Bernhard Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden*, vol. 1, *Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 29.

The number of Black college students has risen in the last 15 years from 1.3 to 2.3 million per year. Nevertheless there are still more Blacks in jail than in college. Blacks represent 13 percent of the American population, but they only fill 3 percent of top positions in business and politics [...] 60 percent of Blacks believe that relations between the races are bad. Only 34 percent of whites believe the same. The average income of Blacks is 32,200 Dollars; the average income of whites is 48,000 Dollars. The unemployment rate for whites is 4 percent; for Blacks it's 8. Employers often prefer white applicants. 'Yet, many whites argue: Hey, there are a lot of Black artists, athletes and actors.' ...³¹

Considering the history of Black men seeking alternative employment in entertainment and sports since Abolition, it is no wonder that the success of Black entertainers and athletes is *still* used as an argument that racial equality exists in America. As R.W. Connell suggests, "in the United States, particular black athletes may be exemplars for hegemonic masculinity. But the fame and wealth of individual stars has no trickle-down effect; it does not yield social authority to black men generally."³² And in view of the similar stereotypes about Black popular culture that exist in Germany, it is also not surprising that Afro-Germans and "politically Black" Turkish Germans have also been relatively successful in these realms.³³

Although the notion of the "more liberated Black man" is certainly a myth, I do believe that Black masculinity did offer a bit more flexibility for white American and German men in the postwar era. Nevertheless, due to Black men's commitment to patriarchy, at its core, hegemonic Black masculinity was not that much of an alternative. Before the Civil Rights Movement, Black men were often characterized as infantile, naïve and innocent (in contrast to emasculating, strong Black woman.)³⁴ Since the 1960s and 1970s, a revolutionary and sexual Black masculinity has been celebrated throughout America. And since the arrival of hip hop culture in the late 1970s, the "gangsta" has dominated ideas of Black masculinity. Despite conservative America's outrage against this gangsta culture, both Bakari Kitwana and bell hooks have argued that the appeal of gangsta masculinity for white Americans comes from its being anchored in white America.

Mark Terkessidis makes a similar argument regarding Germans' uproar against Muslim masculinity. As I mentioned above, Terkessidis points out that while members of the German conservative Christian Democratic Union take issue with the way Muslim men treat women, German women still face many inequalities and Christian democrats are not exactly anxious to help counterbalance these inequalities. To demonstrate his point, Terkessidis relates the arguments of a tennis club member who expressed concerns about gender relations among

³¹ "Die Zahl der schwarzen College-Studenten ist in den vergangenen 15 Jahren von 1,3 auf 2,3 Millionen im Jahr gestiegen. Dennoch sind mehr Schwarze im Gefängnis als an der Uni. Sie stellen 13 Prozen der US-Bevölkerung, besetzen aber nur drei Prozent der Top-Positionen in Wirtschaft und Politik. [...] 60 Prozent der Schwarzen glauben, dass die Beziehungen zwischen den Rassen schlecht sind. Bei den Weißen sind es nur 34 Prozent. Das Durchschnittseinkommen der Schwarzen beträgt 33 200 Dollar, das der Weißen 48 800 Dollar. Die Arbeitslosenrate der Weißen liegt bei vier Prozent, die der Schwarzen bei acht. 'Doch viele Weiße meinen: Hey, es gibt schwarze Künstler, Sportler, Schauspieler...' Giuseppe di Grazia und Jan Christoph Weichmann, "Das Schwarze Amerika," *Stern*, October 16 2008.

³² Connell, *Masculinities*, 81.

³³ See Francine Jobatey, "From Toxi to Tv: Multiculturalism and the Changing Images of Black Germans," in *The African German Experience*, ed. Carol Blackshire-Belay (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1996).

³⁴ Finsch, "'Gay Punk, White Lesbian, Black Bitch' Zur Konstruktion des schwarz Männlichen Revolutionärs durch die Black Panther Party - 1966 bis 1982," 212.

Muslims. The man argued, “it can’t be accepted that in certain corners of society ‘our’ ideas about equality between men and women don’t count.”³⁵ Terkessidis was surprised by the man’s comments because, first of all, the man lived in a district of Cologne where he likely had little contact with Muslims. Secondly, “gender roles in his milieu were very conventional, as is common in the good middle-class circles of Germany.”³⁶ With “conventional” I assume Terkessidis means patriarchal. Terkessidis goes on to point out the hypocrisy embedded in the gentleman’s statement:

The stubborn idea, that one has to force people with a migrant background to comply to standards usually goes hand in hand with the use of double standards. This is illustrated by the statements made by the man from the tennis club. He’s concerned about gender equality among migrants and he offers a standard that is not even realized in Germany. Regarding gender equality, in comparison to other European countries, the Federal Republic [of Germany] is actually steadily in one of the bottom spots. The difference in income between men and women is over 20 percent.³⁷

My study ends in 1998 with the publication of Feridun Zaimoğlu’s *Kanak Sprak*, the very same year Paul M. Zulehner and Rainer Volz conducted a study on German masculinity. In this study, Zulehner and Volz identified four types of males: traditional, pragmatic, uncertain and new. Overall, they found that “whether one [man] comes from East or West Germany plays no direct role...[however] East German men are less traditional than the West Germans. The most strongly occupied model in West Germany is the uncertain man, in East Germany, however, the new man.”³⁸ In his study of hegemonic masculinity in East and West Germany, Holger Brandes argues that the most dominant form of masculinity in Germany today is what R.W. Connell calls “transnational business masculinity.”

At least since the 1980s, [this model] has held its ground in West Germany as hegemonic not only against other models of masculinity in its own society (as, for example, the alternative model of the ‘house-husband’ or also traditional proletarian or traditional bourgeois pattern of masculinity), but also against the feminist demand for a stronger women’s presence in leadership positions. The maintainability of this hegemonic masculinity pattern results not only from its achievements in economic efficiency and personal success but also from its ability to integrate new developments.³⁹

³⁵ “es könne doch nicht angehen, dass in bestimmten Teilen der Gesellschaft ‘unsere’ Vorstellung von der Gleichheit zwischen Mann und Frau nicht gelten würden.” Terkessidis, *Interkultur*, 40.

³⁶ “...die Geschlechterrollen in seinem Umfeld [waren] sehr konventionell geprägt, wie in den gutbürgerlichen Kreisen Deutschlands üblich.” Ibid.

³⁷ “Die hartnäckige Vorstellung, man müsse die Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund zur Einhaltung von Standards zwingen, geht meist einher mit der Anwendung doppelter Standards. Das illustrieren die Aussagen des Mannes im Tennisclub. Er sorgt sich um die Geschlechtergleichheit bei den Migranten und legt dabei einen Standard an, der in Deutschland gar nicht realisiert ist. Tatsächlich landet die Bundesrepublik, was die Geschlechtergerechtigkeit betrifft, im europäischen Vergleich stets auf einen der hinteren Plätze. Der Einkommensunterschied etwa zwischen Männern und Frauen liegt bei über 20 Prozent.” Ibid., 41.

³⁸ Zulehner and Volz quoted in Brandes, “Hegemonic Masculinities in East and West Germany,” 181.

³⁹ Ibid.: 187.

Brandes goes on to argue that in today's Germany, "The leadership positions in politics, the economy, culture, and science are and continue to be occupied by men who either come from the West or at least conform to the Western pattern of masculinity."⁴⁰ And Turkish German journalist Mely Kiyak points out that these top positions are held specifically by *white* German men. In the essay, "Kein Obama, nirgends" (No Obama in sight), Kiyak argues that the reason a figure like Obama is possible in the US and *not* in Germany is because German political parties do not support candidates of other ethnicities. There are several Turkish Germans and other politicians with a *Migrationshintergrund* (migrant background), but their numbers do not reflect Germany's demographics. "Every single one of the overall 80 elected representatives of Turkish descent fights by himself, predominantly at the municipal level, in order to build a career and get something going."⁴¹ According to Kiyak, instead of facing the necessity for more non-ethnic Germans and Germans of color in leading political positions, Germans prefer to "recognize the achievements of other countries; to look at the citizens' movements, protest marches and wild unrest about inequality that exist outside of our own borders"⁴² and then sadly lament that no German politicians have the "Obama-factor."

Yet, if we return to the situation of the so-called "post-racial" U.S., it does not appear that a great deal has changed for African Americans since Obama's election; especially regarding their portrayal in the media. As I mentioned above, Donald Trump said if he had a choice, he would be an educated Black man because "A well-educated Black man has a tremendous advantage over a well-educated white in terms of the job market...if I were starting off today, I would love to be a well-educated Black..."⁴³ However, despite Trump's optimistic, perhaps even envious, assessment of the state of Black men in America today, even for successful Black men one witnesses a double standard in the media on a daily basis. For example, over two years into his presidency, America's arguably most famous well-educated Black man is still faced with Americans' skepticism over his birthplace. Many conservatives are not convinced that Obama was born in the U.S. – a factor that would make his presidency illegitimate. These critics effectively attempt to make Obama into the same "Other-from-Without" which Germans have deemed Afro-Germans throughout history. And coincidentally, though he is a fan of Black men, one of these skeptics is Donald Trump, who is also considering a run for president.

To reiterate bell hooks' argument discussed in my introduction, envy and desire for Black men and Black popular culture cannot be equated with respect or love. This is something Krin Gabbard also observes in a chapter on the white collector of Black popular music in the book *Black Magic: White Hollywood and African American Culture*. Gabbard looks at several films with the quintessential white male collector of Black popular music, from *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) to *High Fidelity* (2000). At one point, Gabbard discusses the similarities between the Blues collector Seymour in *Ghost World* (2001) and the comic book artist Robert Crumb, also an

⁴⁰ Ibid.: 193.

⁴¹ "Jeder einzelne der insgesamt circa 80 türkischstämmigen Mandatsträger kämpft für sich allein, vorwiegend auf Kommunalebene, dafür, Karriere zu machen und etwas zu bewegen." Mely Kiyak, "Kein Obama, nirgends," in *Transit Deutschland: Debatten zu Nation und Migration*, ed. Deniz Göktürk, et al. (Paderborn: Konstanz University Press, 2010), 561.

⁴² "...wir schauen in Deutschland lieber anerkennend auf die gesellschaftlichen Errungenschaften anderer Länder. Auf die Bürgerbewegungen, auf die Protestmärsche, die wild gewordene Wut über Ungleichheit außerhalb der eigenen Grenzen." Ibid.

⁴³ Quoted in kitwana, *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop: Wankstas, Wiggers, Wannabes, and the New Reality of Race in America*, 14.

avid collector of Black popular music.⁴⁴ Gabbard tries to make sense of the fact that both the fictional Seymour and Crumb not only collect and admire Black popular music, but collect and produce racist images of Blacks: “Both [Crumb and Seymour] have a fascination with African American culture that drives them to pile up old blues records as well as more unsavory representations. Whether they know it or not, both are implicated in the racism of the representations with which they surround themselves.”⁴⁵

If decades of envy and desire for Black popular culture have not considerably changed how Black American men live or are portrayed in the media, then can this Blackophilia have really changed anything in Germany? Has the trend of mimicking Black popular culture changed how dominant German culture is conceived? Have the rebellious gestures I have discussed merely been neutralized? It seems that in all the instances when Black popular culture was mimicked by Germans, in the German discourse Black culture eventually went from shocking to normal. Jazz, rock n roll and hip hop are all established genres within the German music industry. Wearing baseball caps or baggy pants is no longer an anomaly. Even the afro was at one point in time a fashion statement in Germany. However, rather than being too enthusiastic about what this kind of cultural syncretism⁴⁶ might mean for Germany, I would suggest that Germans’ mimicking of Black culture may have changed hegemonic German culture, but it has not changed who determines hegemonic German culture. And I will elaborate on this argument in the next section.

On Globalization and Global Memory

In the 1950s, when Germans were first confronted with the wild lyrics, vocals and style of rock ‘n’ roll artists like Little Richard, many were still reeling about the difference of jazz culture let alone ready to accept this new alien music. Today, Germans’ interest in and identification with Black popular culture has become relatively commonplace. In fact, although this dissertation deals specifically with this bilateral exchange, Black popular culture has been influential worldwide. Hip hop, in particular, has attracted fans across the globe, from Cuba to Japan, from Poland to South Africa. In our age of globalization, when it comes to areas like business or music, borders seem all but irrelevant. In fact, philosopher Byung-Chul Han believes that for this reason we have moved beyond the immunological paradigm that was so prevalent up until the end of the Cold War: “Even the so-called ‘immigrant’ is no longer an immunological *Other*; no *stranger* in the emphatic sense of someone who poses a threat or someone whom one must be afraid of. Immigrants and refugees are perceived as more of a burden than a threat. [...] The immunological paradigm does not agree with the process of globalization.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ For example, Crumb published several illustrations of his favorite Black and white musicians in the following book which is accompanied by a CD and biographies of the musicians: Robert Crumb et al., *R. Crumb's Heroes of Blues, Jazz & Country* (New York: Abrams, 2006).

⁴⁵ Gabbard, *Black Magic: White Hollywood and African American Culture*, 229.

⁴⁶ “The word ‘syncretism’ in postcolonial writing calls attention to the multiple identities generated by the geographical displacements characteristic of the postindependence era, and presupposes a theoretical framework, influenced by anti-essentialist poststructuralism, that refuses to police identity along purist lines.” Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, 41.

⁴⁷ “Auch der sogenannte ‘Einwanderer’ ist heute kein immunologisch *Anderer*, kein *Fremder* im emphatischen Sinne, von dem eine wirkliche Gefahr ausginge oder vor dem man Angst hätte. Einwanderer oder Flüchtlinge werde eher als Belastung den Bedrohung empfunden [...] Das

Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider argue that increasing globalization “brings people into a complicated relationship with each other and weakens the once dominating connection between culture and place, without completely dissolving it.”⁴⁸ However, despite theirs and Han’s positive outlook, when it comes to the movement of people, there continues to be very real boundaries that hinder migration across spaces and these boundaries often depend on a person’s citizenship status, wealth, gender, health, class and education, among other factors. Thus can Germans’ identification with African Americans really just be subsumed within the larger global phenomenon of embracing Black popular culture, or is Germany’s Blackophilia different because of its status as a Western European country or because of its Nazi past? Does Germans’ Blackophilia link them to a larger global memory that honors the history of the African Diaspora by celebrating its culture? Or does German Blackophilia have a very distinct meaning for the country’s *national* memory?

According to Levy and Sznaider, the notion of collective memory has especially gained momentum since the 1980s, precisely because of globalization’s effects and people’s fears that the nation state has lost relevance. Critics of globalization attempt “to replace the discredited term of the nation with collective memory.”⁴⁹ These critics claim that global culture is timeless and lacking in memory. However, Levy and Sznaider stress that this is a very narrow notion of globalization that focuses on the homogenization of culture, e.g. the global reach of the McDonalds or the Starbucks brands. On the contrary, global culture reflected in a collective memory that crosses national boundaries might be viewed as something positive that gets people to consider alternative perspectives and look beyond their own four walls. “Global culture does not erase local memories; rather it intermingles with local culture.”⁵⁰

If defenders of the nation state rely on collective memory to make their point, then what about collective memory that crosses national borders? Levy and Sznaider refer to this phenomenon as *Kosmopolitisierung* (cosmopoliticization). Working off of Ulrich Beck’s notion of “inner globalization,” they define cosmopoliticization as follows. It is:

a non-linear, dialectic process, during which the global and the local do not exist as cultural opposites, rather they exist as principles that are conjoining and mutually dependent on one another. This not only includes connections that cross borders, but it is also based on the quality of the social and of the political within national societies (Beck 2000b). The cosmopoliticization of collective memory influences the national identity of different groups whose identity is no longer exclusively dominated by the nation state. Globalization leads to the ‘intensification of the conscience of the world as a whole’ (Robertson 1995).⁵¹

immunologische Paradigma verträgt sich nicht mit dem Globalisierungsprozess.” Byung-Chul Han, *Müdigkeitsgesellschaft* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2010), 8-9.

⁴⁸ “Sie bringt die Menschen in ein komplexes Verhältnis zueinander und schwächt die früher dominierende Verbindung von Kultur und Raum, ohne sie vollkommen abzulösen.” Levy and Sznaider, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust*, 38.

⁴⁹ “...Versuch, den zunehmend diskreditierten Begriff der Nation durch der kollektiven Erinnerung zu ersetzen...” Ibid., 19.

⁵⁰ “Globale Kultur löscht lokale Erinnerungen nicht aus, vermischt sich vielmehr mit ihnen.” Ibid., 20.

⁵¹ “...ein nicht-linearer, dialektischer Prozeß, bei dem das Globale und das Lokale nicht als kulturelle Gegensätze existieren, sondern als sich verbindende und sich gegenseitig voraussetzende Prinzipien. Dies beinhaltet nicht nur grenzüberschreitende Verbindungen, sondern bezieht sich auch auf die Qualität des Sozialen und des Politischen innerhalb von nationalstaatlichen Gesellschaften (Beck 2000 b). Die Kosmopolitisierung

According to Ulrich Beck, one of the most important differences between the first modernity and the cosmopolitanization of the second modernity is that cosmopolitanization is not a monologic concept, but a dialogic one that *includes* alterity.⁵² Levy and Sznajder consider delocalization a prerequisite for cosmopolitanization: “cosmopolitical memory” is characterized by the fact that collective memories are being increasingly ‘delocalized.’⁵³ The example they use of such a cosmopolitical memory is the memory of the Holocaust, which they consider a suitable model for two reasons. First of all, as a diasporic people, they consider Jews to be the personification of a delocalized existence. Secondly, there are very few people still alive who actually survived the Holocaust. Thus, today memories of the Holocaust are circulated primarily through representations rather than first-hand accounts. Because of the delocalization of Holocaust memory, a parole like “Never Again Auschwitz” can be heard throughout the world, and “not just in countries and among groups, who have a direct cultural memory of this event.”⁵⁴

One of the difficulties of subsuming German identification with African Americans under the notion of cosmopolitical memory is delocalization. African Americans belong to the African Diaspora, but they have lived in the United States for over two centuries in contrast to Levy and Sznajder’s example of how European Jews were uprooted only seventy years ago. Secondly, when today’s Germans identify with the African Americans experience, this identification is more often than not based on experiences as old as the Civil Rights Movement and as recent as Hurricane Katrina. There are plenty of African Americans still alive who were eyewitnesses to these events. Therefore, African American suffering is not as delocalized as the Holocaust. Then again, representations of these events in African American history have definitely been circulated in Germany en masse and Levy and Sznajder consider representations central to the delocalization of memory. Consequently, I still believe their notion of cosmopolitical memory can be helpful for understanding Germans’ identification with African Americans.

If we were to look for an example of cosmopolitical memory in the German context, an excellent one would be a video installation done by German artist Marcel Odenbach in 1999 entitled “Ach, wie gut daß niemand weiß” (Oh, how good that no one knows). In the installation, Odenbach had two parallel screens that depicted a white and Black man who jump through German and African American historical events respectively and in the end jump into each other’s screens. Odenbach, a representative of the ’68 generation, explained the concept as follows, “The history of the black person becomes my history, and my history becomes that of the black person.”⁵⁵ This work of art demonstrates a positive outcome from global culture and global memory. Like many white Germans of his generation, Odenbach had such an investment in African Americans’ struggle against racism, that he feels an event like the Civil Rights Movement is as much a part of his history as any other German event.

der kollektiven Erinnerung beeinflusst das Selbstverständnis verschiedener Gruppen, deren Identität nicht mehr ausschließlich vom Nationalstaat dominiert wird. Globalisierung führt zu ‘Intensivierung des Bewußtseins der Welt als ein Ganzes’ (Robertson 1995).” Ibid., 21.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ “...das ‘kosmopolitische Gedächtnis’ [wird] dadurch charakterisiert, daß kollektive Erinnerungen zunehmend ‘entortet’ werden.” Ibid., 23.

⁵⁴ “...nicht nur in Ländern und bei Gruppen, die eine direkte kulturelle Erinnerung an dieses Ereignis haben.” Ibid., 37.

⁵⁵ Hans Belting, “Interview: 5. Februar 1999/ February 5, 1999,” in *Marcel Odenbach: Ach, Wie Gut, Daß Niemand Weiß*, ed. Udo Kittlemann (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhalter Walther König, 1999), 54.

Nonetheless, something seems to be missing in Odenbach's gesture of cosmopolitical memory. It seems to me that a real dialogue would not only include an African American perspective, but also an Afro-German perspective. How can Odenbach make a statement about the transnational and anti-racist experience of his generation and his identification with Blacks, without including the Black German experience? Why is the Black man with whom Odenbach identifies African American? Why can't the man who jumps through German history be Black as well? There are many Afro-Germans of Odenbach's generation who share these memories. However, they are given no space in his national memory. There is no opportunity for the German viewer to identify with an oppressed subject who is Black *and* German. And this is the danger of such global memory; it can appear to be something that unites people across borders while simultaneously excluding others. To quote Leslie Adelson's assessment of Levy and Sznajder's argument, they:

propose that Holocaust memory holds "the key" to modernity beyond nationalism. As "the point of departure for a new solidarity beyond borders," Holocaust memory becomes "a measure for humanist and universalist identifications" in an era of ideological disorientation and "the basis for a global politics of human rights" (9-11). When they speak of Holocaust memory, they mean the ability of victims in different contexts to identify with Jewish victims of the Holocaust, "to recognize themselves in the Jewish victims."⁵⁶

Odenbach's installation is an example of using the memory of slavery and oppression of Blacks as the key to a new solidarity beyond borders. But when this memory still excludes Afro-Germans, have Germans really gotten beyond a race or blood-based understanding of being German? Just because Black popular culture is familiar, is it accepted as German? Furthermore, Germans' prejudices towards Turks discussed in the last chapter show that just because Germans might feel solidarity with one minority group, it does not imply that they accept other minorities.

Throughout German history, the associations between Black popular culture, rebellion and freedom were strengthened by the fact that Black popular culture had long been considered as foreign to or existing outside of Germanness. Although individual Blacks have traveled to and lived within the borders of what is now considered Germany since the middle ages, Germany did not have a significant indigenous Black population until after WWI. During the French occupation of the Rhineland, France deployed many colonial soldiers from Africa and Asia. Germany's first large population of Afro-Germans were the children of German women and these French colonial soldiers. The local population's detestation for these children is evident in their unofficial title as "the Rhineland bastards." Later, the Nazi regime secretly sterilized many of these children. Although the Nuremberg Race Laws did not allow for the sterilization of healthy individuals, these children were inevitably sterilized to help uphold a "racially pure"

⁵⁶ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration*, 56.

German *Volk*.⁵⁷ Another generation of Afro-German children was later born to German mothers and Black (American, French and British) soldiers following WWII.

Despite the thousands of Afro-Germans born since the end of WWI, these individuals largely grew up in isolation without any contact to a larger Black community. It was not until the 1980s that Afro-Germans began to seek each other out and organize events, publish their stories, and engage with issues like racism and discrimination as a community signified by some as *Afro-Deutsche* (Afro-Germans), but by others as *schwarze Deutsche* (Black Germans). One might expect that once Germans recognized the existence of an Afro-European and Afro-German history, Black popular culture would lose its appeal as inherently other than German or Afro-Germans might become the new models for rebellion. Nevertheless, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, African American culture continued to be of greater interest to Germans, while Afro-Germans have had a very small presence in the public. Is the fascination with/exclusion of Black popular culture solely based on the small numbers of Black bodies in Germany? More work, in particular discourse analysis, would need to be done on how Afro-Germans are discussed as subjects in today's media.

There are several reasons why Black popular culture might still be viewed as Other than German. First of all, as Michelle Wright argues, even if their citizenship is acknowledged, Afro-Germans are still viewed as a foreign entity – not a part of, but coming from outside the German community. “In short, the Afro-German identity is not the *antithesis* in the dialectic of (white) German subjectivity: it is simply *non existent*.”⁵⁸ Wright coins the term Others-from-Without to describe Afro-Germans, in contrast to African Americans who were considered Others-from-Within. An “Other-from-Within” is seen as different, but still belonging to the national community, while an “Other-from-Without” is completely foreign.

Fatima El-Tayeb echoes Wright's claims in a brief discussion about Afro-German soccer players on the national team. While there were two Afro-German players on the national team in the 1970s, Erwin Kostedde and Jimmy Hartwig, a more recent Afro-German player who joined the team in 2001 – Gerald Asamoah who was born in Ghana of Ghanaian parents and migrated to Germany as child – was labeled Germany's “first black soccer player.” According to El-Tayeb, “the treatment of the handful of black German soccer players reflects a deeper level of the dominant national attitude towards race and nationality, an attitude which presumes that ‘real blacks’ cannot be Germans and Germans cannot be real blacks.”⁵⁹ Thus, even if there are thousands of Black Germans or Afro-Germans who have been socialized in Germany and have no greater connection to African or African American culture than white Germans, this has not changed Germans' perception of Black popular culture. Rather than affirming that Black is not necessarily Other than German, these Black Germans are simply deemed not really Black or not Black enough and ultimately not representative of *authentic* Black culture.

A reason why African American culture might continue to be appealing as an alternative to German culture is because of its perception as being distant, removed – not too close to home.

⁵⁷ See Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era*.

⁵⁸ Wright, “Others-from-within from Without: Afro-German Subject Formation and the Challenge of a Counter-Discourse,” 298.

⁵⁹ El-tayeb, “Dangerous Liasons: Race, Nation, and German Identity,” 28.

For example, an Afro-German like former pop singer Marie Nejar might have a darker complexion, but having been raised in Germany, she is more likely to cook pea soup than “was Afrikanisches” (something African).⁶⁰ African Americans, however, are “special” precisely because they have been socialized in America.

It is also because of this distance that the identification with African Americans is safer and more satisfying.⁶¹ Germans can identify with oppressed African Americans and condemn America’s racist crimes and occupy the “right side of history” because they themselves were not the ones who committed violence against *these* Black bodies.⁶² In contrast, engaging with the reality of Afro-Germans will inevitably force Germans to acknowledge their own racist past *and present*. This is why Marie Nejar, who became a popular singer known as Leila Negra in the 1950s, was never asked about what it was like surviving Nazi Germany as a Black child. In Nejar’s words, “Vielleicht wollten sie es auch lieber nicht so genau wissen” (maybe they just preferred not to know the details).⁶³ Finally, in regards to Dick Hebdige’s comments discussed in the introduction, African American (and Caribbean) culture has an element of “coolness” that is not necessarily attributed to other cultures in the African Diaspora.⁶⁴ I believe that for all of these reasons, there is still a tendency to use Black popular culture to signify difference, if not rebellion.

According to Sabine Broeck, Germans’ “self-serving identification” with Blacks in order to position themselves “on the right side of history” changed in the 1990s due to four developments:

1. African American Studies’ growing international visibility and black accumulative control over the discourses which frame the Middle Passage and the transatlantic black experience,
2. the growing black diaspora immigrant community which has demanded public acknowledgment,
3. a push for postcolonial paradigms which has been slowly leading to a critical rereading of Germany’s colonial past,

⁶⁰ This is based on an anecdote relayed by Nejar in her autobiography *Mach nicht so traurige Augen, weil du ein Negerlein bist* (Don’t Be so Sad, Because You’re a Little Negro). Nejar, who was born in 1932, is a second-generation Afro-German. While searching for an apartment in her 20s, a concerned landlord asked her what she would normally cook around that time (winter). Presumably, the landlord was worried the dark-skinned Nejar would cook something exotic and offensive to German noses. When Nejar responds that she would likely cook pea soup, the landlord presses further, trying to find out whether Nejar would ever cook something African. Although Nejar insists she knows very little about African culture, let alone being able to cook anything African, she still does not get the apartment. See Marie Nejar and Regina Carstensen, *Mach nicht so traurige Augen, weil du ein Negerlein bist: Meine Jugend im Dritten Reich* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2007).

⁶¹ I am basing this claim of off Angelica Fenner’s discussion of misidentification and the film *Toxi*. See Fenner, “Reterritorializing Enjoyment in the Adenauer Era : Robert A. Stemmle’s *Toxi*,” 174.

⁶² Sabine Broeck discusses this in Broeck, “The Erotics of African American Endurance, Or: On the Right Side of History? White (West)-German Sentiment between Pornotroping and Civil Rights Solidarity.”

⁶³ Carstensen, *Mach nicht so traurige Augen, weil du ein Negerlein bist: Meine Jugend im Dritten Reich*, 194.

⁶⁴ Thus, when considering emigrating from Germany, Nejar considered the Caribbean but would not consider Africa. According to her, the Caribbean just had more positive connotations in Germany than Africa did. For the link between Blackness and coolness, see also Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*.

4. (no system in the order here): the media-visible self-articulation of black Germans, for which African American agency in the person of Audre Lorde, and others, turned out to be crucial.⁶⁵

I would like to respond to Broeck's four reasons and reflect on what this might mean for the phenomenon I have been tracing throughout this dissertation. First of all, Broeck says Germans' identification with Blacks has *changed*, but it has not stopped. Thus, there may still be instances of this kind of identification today. Now turning to her four reasons for this change; I believe that combined, the first and the third reasons suggest that now that we have begun to interrogate hierarchies of discourse and knowledge and allowed the subaltern to speak,⁶⁶ Blacks have more of a say in their representation. Today, Blacks stress the diversity of the Black experience, such as in art works like *Slumberland* and *Passing Strange*. Blacks can also publicly take issue when they are portrayed in an essentialist way, such as when an East German zoo recently sought to put Africans on display in an "African village."⁶⁷

The second and fourth reasons seem to imply that Germans have since called into question the superficiality of earlier identification with Blacks. When I first began looking into the history of Germans' Black Panther solidarity groups and their "afro-looks" in the 1960s and 1970s, I always wondered what these same Germans might have had to say about Afro-Germans. To me, it initially seemed unusual for Germans to fight racism by condemning Jim Crow policies and showing solidarity with African Americans, as opposed to simply confronting racism in Germany, against guest workers, Afro-Germans and other minorities.

In the introduction I questioned whether it was easier for the postwar generation of Germans to face crimes that they themselves were not guilty of or if it is easier for Germans to condemn *American* rather than *German* racism. This seems to be confirmed by Odenbach's installation, Marie Nejar's experience and Broeck's essay. Michael Rothberg addresses this issue in the book *Multidirectional Memory*. In the introduction, he cites an incident when African American Khalid Muhammad criticized the construction of a Holocaust Museum on the National Mall in Washington D.C. Literary critic Walther Benn Michaels put Muhammad's statements into context. For Muhammad, the "...commemoration of the Nazi murder of the Jews on the Mall was in fact another kind of Holocaust denial. Why should what the Germans did to the Jews be treated as a crucial event in American history, especially when, given the absence of any commemoration of American racism on the Mall, what Americans did to Black people is not?"⁶⁸

Rothberg is critical of both Muhammad's statement and Michaels' interpretation thereof.:

Michaels implies that collective memory obeys a logic of scarcity: if a Holocaust Museum sits on the Mall in Washington (or just off of it, as is the actual case), then Holocaust memory must literally be crowding the memory of African American history

⁶⁵ Broeck, "The Erotics of African American Endurance, Or: On the Right Side of History? White (West)-German Sentiment between Pornotroping and Civil Rights Solidarity," 127-8.

⁶⁶ See Danius, Jonsson, and Spivak, "An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak." And Hito Steyerl and Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, eds., *Spricht die Subalterne deutsch? Migration und postkoloniale Kritik* (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2003).

⁶⁷ See Sow, *Deutschland Schwarz Weiss: Der Alltägliche Rassismus*.

⁶⁸ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, 2.

out of the public space of American collective consciousness....Does collective memory really work like real-estate development? Must the claims of memory always be calculated according to their relevance for national history?⁶⁹

Rothberg's argument in *Multidirectional Memory* is that this kind of global memory of traumatic events does not have to obey an either/or paradigm. Using international remembrance of the Holocaust as a model, Rothberg suggests that:

far from blocking other historical memories from view in a competitive struggle for recognition, the emergence of Holocaust memory on a global scale has contributed to the articulation of other histories – some of them predating the Nazi genocide, such as slavery, and others taking place later, such as the Algerian War of Independence (1954-62) or the genocide in Bosnia during the 1990s.⁷⁰

Thus, following Rothberg's argument, one would conclude that Germans' feelings of solidarity with Blacks in the postwar must not be read as an attempt to evade dealing with the crimes of the Holocaust or crimes against other minorities in modern Germany. In contrast, Rothberg would argue that discussing American racism against Blacks actually might have helped Germans work through their own racism.

However, this comparison is perhaps not as simple as it looks. A further question one must ask is, *how* are traumatic events like the Holocaust and slavery remembered? One of the factors that complicates these global memories is the relationship between the victim and the person remembering. In the American narrative of the Holocaust, the Americans are placed on the "right side of history." With the help of the Allied nations, the Americans defeated Hitler and the Nazis. The Americans liberated prisoners from concentration camps. And many German Jews immigrated to the U.S., prior to, during and after the war. In the American narrative of the Holocaust, German Jews may be acknowledged as the victims of Nazism and Anti-semitism, but they are not exclusively defined by victimhood. This is partly because many Jewish intellectuals, from whom our nation greatly benefited, were among the émigrés. Furthermore, America already had a thriving Jewish population.

American remembrance of the Holocaust does not necessarily objectify Jewish victims. In contrast, as I mentioned in the introduction, Sabine Broeck views Germans' relationship to African Americans as forever putting Blacks in the role of victim. Broeck goes on to explain what this pornotroping means for Germans' relationship to African Americans:

The palimpsest that slavery and abolition wrote in the nineteenth century fixed a segregated symbolic pertaining not only to the place of black people within it, but even more so – as it turns out today – it inscribed white people with an extremely limited array of subject positions...As long as white people in Germany create no scripts for themselves other than accepting the choice between the die-hard racist, the benevolent,

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 6.

emphatic, self-reflexive good white man, the white plantation bitch, the stern moralizing and authoritarian do-gooder, or, as the feminine role of choice, sweet little Eva who may desire the black person in all presumptuous innocence, be it as mother, sister lover, redeemer, or omnipotent healer of wounds, their ‘readings’ of and more importantly their relations with African Americans and other black people will not get beyond the prototypical ‘peep at Uncle Tom’...⁷¹

Broeck argues that white Germans must stop using American race relations as a model and instead think of their relations to African Americans and other Blacks within a German context and a German history. In particular, Broeck believes there is work to be done regarding working through Germany’s implication in slavery.⁷² Thus, I would have to disagree with Rothberg. I do not believe Germans’ identification with Blacks necessarily coincided with a working through of German racism. To refer back to the second and fourth reasons in Broeck’s list, I believe the growing numbers of Afro-Europeans and African immigrants have initiated this working through. As Martin Klimke and Maria Höhn report in *A Breath of Freedom*, even when Black GIs admitted experiencing racism in Germany, they generally felt it was not *as bad* as in the US. As long as Jim Crow and race riots reigned in the US, Germans could feel better about their relations to Blacks. In the 1970s, when the Black Panthers turned inward, stressing Afrocentricism, and its members became less interested in solidarity with whites, for Germans this did not have to be read as a critique of *German* racism. Rather, if we recall Fassbinder’s comments on Whity, Germans understood it as Black self-segregation.

As long as Germans could think of American racism as worse than German racism, they remained on “the right side of history.” This became especially difficult in the 1990s with the rise of Neo-Nazism and violence against foreigners and dark-skinned Germans. According to Noah Sow, the reason the German press and politicians label such attacks and other mistreatment against dark-skinned Germans as *Fremdenfeindlichkeit* or *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* (both terms mean “xenophobia”) is because they believe these acts are not technically *Rassismus* (racism). The German constitution clearly states that no citizen can be discriminated against based on race. *Rasse* (race) is a term that the media and public officials avoid. The logic seems to be that if race is not a concept in the German discourse, then there is no racism and violence against *Fremde* is strictly xenophobia.

Sow rightly points out, however, that violence against an Afro-German is not xenophobia, because an Afro-German is not foreign. I believe the term xenophobia is preferred, because xenophobia can be against whites and Blacks alike and Germans do not have to single out Black victims. Regardless, the growing presence of Afro-Germans and Africans in Germany makes it increasingly difficult for the nation to make such claims. The passing of the anti-discrimination law in 2005 testified to the fact that racial discrimination, among other kinds of discrimination, is a problem in Germany. Some would argue that there are still efforts to

⁷¹ Broeck, “The Erotics of African American Endurance, Or: On the Right Side of History? White (West)-German Sentiment between Pornotroping and Civil Rights Solidarity.”

⁷² “In order to surpass abolitionist pornotroping as the hegemonic representation of African Americans as well as other black peoples, European intellectual Weltanschauung need[s] to first come to grips with their pervasive denial of slavery’s constitutive function for the Enlightenment.” Ibid.

downplay the racist violence that occurs in Germany, e.g. the denial that violent crimes against Blacks are hate crimes. In the immediate postwar, African American magazines presented an envious (Black) American public with photos and stories of Black GIs living in a “racial utopia” in Germany and asked why this did not exist in the US. Now, America presents its Black president to an envious Germany and Germany’s Black populations asks, where is the German Obama?

But besides turning the tables on Germans, relieving Germany of its “superior” stance on issues of race, Obama’s presidency has a further meaning for Germans’ relationship to Black popular culture. Although Broeck stresses the need for alternative scripts or roles for white Germans, I would like to entertain the idea that these roles will emerge when Blacks have new roles. If the Black man is not always already the rebel; if in fact, a Black man – and not just *any* Black man, but one that listens to hip hop – runs the most powerful country in the world, then whiteness can no longer serve as a marker of normality. Furthermore, if Germans accept that Germans are not all white, then they will accept that Black culture cannot serve as a counter to German culture. Thus, German rebels can no longer merely look to Black popular culture for rebellious inspiration. In Ferguson’s words, “Blackness” is officially passé, and Germans have to create their own rebellious styles that emerge from the current context.

“Blind Listening”

Considering that this dissertation began with music, more specifically with the defiant drumming of a three-year-old, it seems equally appropriate to end with music. Most of my chapters have focused on how music serves as a representative of Black popular culture. From jazz to hip hop, Germans’ love affair with Black popular music has been a reflection of solidarity with the Black experience. But what musical genres are topping the German charts today? Recently, a few German music journalists suggested possibilities for the soundtrack to 21st century racial politics.

Rather than a consensus, there are two opposing opinions put forth by music journalists. Christian Schröder says Soul is “wieder einmal die Musik der Stunde” (once again the music of the hour).⁷³ In *Soul Babies*, Mark Anthony Neal describes soul as having:

challenged the prevailing logic of white supremacy and segregation in ways that were discomfiting and even grotesque to some, regardless of race or ethnicity. Premised on the construction of ‘positive’ black images that could be juxtaposed against the overextended influence of Western caricatures of black life, the soul aesthetic dramatically altered the projects of the Harlem Renaissance artists and critics by sanctioning both vernacular and popular expression largely valued within the black community without concern for the reactions of mainstream critics or institutions.⁷⁴

⁷³ Christian Schröder, “Die Würze des Menschen; Hymnen aus Wut und Sehnsucht: Warum Soul wieder einmal die Musik der Stunde ist,” *Der Tagespiegel* 2011.

⁷⁴ Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*, 4.

For Schröder, however, Soul is quite simply about “truth” and with this truth, British Soul singer Adele has conquered the German charts. But what or whose truth does she sing? Adele (Adkins) is described as “momentarily, the most successful representative of that British Soul renaissance that began with Amy Winehouse in 2006.”⁷⁵ Both Winehouse and Adele like to pose in retro-50s style “with historical beehive hairdos and long artificial eye lashes.”⁷⁶ Aside from Adele, the Brit of Pakistani descent, Rumer, is also storming the neo-Soul charts. But Soul is not just big in Britain and Germany, “Even in America, it appears Soul is once again the music of the hour. This is because of the Blacks of the middle- and upper-class of the Obama Nation (Kanye West), who distance themselves from the sexism and fetishized violence of gangsta rappers. Instead, they relate to the traditions of the Sixties, the era of the Civil Rights Movement.”⁷⁷ One positive thing about this quote is Schröder’s acknowledgment of the class differences and varying musical tastes found among African Americans. Furthermore, the fact that the singers celebrated as creating the soundtrack of today’s era do not conform to one racial or ethnic model makes one hopeful. Nonetheless, considering that as a baby boomer, not hip hop but Soul is actually the music of Obama’s generation, are we to understand this return to Soul as simply embracing the music of Black baby boomers? And what are we to make of this desire for *truth*?

Perhaps this return to Soul music offers further insight into the persisting quality of difference that Black popular culture embodies. When wondering why, despite the presence of thousands of Afro-Germans, the oversaturation of Black popular culture in the media and “Blackness” passé status, Germans still perceive Blacks as different, perhaps we must consider how much this has to do with Blacks’ own agency. According to Bernhard Waldenfels, *fremd* (strange) is something that moves away from us, closes itself off from us. “Being strange does not mean that something is unapproachable, rather Husserl’s paradoxical marker suggests the assumption that something is there because it isn’t there and it evades us.”⁷⁸ Could one therefore say that because, from the Fisk Jubilee Singers to Afro-German rapper B-Tight who appeared in blackface on one of his album covers, Black artists have always been *performing* Black popular culture, they have always held something back? Have they always closed the German audience off from the real experience of being Black? Is this why Black popular culture can only remain strange? Is this why Germans are once again obsessed with truthful Soul music? Are we forever destined to a dance between white Germans seeking the “truth” about Black popular culture and Blacks masquerading and distorting their “true” selves? This could be an example of what Alison Jones describes as the “reinstatement of the gap” which is the “indigenous response to the ideal

⁷⁵ “die derzeit erfolgreichste Vertreterin jener britischen Soul-Renaissance, die 2006 mit Amy Winehouse begann.” Schröder, “Die Würze des Menschen; Hymnen aus Wut und Sehnsucht: Warum Soul wieder einmal die Musik der Stunde ist.”

⁷⁶ “mit historistischer Bienenkorbfrisur und langen Kunstwimpern.” Ibid.

⁷⁷ “Auch in Amerika scheint Soul die Musik der Stunde zu sein. Das liegt an der schwarzen Mittel- und Oberschicht der ‘Obama Nation’ (Kanye West), die sich vom Sexismus und Gewaltfetischismus der Gangsta-Rapper distanziert und sich stattdessen auf die Traditionen der sechziger Jahre beruft, auf die Ära der Bürgerrechtsbewegung.” Ibid.

⁷⁸ “Fremderfahrung besagt nicht, daß es etwas gibt, das unzugänglich ist, im Gegensatz zu anderem, das zugänglich ist, vielmehr legt Husserls paradoxe Kennzeichnung die Annahme nahe, daß etwas da ist, *indem* es nicht da ist und sich uns entzieht.” Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden*, 62.

of [what Jones calls] the erased, denied, dissolved, or softened hyphen [between indigene and colonizer]...⁷⁹

Yet, one must not forget the alternative soundtrack suggested for the postracial world. Instead of reaching backwards to find an older genre that represents our *Zeitgeist*, Klaus Walter of the leftist newspaper *die tageszeitung* looks forward to the futuristic, cyborg smash-up style of Janelle Monáe. Quoting a critic from the British music magazine *Wire*, Walter writes: ““It has become increasingly difficult by just listening to a track to determine whether it comes from Trinidad or Tottenham, from Orlando or Oporto. The question, who appropriates which music from whom, is becoming increasingly complicated.”⁸⁰ He then quotes Marlo David, an Afro-futurist and professor of Women Studies at Purdue University, in order to explain this phenomenon. David claims that ““In a post-human universe that is ruled by zeros and ones, the body loses its importance.”⁸¹

According to Walter, the perfect artist to represent this post-human universe is Janelle Monáe, an African American female vocalist. In Walter’s words ““maybe this African American with the Little Richard quaff didn’t produce the most exciting record of the year. But with certainty she caused the most exciting discussions about race and genre borders this side of Lady Gaga.”⁸² Walter goes on to point out the irony in a German review that praises Monáe for being a “child of an iPod whose shuffle function no longer knows the difference between Black and white” while simultaneously heralding that she will “renew Black music.”⁸³ Walter points out that in Germany “we’ve grown accustomed to talking about Black music; it creates order. It assumes that there’s a racial divide in pop music.”⁸⁴ And Walter believes this assumption has now come to an end thanks to a generation accustomed to a Black American president and iPods filled with diverse music styles. Marlo David believes that Janelle Monáe’s “self-empowerment subverts those barriers of identity that the hegemonic discourse distills out of categories like race, gender class and religion...”⁸⁵ However, not everyone shares this optimism of a post-human society. In *Race in Cyberspace*, Beth E. Kolko et. al. argue that

...in spite of popular utopian rhetoric to the contrary, we believe that race matters no less in cyberspace than it does ‘IRL’ (in real life)... While the mediated nature of cyberspace renders invisible many (and in some instances, all) of the visual and aural cues that serve to mark people’s identities IRL, that invisibility doesn’t carry back over into the ‘real

⁷⁹ Jones and Jenkins, “Rethinking Collaboration: Working the Indigene-Colonizer Hyphen,” 474.

⁸⁰ ““Es wird immer schwieriger, beim bloßen Hören zu erkennen, ob ein Track aus Trinidad kommt oder aus Tottenham, aus Orlando oder Oporto. Die Frage, wer sich welche Musik vom web aneignet, wird immer komplizierter.” Klaus Walter, “Fortschritt 2010: Farbenblind hören?” *die tageszeitung*, December 28 2010.

⁸¹ ““In einem post-humanen Universum das von Nullen und Einsen regiert wird, verliert der Körper an Bedeutung.” Ibid.

⁸² “Die Afroamerikanerin mit der Little-Richard-Tolle hat vielleicht nicht die aufregendste Platte des Jahres produziert. Aber mit Sicherheit die aufregendsten Diskurse über Rassen- und Genregrenzen diesseits Lady Gaga ausgelöst.” Ibid.

⁸³ “...ein Kind des iPod, dessen Shuffle-Funktion kein Schwarz und Weiß mehr kent...erneuert die schwarze Musik.” Ibid.

⁸⁴ “An die Rede von der schwarzen Musik haben wir uns gewöhnt, sie sorgt für Ordnung. Sie setzt voraus, dass es eine Rassentrennung in der populären Musik gibt” Ibid.

⁸⁵ “...Janelle Monáe[unterläuft] im Modus der Selbstermächtigung jene Grenzen Identität, die der hegemoniale Diskurs aus den Kategorien Rasse, Gender, Klasse und Religion seit Pop-Menschengedenken destilliert und festlegt.” Ibid.

world' in ways that allow people to log in and simply shrug off a lifetime of experiencing the world from specific identity-related perspectives.⁸⁶

Thus, just because cyberspace, sampling and global economies have changed the way we think and feel about difference – and at times even erased difference briefly – this still has not changed how divisions along gender, class and race affect people's lived realities. Furthermore, philosopher Byung-Chul Han believes that the self-empowering meritocracy promoted in such popular phrases like Obama's "Yes we can" is actually responsible for creating a bland, tired society of conformity.⁸⁷

No Future? The Current State of German Rebellion

For decades, German rebels envisioned themselves in solidarity with their oppressed, Black brothers and sisters. But what happened when those brothers and sisters no longer wanted German help or when they began embracing the very middle-class life style German rebels resisted? In light of hip hop's recent mainstream popularity and commoditization, Paul Gilroy believes that freedom as an element of Black popular culture is dead. He wants to "...mourn the disappearance of the pursuit of Freedom as an element in Black vernacular culture, and to ask why it seems no longer appropriate or even plausible to speculate about the freedom of the subject of black politics in overdeveloped countries."⁸⁸ While Gilroy does not believe freedom is still an issue for Blacks in "overdeveloped countries", this outdated view is still circulated in Black popular culture. When Germans see hip hop royalty on MTV and a Black U.S. president, do they agree with Gilroy? Have they since transferred their desires for "freedom" to "underdeveloped" Africa?⁸⁹ Or have they abandoned these fantasies of Black freedom altogether?

Thomas Ernst describes the period from German unification until the present as a period of "cultural 'normalisation.'"⁹⁰ Those Germans born since 1970 are considered "unburdened by history and ideology... a disillusioned generation that [sees] itself without alternatives, and yet also as active and entrepreneurial – a generation, then, well-suited to the neo-liberal spirit of the times."⁹¹ In truth, the rebels discussed in Chapters One through Four were burdened by history (Germany's fascist past and the crimes of the Holocaust) and ideology (a divided Germany and the Cold War binary of Capitalism vs Socialism). More recent German rebels of pop literature, however, "speak from the vantage point of the middle or upper class, in a language which is

⁸⁶ Rodman, *Race in Cyberspace*, 4.

⁸⁷ "The collective plural of the affirmation *Yes, we can* perfectly expresses the positivist character of the meritocracy." "Sein Kollektivplural der Affirmation *Yes, we can* bringt gerade den Positivitätscharakter der Leistungsgesellschaft zum Ausdruck." Han, *Müdigkeitsgesellschaft*, 18.

⁸⁸ Gilroy, "After the Love Has Gone": Bio-Politics and Etho-Poetics in the Black Public Sphere," 55.

⁸⁹ Regarding the idea of replacing a desire for Black American bodies with African bodies, Damani Partridge argues that with the number of Black GIs receding since the end of the Cold War, German women have redirected their attention to African men. While relationships with German women could serve as a means for noncitizen Black men to gain legal status, "For black noncitizen men staying in Germany becomes contingent on being seen as beautiful and becoming hypersexual." Partridge, "We Were Dancing in the Club, Not on the Berlin Wall: Black Bodies, Street Bureaucrats, and Exclusionary Incorporation into the New Europe," 668.

⁹⁰ Klee, *Die Nigger Europas. Zur Lage der Gastarbeiter* 175.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 176.

culturally conservative and realistic...[with characters who] come from the bored (upper) middle class.”⁹²

Oskar, Rull, Whity, Edgar and Schultze all represented the *Zeitgeist* of their respected eras. Thus, if present-day Germany is a normalized, self-confident and neo-liberal nation perhaps that is why its fictional rebels embody the “ermüdete Gesellschaft” (fatigued society) Han heralds. Viewed positively, perhaps these new rebels do not feel the need to resist cultural stereotypes and norms, because they have embraced the postmodern notion of unstable identities. However, if embracing the freedom *from* an essential identity is only expressed in constructing the self out of brands, this could be a negative trend and instead of defiant, the new rebels are just complacent – which seems to be the perspective of popular protagonists of most recent pop literature best-sellers. These protagonists tend to be young people from the (upper) middle-class who are jaded with their anti-authoritarian ’68 generation parents and embrace excess, consumerism and a life without boundaries through partying, sex and illicit drug use.⁹³ According to Han, all of these distractions have eliminated their capacity for *Wut* (anger):

The general distraction that marks the society of today doesn’t allow for emphasis, energy and anger to surface. Anger is an asset that is capable of disturbing a condition and allowing *a new condition to begin*. Nowadays anger yields to irritation or the state of being annoyed which cannot create any real change. And so one becomes annoyed about the unavoidable...Anger does not concern a single situation. It negates the whole.⁹⁴

Despite the fatigue and comfort of many Germans, Germany does not only consist of the white (upper) middle-class; as I discussed in Chapter Six and above regarding Mark Terkessidis’ observations, there are still groups who struggle economically. For example in *Interkultur*, Terkessidis demonstrates how Germany’s educational system stigmatizes children whose first language is not German and this has a lasting effect on their educational and job opportunities. Furthermore, ethnic minorities do not only face economic challenges, but often institutional and every-day discrimination as well. Thus, I suspect that today’s German rebels can be found among those who are discriminated against based on ethnicity, religion, class and citizenship status among other factors; people who battle against being pushed to the margins and being expected to conform to a very rigid, guiding culture.

To whom do today’s German rebels turn for representation? Do they still turn outward or do they perhaps look inward? I suppose despite the commercial success which has weakened its status as a tool of rebellion, hip hop is still the immediate example of what drives today’s rebels. Around the world, often the most exciting and critical work being done by citizens who are unhappy with their governments is done through hip hop. The recent unrest in the Middle East is a testament to this fact. And in Germany, hip hop remains the preferred mouthpiece of the youth.

⁹² Ibid., 178-9.

⁹³ See Ibid.

⁹⁴ “Die allgemeine Zerstreung, die die Gesellschaft von heute kennzeichnet, lässt die Emphase und Energie der Wut nicht aufkommen. Die Wut ist ein Vermögen, das in der Lage ist, einen Zustand zu unterbrechen und *einen neuen Zustand beginnen zu lassen*. Sie weicht heute immer mehr der Ärgernis oder dem Angenervtsein, das keine einschneidende Veränderung zu bewirken vermag. So ärgert man sich über das Unvermeidliche...die Wut bezieht sich nicht auf einen einzelnen Sachverhalt. Sie negiert das Ganze.” Han, *Müdigkeitsgesellschaft*, 42.

Recently, Germany's *enfant terrible* Feridun Zaimoğlu turned his attention to the theater, penning *Schwarze Jungfrauen* (Black Virgins, 2006), a play about second-generation Turkish German Muslim women which is similar to his earlier book *Koppstoff*. In 2003, he also wrote a new translation of Shakespeare's *Othello*. Back in the 18th century, it was actually the German reception of Shakespeare that helped ignite the rebellious *Sturm-und-Drang* movement. Young Goethe, for example, wished to abandon the influence of French Classicism, which had become very popular in Germany, and instead embrace Shakespeare's writing style. Shakespeare was considered a rebel because of his "Originality, inventiveness, naturalness, intuition, and imagination."⁹⁵ Artists of the *Sturm-und-Drang* "saw and admired in Shakespeare a grand depicitor of humanity, a godlike genius who broke all the rules of classical, theatrical emplotment only to be all the more successful in the presentation of individual characters and a vast, multifarious world."⁹⁶ An example of Shakespeare's transnational influence in Germany is the fact that Goethe's play about the rebellious knight who aided the revolting peasants during the Peasant War of 1525, *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), is clearly influenced by Shakespeare's historical, realist and prose style.

Perhaps Zaimoğlu's turn to Shakespeare and theater suggests he is looking into past rebellious movements and German as well as other European trends in order to bring a new perspective on today's problems; much like Heiner Müller commented on a divided Cold War Germany and its uncomfortable fascist past with his play *Hamletmaschine* (Hamlet Machine, 1977). *Othello* is partially translated into Zaimoğlu's quintessential literary street slang. In "Kanak Sprak," Rodrigo and Iago's rants against Othello, whom they call "der Schoko" (the chocolate), seems to mirror the kinds of racist statements one might hear from modern-day Germans who might feel overlooked in the workplace in favor of a *Quotenschwarze* (quota Black). In fact, the difference in register between Othello's standard German and Rodrigo and Iago's "Kanak Sprak" puts a new spin on Shakespeare's rebellious practice of having "persons of different status intermingle[e] in one and the same play."⁹⁷ By reviving this centuries-old classic, Zaimoğlu not only participates in European literary tradition, staking his claim to its cultural capital, he also draws a constellation between Early Modern-era and contemporary racism. This kind of constellation is also the strategy presented by the recent theater hit *Verrücktes Blut* (2010), in which a German school teacher wielding a gun takes her Turkish German students hostage and forces them to act out scenes from Schiller's plays in order to relate their problems with those of the young artists of the *Sturm-und-Drang* period.⁹⁸ Perhaps we can understand *Verrücktes Blut* and Zaimoğlu's plays as examples of a shift away from (African) American pop culture, and one towards seeking rebellion in "high culture."

⁹⁵ Friederike von Schwerin-High, *Shakespeare, Reception and Translation: Germany and Japan* (London; New York: Continuum, 2004), 52.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 49.

⁹⁸ *Verrücktes Blut* was written by Nurkan Erpulat and Jens Hillje for the Ballhaus Naunyrstrasse theater located in Berlin-Kreuzburg.

Filmography

- I Berlin Harlem*. Dir. Lothar Lambert. Perf. Claudia Barry and Ortrud Beginnen, 1974.
- 40 Quadratmeter Deutschland*
- Angst essen Seele auf* [Fear Eats the Soul]. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Perf. Brigitte Mira and El Hedi ben Salem. Film Verlag der Autoren, 1974.
- Abschied von Gestern* [Yesterday Girl]. Dir. Alexander Kluge. Perf. Alexandra Kluge. Independent Film, 1966.
- Auf der anderen Seite* [The Edge of Heaven]. Dir. Fatih Akin. Perf. Hanna Schygulla and Baki Darak. Anka Film, 2007.
- Band of Angels*. Dir. Raoul Walsh. Perf. Clark Gable, Yvonne De Carlo, and Sidney Poitier. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1957.
- Beat Street*. Dir. Stan Lathan. Perf. Rae Dawn Chong and Guy Davis. MGM, 1984.
- Berlin, Ecke Schönhäuser Allee* [Berlin, Schonhauser Corner]. Dir. Gerhard Klein. Perf. Ekkehard Schall and Ilse Pagé. DEFA, 1957.
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