I, Vanessa D. Plumly, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Germanic Languages & Literature.

It is entitled:
BLACK-Red-Gold in “der bunten Republik”: Constructions and Performances of Heimat/en in Post-Wende Afro-/Black German Cultural Productions

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BLACK-Red-Gold in “der bunten Republik”: Constructions and Performances of Heimat/en in Post-Wende Afro-/Black German Cultural Productions

A dissertation submitted to the
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by

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Abstract:
While the Afro-/Black German population in the Federal Republic of Germany continues to seek national recognition, the volume and diversity of their cultural output has begun to receive its own international attention. This dissertation is an interdisciplinary study that assesses the multiplicity of the discursive constructions and performances of the imagined, yet real concept of Heimat in Black German cultural productions. These productions introduce a decolonization of the culturally and politically laden, as well as hegemonically and heteronormatively conceived, exclusionary space of (German) Heimat. In studying these re-imaginings and reconfigurations and the performative acts that constitute them in select Black German political and aesthetic works, I contend that Heimat is not only performed in resistance to a singularly imagined German origin and space of whiteness, but is also revealed to be a more vital construct than other forms of imagined communities. Black Germans, while rooted by their German cultural inheritance, simultaneously traverse the borders of the bounded German nation and interact on a global scale in the realm/s of the transnational Black diaspora. Heimat encompasses elements of both of these imagined communities; yet, it still can be distinguished from them. Persisting through contradictions, the plural Heimat/en of Black Germans become geographically situated, but also internalized (non-)spaces/places that are simultaneously individual and collective (corporeal in both senses of the ‘body’), voluntary and involuntary, inclusive and exclusive, local, national, and transnational, and dangerous and safe.
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When I write, I write from a position of power as a white American woman in academia. My ability to enter into this elite sphere as well as my racialization have afforded me many privileges. I choose to use this position of privilege to work together with those who are denied it. This collaborative effort meant that this project was never solely mine from the beginning. Indeed, it would not have existed without the labor of Afro-German cultural producers who provided me with cultural productions to engage in and assess in this dissertation and, for this, I am grossly indebted to them. It is my hope that this work proves to be another step alongside theirs in the recognition of the existence of Afro-/Black Germans and their rich and diverse German cultural productions in a heterogeneous German society.

Like many projects, this dissertation and the research conducted to write it would not have been completed if not for the generous support of numerous foundations and research stipends. The DAAD German Studies Research Grant (summer of 2011) provided me with my first opportunity to encounter and speak to Afro-German cultural producers and activists in Germany. I greeted each opportunity with open eyes and ears, being guided to new sources of information, as well as listening to the personal stories of individuals. I am thankful to Stefan Roloff, a white German artist from New York and Berlin, whom I serendipitously met at the DEFA summer film festival for connecting me with Afro-German artist Patricia Vester who opened her life to me and also shared her collection of Afro-German literature with me, entrusting that I (a stranger at the time) would return them to her. It is she who also directed me to the Afro-German ensemble Label Noir. Lara-Sophie Milagro, the artistic director of this ensemble is someone to whom I am also greatly thankful, for both her initial and sustained contact with me and her willingness to invite me into her home to interview the entire ensemble.
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Beyond financial support, I have had the opportunity to work with a number of crucial mentors during my academic career from my years in high school throughout graduate school, each of whom prepared me to be able to undertake a project of this scope. They are too many to list here individually, but I am indebted to them all. My committee members from the University of Cincinnati, among them, Dr. Todd Herzog, Dr. Katharina Gerstenberger (now at the University of Utah), and Dr. Jana Braziel have been crucial to my success in academia thus far and have offered me guidance and inspiration beyond any expectations. They take their jobs as mentors seriously, and I owe them all a heartfelt thank you and so much more. A very special thank you goes out to my external committee member and remarkable scholar in the field of Afro-German Studies, Dr. Tina M. Campt. The DAAD conference grant enabled me to invite Dr. Campt to the University of Cincinnati’s campus with the financial help of the Taft Center and our German Department. Without this extended invitation, I likely would not have mustered the courage to ask her to serve on my committee. Aside from the members of my dissertation committee, one person in particular has invested endless time and effort into this project (and into me as a scholar), seeing it to fruition from its initial stages—this is my dissertation advisor and mentor, Dr. Tanja Nusser. More than just simply an advisor to this project, she has become a trusted friend and colleague, without whom I am absolutely certain I could not have succeeded in
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All of the graduate students at UC past and present (you know who you are!) and all of my students at UC made my time spent here thoroughly enjoyable. I cannot imagine having had the same sense of community anywhere else, as I did at UC. Professors Dr. Amy Elder and Dr. Anne Runyan from my other departmental home in the Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality program, Olya Hart, who is responsible for German Studies acquisitions at the Langsam library, and all of my professors at the University of Kentucky and at Bethany College who helped me achieve my academic potential, also deserve to be thanked and recognized here.

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Note to the dissertation title: The citation in the title comes from May Ayim’s poem “gegen leberwurst grau- für eine bunte Republik” published in the volume *Blues in Schwarz Weiss*. Udo Lindenburg had used the phrase at the time in relation to Germany’s multiculturalism (Odukoya, “fill the gap” 142).
INTRODUCTION

New Perspectives on *Heimat* Discourse: Race and Space Matters

What makes Afro-/Black German cultural productions uniquely German? This project argues that the imagined community of *Heimat* is central to Black German cultural productions and Black German articulations and performances of a German identity. In arguing that race matters in the production and reconfiguration of racially inclusive and, thus, decolonized *Heimat/en*, I address the ways in which this is identifiable in Black German texts written and performed in the post-*Wende* period.

A number of scholarly publications have examined Germany after reunification and the reconstitution of the culturally and racially laden, as well as gendered and overwhelmingly heteronormative term, *Heimat*. Many focus on the loss of an ethnic German *Heimat* in the postwar period and the continued construction or reconstruction of a German identity, interpreting Germanness strictly as an unmarked ‘white’ identity and unwilling to take its racially normative constitution into account or refusing to see this often invisible, yet hegemonic factor as a constitutive element. This is most evident in Peter Blickle’s theorization of *Heimat* that takes a gendered approach to the concept into account, but not a race-based approach.

Recent research has shifted the focus to the spatial constitution of *Heimat* constructs, particularly in relation to representations of Polish-German expulsion in literature in the second half of the twentieth century as indicated in Frederike Eigler’s latest work. Similarly, Karina Berger’s new publication approaches the loss of *Heimat* for ethnic Germans in German postwar

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1 *Race Matters* (2000) is a publication by Cornel West addressing American democracy and the persisting problem of the color line.
literature. Nick Hodgin’s contribution to *Heimat* discourse in East German cinema in *Screening the East: Heimat, Memory, and Nostalgia in German Film Since 1989* has also turned the gaze of *Heimat* eastward in an effort to decolonize the concept as one that is situated and located only in German culture of the former West Germany and instead designates it as a thematic concept just as visible in the former East Germany as well as in the *Ostalgie* that dominated the loss of this state. However, few literary and cultural scholars have examined *Heimat* from a minority perspective as represented in their diverse cultural productions and only a few have done so from a strictly Black/Afro-German (Women’s) perspective after the *Wende* period in Germany. These include Peggy Piesche’s “Identität und Wahrnehmung in literarischen Texten Schwarzer deutscher Autorinnen der 90er Jahre,” Imke Brust’s contribution “Transnational and Gendered Dimensions of *Heimat* in Mo Asumang’s *Roots Germania*” to the edited volume *Heimat Goes Mobile*, Heike Henderson’s manuscript “Re-Thinking and Re-Writing Heimat: Turkish Women Writers in Germany,” Alexandra Ludewig’s chapter on “Hyphenated Heimat” in her book *100 Years of German Heimat Film*, Jennifer Michael’s chapter “Multi-Ethnicity and Cultural Identity: Afro German Women Writers’ Struggle for Identity in Postunification Germany” published in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film and Discourse since 1990* and Karein Goertz’ article “Showing her Colors: An Afro-German Writes the Blues in Black and White,” and they are individual manuscripts and chapters.

My project therefore addresses this gap, complementing these scholarly contributions and the already existing body of knowledge on the historical discourses that have affected and shaped Afro-German identity and the Black German diaspora. In addition to the more broadly relayed Afro-German history compiled in the seminal book *Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf*
den Spuren ihrer Geschichte, Katharina Oguntoye’s Eine Afro-Deutsche Geschichte: Zur Lebenssituation von Afrikanern und Afro-Deutschen in Deutschland von 1884 bis 1950 has explored the experiences of Black Germans at the turn of the century into the mid-twentieth century and Fatima El-Tayeb has charted the historical and “scientific” discourse of race in Germany in her book Schwarze Deutsche: Der Diskurs um “Rasse” und nationale Identität 1890-1933 as well as theorized the African diaspora and People of Color in Germany and Europe within the context of a queering of white European identity in her latest monograph European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe. Tina Campt has explored historical intersections of related Afro-German topics in the Third Reich in her first book Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich and expanded this research in her more recent monograph Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe.

In moving the discussion beyond these existing historical studies, I offer a new direction in Black German Studies by focusing specifically on the discursive analysis of contemporary cultural texts, while still reading them within their socio-political and historical contexts. This analysis of Black German cultural productions, therefore, undoubtedly builds upon the existing work completed in this realm as, for example, in Cathy Gelbin, Kader Konuk, and Peggy Piesche’s edited volume AufBrüche: kulturelle Produktionen von Migrantinnen, Schwarzen und jüdischen Frauen in Deutschland and more recently evinced in some of the contributions to Sandrine Micossé-Aikins and Sharon Otoo’s The Little Book of Big Visions: How to be an Artist and Revolutionize the World.

My project reads Black/Afro-German cultural productions as individual pieces of a comprehensive endeavor to reconfigure an inclusive German identity and Heimat, which strive
to maintain and embrace the heterogeneity and plurality of the Afro-German diaspora, a diaspora that is not only located within the German nation, but also situates itself via multiple individual and collective positionings. In Black German works, *Heimat* is not just perceived as a nationally imagined space/community; it is much more. It is often simultaneously a number of localities and positionings (*Heimat/en*).

As such, this dissertation project closely examines the repeatedly referenced construct of the imagined community and space/s of (German) *Heimat/en* in select Afro/Black German works from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the present. Taking a cross-genre approach to Black German cultural productions that perform *Heimat* and engage it spatially, I highlight the interchange between *Heimat* and other imagined communities. In following Benedict Anderson’s claim that, “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (6), I set out to reveal what it is that makes *Heimat* uniquely distinct from other imagined communities that to some extent still structure the plural *Heimat/en* of Black Germans, namely, the German nation and the African Diaspora. Furthermore, in addition to Anderson, I also follow Khachig Tölölyan who asserts that, “diaspora must pursue, in texts literary and visual, canonical and vernacular, indeed in all cultural productions and throughout history, the traces of struggles over and contradictions within ideas and practices of collective identity, of homeland and nation” (3), to argue that Black German productions do precisely this.

Through an examination of the multiple modes of performance and citation or re-signification of cultural elements adopted from the imagined communities of the German nation and the African diaspora in the creation of Afro-German *Heimat/en*, which unveil the contradictions of collective identity in their individual interpretations, I maintain that a new and alternate discourse of the plurality of meaning of *Heimat* can be observed. Afro-German
Heimat/en are performed as being intersectionally produced in (non-)space/s within the—at times contrasting and at times overlapping—genres of (spoken word) poetry, autobiography, theater, hip-hop, and documentary film.

“Space is the Place”

With the continued emphasis placed on space in the constitution and performance of Heimat/en, it is also necessary to include this element in the reading and interpretation of Black German cultural productions that approach Heimat as a construct. Adressing the implication of knowledge and power—both of which are inherently political—in the construction of space, Michel Foucault pointed out in the 1960s that, “[t]he present epoch will perhaps above all be the epoch of space” (“Of Other Spaces” 1). I maintain that this statement on space sustains its validity well into the twenty-first century and would add to this that the present epoch approaches both real and imagined (non-)space/s, such as internalized spaces embodied by emotions and ideas, and particularly does so when read in relation to Heimat/en. Beyond this, space/s in the twenty-first century continue to be conceived of in terms of and dominated by what W.E.B. Dubois articulates as “the problem of the color line” (3). It is, therefore, necessary to enact a decolonization of such spaces. The African diaspora as imagined community and transnational network of connections offers a decolonizing potential that can enable Black Germans to do precisely this.

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5 Intersectional in the sense that it examines the converging and multiple points of identity (race, sexuality, gender, regional identification, age, etc.), many of which are also always shifting through performance. Intersectionality is a term coined by feminist scholar Kimberle Crenshaw. For more on this see “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color.”

6 “Space is the Place” is the title of a film in which the late Black American philosopher and musician Sun Ra plays. He is best known for his theorizations and ponderings on what has been termed cosmic philosophy and his work paved the way for afrofuturist aesthetics.

7 Borders continue to have an impact in the construction of nations and supranational entities such as within the EU, while new modes of conceptualizing space continue to be articulated that move beyond these traditional articulations of space, in particular in relation to virtual spaces.
In relation to the function, understanding, and utilization of space, as well as the political imaginary, the imagined construct of *Heimat* not only coincides with, but also diverges from the German nation and the African diaspora. All of course are discursively constructed and imagined communities and all three have some elements of stability and are capable of producing real world effects. Whereas the German nation’s borders spatially define it as an entity, marking this imagined community as one that is geographically rooted, the African diaspora is mostly conceptualized as borderless, even if it often refers to the geographic space of displacement (Africa). *Heimat*, however, can be simultaneously borderless and bound, as will be evinced in the textual analyses that follow. For, whereas white German conceptualizations of the imagined communities of nation and *Heimat* often remain tied to fixed notions of blood, race, *Volk*, national borders, and soil, Afro-German interpretations are much more fluid, at many times individualized, and not necessarily attached to (geographic) space/s per se.

According to Andreas Huber, *Heimat*, “weist zweifellos in den Köpfen der meisten Menschen primär eine räumliche Komponente auf” (76). This spatial dimension, however, can refer to a geographic location or a different constellation of space altogether as Elenore Wiedenroth wrote in the introduction to the compilation text *Talking Home: Heimat aus unserer eigenen Feder. Frauen of Color in Deutschland*: “immer wieder geht es um Raum, Raum zum Leben, zum Überleben, um *den schweren süßlichen Wunsch geborgen zu sein* (Peggy Piesche),

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8 The word *Volk* in German has three meanings. One means the everyday people. The other two versions are interpreted in an ethnic context and as the nation. These two meanings have not been completely separable over the course of German history and converged most notably during German colonialism and the Third Reich. Alexander Weheliye points out this overlap in his entry “Nation” in *Wie Rassismus aus Wörtern spricht* (451). He calls for a differentiation between das Volk and ein Volk, the former referring to all people, particularly those of a lower class and the latter referring to an imagined homogenous racial, ethnic, or cultural group (452). Weheliye argues that it is the nation as a container concept that homogenizes the interal group in order to differentiate itself from other nations. (452). The nation as imagined community is unpacked in section one.

9 The phrase *Blut und Boden* to which the soil aspect of *Heimat* as a concept is connected will be discussed later in section one.
um Orte der *Heimat*” (5). These spaces of dreams and wishes, of survival and security, and of longing and belonging are imagined as both existing and yet to be made.

Beyond this spatial dimension, whereas the German nation and the African diaspora are communities imagined in a purely collective sense, *Heimat* can be and indeed is also a concept that is capable of being defined individually. This distinguishes *Heimat* as a more malleable concept, even if it still integrates elements of community and belonging, for example, kinship ties and friendships, or it is a ‘community’ with which many identify, but conceive of in different ways.¹⁰

My project specifically explores cultural productions of Black Germans who have been or are active in some capacity in the Afro-German movement and therefore produce or have produced their works as a political act, performing and articulating their identity as Afro-/Black Germans and working within an anti-racist context. These cultural productions are exemplary of the political counterdiscourse evolving during and after the *Wende* period. I highlight the variation and difference that can be extracted from these works, while also pinpointing their commonalities—what Audre Lorde has referred to as “connected differences” (Lorde, “Foreward” vii). While these texts and their producers speak for themselves and I do not have to speak for them, they also merit close readings and interpretations, particularly in relation to their enacted performances and constitution of Afro-German *Heimat/en*.

Choosing the specific works to focus on for this project was not an easy task, as there are many one could employ. In limiting my frame of reference, I decided to approach the works of Afro-Germans with one white parent and one black parent and selected works that are representative pieces for each of the genres assessed here. As a result, this dissertation neither

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¹⁰ Tiffany Florvil’s dissertation on the Afro-German Women’s movement highlights these kinship connections. While she does not address this bonding as a form of *Heimat*, but rather a transnational diasporic network, I interpret this community as part of the establishment of one rendering of an Afro-German collective notion of *Heimat*. 
makes claims to completeness nor to an overarching representation of the heterogenous Black German community’s individual and collective views on the concept of *Heimat* in its entirety. Despite this, it does articulate common threads that are present. The selected works are viewed as representative samples that are exemplary of what I view as the evolving parallel and counterdisocurses of Black German *Heimat/en*, which point to common techniques of re-imagining *Heimat* through performance and of questioning its exclusivity in its hegemonic versions. By zooming in on the three-prong constellation of imagined communities including nation, *Heimat*, and the African diaspora, with particular emphasis on *Heimat*, I contend that *Heimat* is discursively constructed as the most essential community for Afro-Germans in the texts. It combines elements of both the nation and the African diaspora and collective and individual understandings of the term to create a hybrid and personalized *Heimat*, something which Eric Hobsbawm has argued cannot exist due to the nature of the differing words *Heim* and *Heimat*.

In his statements on exile, Hobsbawm claims that “home, in the literal sense *Heim*, chez moi, is essentially private. Home in the wider sense *Heimat*, is essentially public […] *Heim* belongs to me and mine and nobody else […] *Heimat* is by definition collective. It cannot belong to us as individuals” (“Introduction” 67). Despite his belief in the inability to render *Heimat* as an individualized construct, my reading of Black German performances exposes the fallacy of this statement that perceives *Heimat* as existing only at the level of the collective body. The very fact that *Heim* comprises the beginning of the word *Heimat* reveals that it cannot be considered separately, but rather functions as a part of *Heimat*’s very construction. This is part of the ambivalence of the term that is already present in its linguistic formation. The reality that the personal is political and tied to the national implies that *Heimat* can and must be considered as
both private and public, individual and collective, existing in and persisting through contradictory sites, particularly as it is experienced by Black Germans. White Germans who question the personal “Heim” of Heimat permeate the personal space of the Black Germans’ Heimat, overstepping the boundaries of what “belongs to me and mine and nobody else” in their rejection of Black Germans’ self identity, socialization, and individual and collective history.

**Framework**

The analytical framework that I employ to examine Black German cultural productions in relation to the construction of Heimat/en as they are bound to the German nation and connected to the African diaspora is informed by theories of the German idea of Home/Homeland/Heimat (Riedel, Türcke, Blickle, Huber, Boa and Palfreyman, Wickham, Confino), theories of nation building/construction (Hobsbawm, Anderson, McClintock, Bhabha, Smith, Gellner), and theories of the African diaspora (Gilroy, Brown, Campt, Braziel and Mannur, Wright, Clifford). My theorization of a new construction of Heimat from an Afro-German perspective integrates theories of exile, space and location, dis(placement), contact zones, and nomadism (Braidotti, Said, Foucault, Pratt, Kaplan), since I view the discourse surrounding Heimat in Afro-German cultural productions as informed by both the national and the diasporic and, therefore, consider Heimat to be a third space of in-betweenness that informs these corresponding theories (Bhabha 38). In assessing how Heimat/en as personal and political communities are (de/re)constructed and re/imagined in the Afro-German context, my dissertation provides a shift in perspective of the cultural and spatial turn of the Wende, one that is impacted upon by both collective and individual components of identity (e.g. race, gender, sexuality, and national identity, among others), marking its intersectionality. Hence, the role of performativity (of identity), particularly
as theorized by Judith Butler, will also be examined to support my analysis of Afro-German
Heimat/en.

This dissertation project, rather than divided into completely closed chapters, is instead divided into generic sections. These sections are not only generic in the sense that they refer to specific genres that are performing Afro-German Heimat/en, but also in the sense that the sections are generic, given that the thematic content of each intersects and overlaps with the others. Section one, “Theorizing, Constructing, and Imagining Communities: Producing Heimat/en at the Intersection of the German Nation and the African Diaspora,” approaches the historical context for my analysis and the definitional capacity and framework of the imagined communities of the German nation, Heimat, and the African diaspora. Following the initial historical background provided in this section, I outline the points of overlap and difference in the three imagined communities, in order to demonstrate that Heimat incorporates and contains elements of both the German nation and the African diaspora, specifically as it relates to Black German identity. In section two, “Exilic, Embodied, and Nomadic Heimat/en in Autobiographical Writing and (Spoken Word) Poetry,” I theorize what I consider an Afro-/Black German exilic Heimat that is evinced in a majority of Afro-/Black German cultural productions, which reference the concept of Heimat or home. This collective Heimat is one of being in exile at home and being at home in exile that is experienced by Afro-/Black Germans as a result of their exclusion from a national belonging that is hegemonically conceived of as white and which further seeks to refuse them the right to claim a space of Heimat on German soil. The physical and personal space inhabited by the body, besides the space of the home or dwelling, becomes the only space/s granted to Afro-/Black Germans. Heimat/en exist for them as a collective
experience, but also forcefully become internally rooted. Resultantly, they can be carried with them, wherever they go.

“Performing Heimat/en on Stage: Label Noir’s Theatrical Production Heimat, bittersüße Heimat,” the title of section three, approaches the theater production, Heimat, bittersüße Heimat, that the Black German theater ensemble Label Noir—based in Berlin—produced and has staged throughout Germany. In this section, my theoretical analysis focuses on the role of parody (via music) in the production, while also making necessary excurses into other theoretical concepts addressed in the play’s thematization of Heimat that are tied to national and diasporic community building. Through parody, the original or authentic German Heimat and the hegemonic construction of whiteness as connected to national identity is revealed as a copy. The performance of Heimat on stage acquires multiple layers of ambivalence that break down the binaries of seemingly prefabricated identities produced in and through performance. The space of German Heimat is performed by the Black German ensemble as an inclusively rather than exclusively imagined community—one that calls for the recognition of Afro-Germans in German society, as well as one that marks Heimat/en as both individual and collective and (non-)spaces/places of pain and healing.

Examining the genre of hip-hop in the production of Black German Heimat/en, section four, “Imagining Heimat/en through the Hip-Hop of Samy Deluxe,” zooms in on the work of well-known Afro-German hip-hop singer Samy Deluxe. In particular, he writes Black (masculine) Germanness into the German nation and the aesthetic space of the German Heimat, as first assessed in his album covers and then in the songs and corresponding music videos to “Dis wo ich herkomm” and “Poesie Album.” In the former song, I analyze the musical narration of a new Germany or Heimat from a postwar Black German masculine perspective in which
elements of spatial representation come to the fore. This interpretation asserts that the video cites prevalent postwar film genres in an attempt to imagine a future-oriented collective *Heimat* comprised of numerous individually recognized *Heimat/en* that in many ways appears to be utopian, but in other ways is actually depicted as already existing in German society. In the latter song, I uncover the projection screen of whiteness that produces race in Germany and excludes Black Germans from belonging not only at the national level, but also at the level of cultural representation and aesthetics. Samy Deluxe parodies the white German *Kulturnation* and provocatively inserts himself into a space that is just as much his home as it is the home of the prominent cultural Classicists, Goethe and Schiller.

Finally, the last section, section five, turns to modes of “Unmapping, Re-framing, and Documenting *Heimat/en* on Film.” In this section, the documentaries, *Yes I am* and *Roots Germania* are comparatively considered, read as presenting a new postcolonial travel narrative in which the Black German, as simultaneously European and African, re-writes the discourse on *Heimat* by turning the gaze back onto the departed homeland in the journeys to Africa that two of the protagonists make in the films. Both films produce a sense of home as being underway or on a journey that is never fully complete, for in both spaces one is *never fully at home*, while simultaneously presented as *being at home*. The ambivalences of Black German *Heimat/en* are once again brought to light in this section, as well as the performative elements of culture that purport an original or authentic singular *Heimat* that does not exist or cannot be mapped.
SECTION ONE

Theorizing, Constructing, and Imagining Communities: Producing Heimat/en at the Intersection of the German Nation and the African Diaspora

Developing an Afro-German Community: The Afro-German (Women’s) Movement

“comme si comme ça, community.”
- May Ayim (“community” 1994)

Slightly over two decades after Afro-German poet, author, and activist May Ayim writes the poem “blues in schwarz-weiss” in 1990 that would later be published in the eponymous poetry collection (1995), Afro-German hip-hop artist Samy Deluxe raps “Ich bin nicht Afro-deutsch-farbig, ich bin SchwarzWeiss” on his album entitled SchwarzWeiss (2011). Although the Black/Afro-German presence in Germany has a long history, over the past quarter of a century it has made itself collectively and politically known on a much larger scale than previously. This is on the one hand due to the increase in size of the Black German population and its cultural output and on the other hand due to the Black German political community that developed out of the Afro-German Women’s movement of the 1980s. This movement, and the Black German organizations founded in conjunction with it, contributed to the visibility of Afro-Germans as well as established a sense of community that enabled Afro-Germans living in Germany to develop a collective voice, to create a self-proclaimed identity, and to critique institutional structures and dominant discourse through the production of their own.

As Kofi Yakpo writes, “Der Widerspruch zwischen dem von der Gesellschaft aufgezwungenen “Anderssein” von Afros auf der einen, und dem kulturellen “Deutschsein” auf

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11 See Ayim’s poetry collection Blues in Schwarz Weiss and the lyrics to Samy Deluxe’s song “SchwarzWeiss” on the album of the same name, released in 2012.
12 For more on the Afro-German women’s movement and the evolving Black German community, see Katharina Oguntoye, et. al.’s Farbe bekennen, Peggy Piesche’s Euer Schweigen schützt euch nicht, and Tiffany Florvil’s dissertation “Writing Across Differences: Afro-Germans, Gender, and Diaspora, 1970s-1990s.”
der anderen Seite musste irgendwann aufbrechen” (“Denn ich bin” 335), and indeed it did. The year 1984 has served as one of the major milestones in the course of contemporary Afro-German history. It is, however, not the only significant benchmark in the context of the many centuries of Afro-German history and the Afro-German presence in Germany, as Phillip Khabo-Köpsell has rightly noted. To be sure, the cultural critique and output of Afro-Germans did not commence with the beginnings of a larger Afro-German Women’s Movement, but was discernible well before this time in multiple cultural outlets and voiced by various individuals since at least the past three centuries.13

Nevertheless, this year (1984) has undeniably been the one made most visible in the texts of Afro-Germans—particularly women involved in the movement—and in the discourse surrounding the movement. It was in this year that Carribean-American, poet, author, lesbian, and activist Audre Lorde was invited by Dagmar Schultz, a white, anti-racist feminist, to the Free University in Berlin to lecture. During one of Lorde’s many stays in Berlin in 1990, Ina Röder-Sissako also invited her to Dresden to establish connections with Black Germans in East Germany, thereby opening the transnational dialogue between Lorde and Black Germans in both former Germanies (Piesche, Euer Schweigen 12). Lorde’s presence at the Free University, her multiple visits to Berlin and other universities and cities in Germany, and the contacts she made with Black German women as well as initiated among them brought together Women of Color from different locations in Germany in the same space (often for the first time). This sparked the beginning of what would become officially known as the Afro-German Women’s Movement.

13 See the online publication for the Ballhaus Naunynstraße’s BlackLux: Ein Heimatfest aus Schwarzen Perspektiven and Asoka Esuruoso and Khabo-Köpsell’s “Introduction Alpha” in Arriving in the Future, in which they state that this time would be referred to more accurately if described as a “transition point,” rather than the “‘birth’ of Black German activism and literature production (12). See also Köpsell’s section entitled “Literature and Activism” in Arriving in the Future, wherein he discusses the “invisible archive” (36-47), i.e. those works and authors that are much lesser known in the dominant narration of Afro-German history and activism.
First and foremost, the movement was focused on the self-assertion of a collective identity that came to fruition with the publication of the compilation work *Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte* (Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out) in 1986. The movement also led to the formation of the *Initiative Schwarze Deutsche* (now the *Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland*, the Initiative of Black People in Germany, better known as the ISD) and the *Afro-Deutsche Frauen* (Afro-German Women, better known as ADEFRA) organizations, as well as to the construction, production, and publication of—prior to this time often unheard—Afro-German (hi)stories in media outlets such as the magazines *afro look* and *Afrekete* (Piesche, *Euer Schweigen* 11-12).¹⁴

Afro-Germans certainly had been writing and publishing works prior to this time, but these often had not been brought to the attention of a larger Black German community, due to the isolated existence of Black Germans prior to the movement. Indeed, as Leroy Hopkins writes “the first step to be taken to assert their cultural identity was to overcome the barrier of isolation” (“Searching for the Father/land” 306). Not only had Afro-German authors, such as (Nzingha) Guy St. Louis, whose first volume of poetry, *Gedichte einer schönen Frau* appeared in 1983, three years before *Farbe bekennen* and Raja Lubinetzki whose poem collection *Magie* published in 1985, presented their work to a wider German audience through publication, but their works were also part of a long tradition dating at least as far back as to Anton Wilhelm Amo’s dissertation research on the experiences of Black Germans during the eighteenth century, which

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¹⁴ These magazines were published by ADEFRA and the ISD. For more information on their content, political positioning, and length of publication, see Hopkins, “Writing Diasporic Identity” (189), Adams “The Souls of Black Volk” (228-230), Oguntoye, et al. *Farbe bekennen* (11), and Jeannine Kantara’s online article on the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung’s webpage “Die Geschichte der ‘afro look.’” Peggy Piesche describes theses magazines as a “Plattform zur Veröffentlichung von einzelnen künstlerischen Arbeiten” (*Euer Schweigen* 14) and Kantara as “einen wichtigen Schritt zur Selbstfindung.”
he completed in 1729 (Khabo-Köpsell and Esuruoso 16, 43).\(^{15}\) Thus, it is perhaps best to view Lorde and her contributions as a cog that was added to the pre-existing people in the community of Black German activism (those Afro-Germans who had already been politically active in Germany), thereby helping to speed up the movement in both meanings of the word and allowing the already long-standing members of the resistance machine (not a master’s tool)\(^{16}\) to take shape as a collective entity.

The movement proceeded full speed ahead in the late 1980s and was mostly organized by Afro-German Women of Color, many of whom were self-proclaimed lesbians (Piesche 10). The movement was therefore an inclusive movement from its very beginning stages, focusing on the multiple intersections of race, gender, nation, class, sexuality, and religion, among others. The collected essays in the volume *Entfernte Verbindungen: Rassismus, Antisemitismus, Klassenunterdrückung* (1993) were just one of the products resulting from such intersectional analysis.

Two signifiers that became the dominant forms of self-designation during this time were Afro-German and Black German, noted in the volume *Farbe bekennen* and still employed today. Both terms are meant to be inclusive categories that allow identification with and connection to African descendants or parents. The term Afro-German is a political term chosen as a form of self-representation and self-identification and employed to combat colonial terms that have been and continue to be used to refer to Afro-/Black Germans in white German discourse in the

\(^{15}\) Anton Wilhelm Amo was brought as a “gift” to the court at Wolfenbüttel and, a philosopher, he completed his dissertation in 1729 entitled “Dissertatio inauguralis de iure maurorum in Europa” or “Dissertation: on the Rights of Moors in Europe.” This project was an intellectual engagement with his experiences and the experiences of other People of Color in Europe during the time of the Enlightenment period (Esuruoso and Khabo-Köpsell 16). He is one of many other individuals who had spoken out about the experience of being Black in Germany. For more on Amo, see also Marilyn Sephocl’s article “Anton Wilhelm Amo” in the *Journal of Black Studies*.

\(^{16}\) One of Audre Lorde’s famous essays is entitled “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” wherein she argues for alternative tools than those possessed and employed by hegemonic discourse and hegemonic positionings that seek to produce difference in order to divide those with common experiences, rather than enable them to unite to envision change and enact resistance (110-113).
media, in literary texts, and beyond. The term Black German enables anyone who has had experiences of exclusion through racism to employ it (e.g. Turkish Germans, Asian Germans, etc.).\(^{17}\) Prior to the development of these self-designations, Afro-Germans had possessed no positive form of identification, as terms such as mulatto and *Mischling*, among others, were the only words in circulation and Black Germans in their own racial consciousness were aware that these terms carried negative connotations (Oguntoyé, et. al 10). As Tina Campt states in “Reading the Black German Experience,” “‘Black German’” emphasizes the constructedness of blackness in German society and the fact that public perception of blackness in Germany is not restricted to the attribute of skin color” (288). Black as identity, however, is, as diaspora scholar Michelle Wright has pointed out, not just a category given to people of African descent by a white Western subject, it is also a performed and created identity shaped by those who identify with the term (“Pale by Comparison” 265).

The publication of *Farbe bekennen* and the beginnings of the broader Afro-German Women’s Movement, therefore, served to document and trace the long-standing historical presence of the African diaspora and Afro-Germans in Germany for the first time,\(^ {18}\) as well as to

\(^{17}\) These terms are used throughout my dissertation interchangeably. In most cases one term is preferred over another by those who identify with them. For example, Noah Sow prefers Black German to Afro-German, as she claims no familiarity or association with Africa, but rather is Black both in her political activism and as having been positioned as such through experiences of racism. See Oliver Hardt’s documentary film *Black Deutschland*. Oguntoyé, Ayim (Opitz), and Schultz further explain the terms in the introduction to *Farbe bekennen*: “Mit Audre Lorde entwickelten wir den Begriff “Afro-deutsch” in Anlehnung an Afro-amerikanisch, als Ausdruck unserer kulturellen Herkunft. “Afro-deutsch” schien uns einleuchtend, da viele von uns eine deutsche Mutter und einen afrikanischen Vater haben. Es geht uns mit dem Begriff jedoch nicht darum zu betonen, daß wir einen weißen und einen schwarzen Elternteil haben. […] Mit dem Begriff “Afro-deutsch” meinen wir alle, die diese Bezeichnung auf sich beziehen möchten, egal ob sie einen oder zwei Schwarze Eltern teile besitzen. Ebenso wie mit der synonym gebrauchten Bezeichnung “Schwarze Deutsche” geht es uns nicht um Ausgrenzung nach Herkunft oder Hautfarbe, wissen wir doch allzu gut, was es heißt, unter Ausgrenzung zu leiden. Vielmehr wollen wir “Afro-deutsche” den herkömmlichen Behelfsbezeichnungen wie “Mischlinge”, “Mulatte” oder “Farbige” entgegensetzen, als einen Versuch, uns selbst zu bestimmen, statt bestimmt zu werden” (10). For more on the meaning and usage of these terms, see also the entries “Schwarze Deutsche” and “Afrodeutsch/Afrodeutsche_u” in *Wie Rassismus aus Wörtern spricht: (K)Erben des Kolonialismus im Wissensarchiv deutsche Sprache* and the entries “Afrodeutsch/Afrodeutsche_e” and “Schwarze, Schwarze Deutsche” in *Rassismus auf gut Deutsch: Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk zu rassistischen Sprachhandlungen*.

\(^{18}\) It should be noted that May Ayim also published her dissertation on this topic.
examine and articulate personal accounts of racism that Afro-Germans experienced to a broader audience. This opened up the discourse on race and racism for further debate in the German public sphere at a time that seemed politically rife for such discussions. Furthermore, with this newly acquired and politically mobilized visibility, powerful collective voice, and archivization/documentation of individual and collective experiences, Afro-Germans—in particular, under the guidance of Lorde—discovered that rather than waiting for changes in the hegemonic structures constituting German society and their everyday lives that they “must be the change they wish to see” with regard both to recognition in Germany and to the acquisition and dissemination of previously undisclosed knowledge (Audre Lorde, The Berlin Years).

In the decades following this call to action, the Black German community and its individual constituents have actively and collectively pursued this change through cultural production, among other means. Their works continue to address their everyday experiences of racism as members of the African diaspora who despite their socialization and membership in the German nation are frequently denied their German identity and a sense of belonging or Heimat, what Olumide Popoola has referred to as a “fehlende Zugehörigkeit” with which Germans of Color are confronted or “dieses nie ‘ganz sein’ zu können, ständig auf der Suche, im übertragenen Sinne sozusagen ‘heimatlos’” (Talking Home 2). With the Afro-German Movement coinciding with a major historical shift in German national history—that of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the (violent) period of German reunification that placed Heimat at the center of the newly conceived German nation and German identity—, the increasing emphasis Afro-Germans placed and continue to place on (denied) belonging to a German Heimat has led to a re-claiming of the place and space of Heimat in the counterdiscourses produced in their cultural texts. They embody this very “change they wish to see” transform the new Germany.
Afro-Germans’ Contested Heimat

Afro-Germans whose current number is estimated at around 500,000-800,000, but remains indeterminate due to the inability to inquire about an individual’s race on public/official documents in Germany—and is likely much larger than this—, continue to be subjected to the following questions on a daily basis: *Woher kannst du so gut Deutsch?; Woher kommst du? Na ja, aber wo kommst du eigentlich her?; and Wann gehst du zurück in deine Heimat?*\(^{19}\) These questions are part of what comprises the quotidian racism present in contemporary German society, in which many white Germans still consider themselves the norm and those with darker skin are relegated to a space outside of national boundaries (in most cases, Africa—a vast and diverse continent that often becomes essentialized as a cohesive nation by white Germans—or the U.S.) and hegemonic notions of belonging to the German nation. Yet to refer to Afro- or Black Germans is to refer to an incredibly heterogeneous minority community living in Germany, the origins of which are many, since no single historical event resulted in their presence on the European continent. To provide but a few examples, Afro-Germans were court servants in the early modern period, came to Germany during the period of German imperialism, became the sons and daughters of French occupation troops and Germans after World War I and African American soldiers and Germans following World War II, came to the GDR as students or apprentices from Africa or were fathered to these students and Germans. Some are the offspring of African migrants to Germany and many are already third and fourth generation Afro-Germans in today’s Federal Republic.

\(^{19}\) See, among others, Noah Sow’s *Deutschland SchwarzWeiss: Der Alltägliche Rassismus* (252-263), May Ayim’s *Grenzenlos und unverschämmt* (11), Grada Kilomba’s chapter on “Space Politics” in *Plantation Memories* (64-69), Emily Ngubia Kuria’s entry “‘AFRIKA!’-seine Verkörperung in einem deutschen Kontext” in *Rassismus auf gut Deutsch* (231-232), and Nzitu Mawakha’s *Daima: Images of Women of Colour in Germany*. Victoria Robinson articulates this as a “Weigerung, Afro-Deutsche als Deutsche zu verstehen” and to accept them as “gleichwertige.” She also views this as “der Grundstein des deutschen Diskurses vom weißen deutschen Subjekt und dem afrikanischen ‘Other’” (4).
Still, despite their German socialization, German citizenship, and fluency in German, Black Germans remain excluded from their nation-state by those white Germans who continue to deny their national identity and belonging and question their origins, as a result of their racial constitution. As Reinhild Steingrover and Patricia Mazon put it “German society still sees them largely as ‘foreigners’” (2) or to employ Wright’s theoretical terminology, they become “othered-from-within-from-without” (Becoming Black 190). This means, more simply put, that although they are indeed Germans, they are not accepted as members of the German national community and are displaced to other geographic locations. In the process, they are further othered in relation to the stereotypical renderings of race that are associated with that location of that geographic displacement. This is in contrast to African-Americans who are accepted as citizens of the U.S., but are, nevertheless, Othered from within the nation. Afro-Germans, as Wright maintains, are always considered as belonging to another nation and thereby geographic locale. Ika Hügel-Marshall pegs this type of othering as something specifically German, when she asserts that “kein anderes Land auf dieser Welt spricht Kindern, die dort geboren wurden und aufwachsen, ihre Herkunft und damit Nationalität ab. […] Daß wir eine Distanz zu dieser Gesellschaft haben und von ihr abgelehnt werden, schafft nicht die Tatsache aus der Welt, daß wir Deutsche sind“ (“Wir brauchen uns—und unsere Unterschiede,” Entfernte Verbindungen 31). A white German’s denial of an Afro-German’s identity is not just a denial of ancestry and nationality, but it also is tied to conceptions of nationality as it relates to space and race.

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20 One could argue that even in this acceptance in the U.S., there still remains a lack of equality in belonging that is divided along racial lines, as has been made visible in the coincision of race/(public) space in the current Black Lives Matter movement in the United States.

21 Fatima El-Tayeb, in her book European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe, expands this notion of Othering-from-within-from-without, presenting it as a Europe-wide phenomenon, rather than just a German one. El-Tayeb describes white European encounters with non-white Europeans as a repressed haunting that marks every encounter with a non-white presence as “happen[ing] for the very first time” (xxiv).
Grada Kilomba explains this conundrum more succinctly in reference to spatial dimensions, accurately indicating this displacement as an exclusionary form of racism that can be “explained in terms of ‘territoriality’” (65). Specifically, Kilomba conveys that Blackness signifies “‘being out of place’” while whiteness signifies “‘being in place’” (30). Afro-Germans, despite being displaced by many white Germans who deny them their German identity (and the spatial belonging that comes with this) as the questions posed to them demonstrate, possess German citizenship and are thereby tied to the nation as space, are almost always born in Germany, and often have little or no contact to their African or Black parents (usually their fathers) or actual ties to the African continent. Additionally, it is often the process of Othering that first produces the desire in Afro-Germans to seek out the missing pieces of their identity.

This racialized Othering process is decidedly a by-product of the structurally embedded German citizenship law that maintained *jus sanguinus* or direct inheritance of German citizenship through “blood” lines. *Jus sanguinus* citizenship supports the misconception, myth, and racist interpretation that all Germans must be white. This law, which had been legally in place since 1913, was not altered until the year 2000, when the Nationality Act came into effect (Howard 41). The conflation of a genealogical/kinship definition of nationality with racialized conceptions of the German nation as tied to blood and soil—the spatial element—was easily achieved in order to envision a homogenous white German nation over the course of late

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22 Articulating this lack of a father figure, Tina Campt states “the death or departure of these almost always male parents often meant that these nascent networks of relation were rarely, if ever, sustained from one generation to the next” (“Diaspora Space” 95). See also Katharina Oguntoyé, et al, *Farbe bekennen* pg. 10. Mamadee Wappler also explains that she is “eigentlich gar nicht wirklich informiert” in relation to Sierra Leone and the *Heimat* of her father, explaining that most of what she knows about the country she learned from the stories of Africans from Sierra Leone who live in Cologne *(Yes I am!)*.

23 See, for example, Ika Hügel-Marshals autobiography *Daheim unterwegs: Mein Leben in Deutschland* and Mo Asumangs film *Roots Germania*.

24 According to Howard, “the principle of this policy […] was that German citizenship refers to a ‘community of descent’ with little regard for birthplace and residence” (42). Later, however, it would become attached to residence as well.
nineteenth and early twentieth-century German history, most apparent during imperial times and the Third Reich. Tina Campt and other scholars have rightly pointed this out in their research *(Other Germans 44-45).* The structural roots of these constructs remain, thus embedded to date, despite their waning cogency in the legal realm. They are most visibly evinced in the racial profiling of People of Color along and within German national borders and in the policing of the European Union’s borders, in addition to the continued denial of national belonging to German citizens of Color, despite their possession and presentation of a German passport, their fluency in the German language, and multiple other elements that substantiate their identity as Germans.

As witnessed in the questions listed above that Afro-Germans repeatedly face, German conceptions of national identity and belonging as they are understood and interpreted by many white Germans appear to be only skin-deep. The white German conception of *Heimat* as home/land itself often becomes conflated with the nation space as *Vater/land* through such discursively produced, performative interrogatives in the interactions and exchanges that are had when white Germans are confronted with the existence of Afro-Germans. These encounters are

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25 The trajectory leading up to this is most visible in the discourses of race and nation, taking place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that made being German (meaning white German) and being black incompatible and indeed impossible as Joachim Zeller has pointed out *(Black Berlin 56).* Fatima El-Tayeb has also thoroughly researched this in her book *Schwarze Deutsche* and in the article publication “Colored Germans There Will Never Be.”

26 One of the earliest representations of the symbolics of owning a passport, but being denied German identity is framed in Advanced Chemistry’s music video “Fremd im eigenen Land.” For other cultural productions in which the passport is employed symbolically and definitions of national citizenship approached and questioned in relation to race and racial exclusion, see the documentary film *ID without Colors,* Philipp Khabo-Köpsell’s spoken word video “Stop Racial Profiling Now!,” and Samy Deluxe’s music video “Dis wo ich herkomm” also discussed in section four.

27 Skin color is the sole factor, which constitutes non-belonging in the context of Black Germans and their membership within and entry into the (white) German nation. As Victoria Robinson explains, “Die Lebensläufe von vielen Schwarzen Deutschen, die in Deutschland geboren, aufgewachsen und sozialisiert sind, zeigen, dass es keine Rolle spielt, wie gut man die deutsche Sprache herrscht, welche kulturellen und religiösen Werte man teilt, wie genau man deutsche Volksliedtexte kennt oder ob man einen deutschen Pass besitzt, wenn man nicht so aussieht, wie die Mehrheitsgesellschaft sich einen “richtigen Deutschen” vorstellt” (3). She continues, “Schon von Kindheit an müssen Schwarze Deutsche die Zugehörigkeit zu ihrem Heimatland dauernd erklären, begründen und verteidigen—”gutes Deutsch” wird gelobt und als besondere Leistung bewertet” (4). Thus, the black body speaking German and being German appears to be a contradiction in the white German imagination.

28 Here, I am referring to the performative act as constituting the social relation that produces and enacts the exclusion of Afro-Germans from the national space as well as the German *Heimat* in J.L. Austin’s sense of the
often thematized in Black German cultural productions that engage in the multiply co-existing, parallel and counter-discourses of *Heimat*.

This questioning of Black German origins by white Germans was already a publicized subject of discourse around the time directly prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall. In her poem “Wohin?” from April 7, 1989 published in an edition of the *afro look* magazine, Helge Emde writes:

> Die Frage des Woher/impliziert/Ursprung/Fremdheit in/ja-aber-Form/Wurzeln in schwarzer/Erde. /Die Frage des Woher/gestellt/aus schmallippig verkniffenen/sptizen Mündern/unterschiedlicher Formen/gestammelter Toleranz/die Augen/kalte blaue/lächelnd graue/stellen unablässig/die Frage wie lange noch/ bleibst Du hier/ in unserem Land?

(35, lines 1-20)

As this poem demonstrates, the white German discourse surrounding the spatial dis/placement and cultural dis/location of Afro-Germans was by no means new to the post-*Wende* period. Nevertheless, it did become an even more dominant topic in Black German cultural productions thereafter. More recent thematizations of Afro-German displacement and exclusion are present, for example, in Noah Sow’s 2008 book *Deutschland SchwarzWeiss* and in Philipp Khabo-Köpsell’s spoken word poetry publication *Die Akte James Knopf: Afro-deutsche Wort und Streitkunst* from 2010.

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29 *afro look* and *afrekeete* served as outlets for a wide range of Afro-German cultural productions in the form of poetry, essays, short stories, and autobiographical sketches.

30 In the actual printed text, the *Du* is circled and *unserem* is underlined.

31 The title of the work is a play on the German children’s figure Jim Knopf whose image and conceptualization has been criticized. The Jim Knopf books, as a result of their racist content have been part of the ongoing Kinderbuchdebatte in Germany that started in 2013. For more on this topic, see the numerous online articles, including, among many others, “Pippi Langstrumpf im Herzen der Finsternis,” “Modernisierte Klassiker,” and “Sprache ist ein Gebrauchsgegenstand: Interview mit Maureen Maisha Eggers.”
In a digital performance of the English-language poem “Stop Racial Profiling Now!” (2012), Khabo-Köpsell calls out police and border control officers, articulating their implication in the perpetuation of structural racism in Germany and in the exclusion of Black Germans from the geographically demarcated space of the German nation. In his own act of talking back (hooks) and asserting himself, Khabo-Köpsell verbalizes:

And many white Germans do actually think/ German skin color is a pale shade of pink/
they all knowingly confuse nationality and race/ because they are used to their old-fashioned ways/ ivory cheeks and their clear blue eyes/ and their wavy blonde main and the rest of them scheiss/ has nothing to do with your citizenship.

This spoken word poem explicitly points to the convergence of the constructions of race and nationality in the exclusion of Afro-Germans in the present day through the act of racial profiling. While Khabo-Köpsell took to the digital airwaves to send his message in the twenty-first century via YouTube for this particular poem, one of the first Afro-German cultural producers to address this exclusionary encounter with white Germans in the post-Wende period in public discourse was May Ayim. She makes visible the connection of nation to Heimat in the spatial discourse of belonging verbalized by white Germans.

Ayim staged much of her spoken word poetry, which can be viewed in the documentary of her life, Hoffnung im Herz: The May Ayim Story. She also published some of her poetry while still living, although some of her later works were published posthumously as in the collection Nachtgesang (1997). In the poems “afrodeutsch I” and “afrodeutsch II,” written in 1985 and

32 To access the video, see the following YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umFWM-V26WM.
33 hooks writes, “our words are not without meaning. They are an action—a resistance” (Talking Back, 28).
34 Ayim similarly writes “Wer nich typisch deutsch aussieht—maßgebend ist noch immer der arische Idealtypus—, der bzw. Die gehört hier scheinbar nicht hin” (Grenzenlos 137).
35 For interpretations of these works see Jennifer Michael’s “The Impact of Audre Lorde’s Politics on Afro-German Women’s Writers” (33).
first published in the poetry collection *Blues in Schwarz Weiss* (1995), as well as in her essay titled “Ein Brief aus Münster,” Ayim engages these everyday racialized encounters with white Germans and their performative notion of the nationally conceived *Heimat*.\(^\text{36}\) In both poems, a white German subject questions the identity of an Afro-German subject, asking if s/he desires to return (to where is not immediately mentioned, but first implied and later revealed in the poem to be Africa), “Wollen Sie dann mal zurück?,” and how it could be that the Afro-German subject engaged in the poem was “noch nie in der Heimat vom Papa” (“afro-deutsch I,” *Blues*, 18 lines 13-14). In the poem, the white German agent takes on the dominant position capable of categorizing and spatially placing the Afro-German subject in a colonizing of the space of German *Heimat* that marks it as white, while the Afro-German’s responses remain unregistered and/or disregarded, falling on deaf ears. Far more than ironic as Jennifer Michael’s views it (“The Impact” 33), and perhaps better stated as a grotesque reality, the poem exposes the underlying structures of the silencing and erasure of the black German subject, making whiteness as a construct visible.

Ayim’s essay “Ein Brief aus Münster” published posthumously in the essayistic volume *Grenzenlos und unverschämt* (1997) addresses similar contexts:


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\(^\text{36}\) See, Jennifer Michael’s “Multi-Ethnicity and Cultural Identity: Afro-German Women Writers’ Struggle for Identity in Postunification Germany” in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film and Discourse since 1990*. 
As demonstrated in the selected excerpts, the definition of *Heimat* as a spatial representation and its correspondence or collapsing into a *white* German national identity as it is shown to be performed by white Germans within a range of Black German cultural productions remains “beim Alten”\(^{37}\) and unaffected or transformed over the course of the late twentieth century and well into the twenty-first. This is because these interactions across the color line continue to occur in German society. The space of the German nation is incessantly reconstituted through performative exclusions (actions or words and words as actions) that imagine Germany and the German *Heimat* as white, via questions that point to racial difference and employ it to exclude.

In temporal terms, Khabo-Köpsell and Ayim’s texts are speaking to each other from approximately a fifteen-year distance, but spatially speaking, with their references to the exclusion of Afro-/Black Germans from the imagined community and the territory of the German nation and by proxy the white German idea of *Heimat*, they coincide. Although time has not stood still, the perception of or the projection screen of the imagined German nation space as white has persisted over time. Thus, *Heimat* as (white) cultural performative and racial self-assertion is still associated with the emergence of a falsely interpreted blood-based nation of Germany that developed in the late nineteenth century first with miscegeny decrees in the German colonies in Africa (Namibia, parts of Togo, Cameroon, Tanzania and Rwanda and Burundi) and later solidified into law in early twentieth-century Germany. Even with the transition away from *jus sanguinus* in 2000, Afro-/Black Germans—most of whom already had

\(^{37}\) It is an outdated understanding of who and what is German that remains embedded in the past and refuses to move on, while Black Germans and other Germans of Color are already are moving forward, as witnessed in the title of Asoka Esuruoso and Philipp Khabo Köpsell’s recent publication, *Arriving in the Future*. This is perhaps most obvious in Lara-Sophie Milagro’s theatrical production *Heimat, bittersüße Heimat*, in which an older white woman questions a younger black woman about her ethnic origins and excludes her from her definition of (white) German *Heimat*. This production is examined in great detail in section three.
possessed German citizenship prior to this time—continue/d to be viewed as not belonging to the German nation(space) or home/land still predominantly imagined as white.

**The Wende Period: Re-emerging Heimat Discourses, Rhetoric, and Racially Motivated Violence**

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent reunification of Germany came the most recent reconfiguring of who/what is German. Since this historical turning point, Black/Afro-German cultural production in what continues to be an exclusionary German society has consistently increased, embedding itself within larger socio-political and cultural-historical contexts and engendering its own parallel and counterdiscourses. Cultural productions, such as literature, autobiography, poetry, hip-hop, and film (among others) reach a broad audience. They have become the media of choice for Afro-Germans to assert their existence in a “white”-dominated and defined society and to contest monolithic notions of identity in their thematization of the construction and performance of racial difference and the persisting presence of racist structures in contemporary Germany.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification was the manifestation of unconcealed racial violence in an attempt to reimagine “home” or “homeland” through virulent force. This reimagining once again excluded People of Color and created a renewed conception of the German nation as homogeneously ‘white.’ Such overtly racist renderings of the German

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38 Peggy Piesche writes that the contributions to her recent edited volume “wenden sich an die Schwarze (Frauen) Bewegung, mit dem Ziel, Paralleldiskurse zu besetzen, um sich in einem Raum der Gegengeschichtlichkeit zu verorten” (*Euer Schweigen*) See also Victoria Robinson’s the section entitled “Wer Kultur erschafft, erschafft sich selbst” in her article “Schwarze Deutsche Kräfte” (6-7) and Sharon Otoo’s article “Correct me if I am (politically) wrong.”

39 All societies have been and continue to be shaped by racial discourse and the hegemonic structures of racism. Germany, thus, is not alone in this regard, but it is also not an exception to the rule, as often claimed in German media. As Noah Sow writes, “‘Rassismus’ gibt es, wenn man deutschen Medien Glauben schenken mag, immer nur anderswo: in Südafrika, in den USA, in Frankreich. In Deutschland gibt es keinen ‘Rassismus,’ unter anderem, weil Deutsche ja alle weiß sind. Schon praktisch. Aber gelogen” (17).
nation and *Heimat* were most evident in the incessant proclamations of “Deutschland den Deutschen, Ausländer raus” and “Wir sind das Volk” (*Hoffnung im Herz*), during—what have often been deemed in historical documentation—the ‘peaceful’ protests of the *Wende* period. This politicized rhetoric situated all People of Color under the rubric of foreigners (Ausländer), whether or not they were actually German citizens in the legal sense, and was employed to deny Afro-Germans and other Germans of Color a spatial belonging and attachment to the homeland on the national level.

Materializing on a much larger scale than exclusion through interpersonal exchanges, this rallying cry moved well beyond intimate questions about ethnic origins. Although such questions continued to play a role in the daily lives of Afro-German citizens and other People of Color, the exclusionary call to action that garnered collective support against the inclusion of PoCs in the new definition of Germany and the newly forming German identity was much more visibly violent and public. In contrast to the personal questioning of one’s home and ethnicity that can remain to some extent invisible in its dispersal of power to the individual level, even if still maintaining a haunting hegemonic presence, the exclusionary power evolving during the *Wende* was centered first through verbal attacks that later had manifested themselves in physical attacks. This is, of course, not to say that one form of exclusion was or is of greater impact than the other in the violence they produce/d, as both are a result of hegemonic power structures, but rather that the racial exclusion post-*Wende* became perceptible on a much larger national and international scale. The collective body became enveloped in a rising nationalism that attacked the individual body (and/or German citizen) of Color.

Interpreting violent acts as capable of constituting ‘secure’ identities, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Biddy Martin have argued that, “stable notions of self and identity are based on
exclusion and secured by terror” (224). This notion of securing through terror is only safe on one side of the coin, as the terror does not protect those on which it is enacted. Rather, it contributes to the desire of those affected to prefer unstable and constantly shifting identities. Such terror, to which Mohanty and Martin mention, however, is exactly what took place during and after the Wende in an attempt to produce a stable and ‘newly’ conceived—albeit still normatively white—German identity. During the time directly following the Wende, many Afro-/Black Germans considered leaving their native country as a result of this violent turn, while others actually did.40

Understanding both the exclusionary and terrifying experiences Black Germans encountered within re-united Germany that made PoCs wish to flee, Ayim explains in the essay “Das Jahr 1990: Heimat und Einheit aus afro-deutscher Perspektive” that, “ebenso wie andere Schwarze Deutsche und ImmigrantInnen wußte ich, daß selbst ein deutscher Paß keine Einladungskarte zu den Ost-West-Feierlichkeiten darstellte” (Grenzenlos 90) and, in the documentary film Hoffnung im Herz: The May Ayim Story, she categorizes this exclusion as a reclaiming of territory by white Germans in her description of the Wende as a time when “auf [ ] einmal Platz [ist], aber nur für bestimmte Leute.” Carol Blackshire-Belay has referred to this experience as the Afro-German “struggle for cultural space in the New Germany” (3). This struggle, however, became transnational when Audre Lorde, who as already mentioned had spent many years visiting Berlin and had contributed to the founding of the Afro-German Movement, co-authored a letter with her partner Gloria Joseph that was addressed to Chancellor Kohl. The letter was written in response to the increasing violent attacks on foreigners and German citizens of Color and therein they questioned: “Why has the dismantling of the Berlin Wall meant that we

40 This was confirmed in conversation with professor of social psychology and co-initiator of the BEST (Black European Studies) program (in conjunction with Dr. Sara Lennox, Dr. Fatima El-Tayeb, Dr. Timo Wandert and Peggy Piesche), Dr. Randolf Ochsmann, when I met with him at the University of Mainz in the summer of 2011. ManuEla Ritz also writes of this in her autobiography Die Farbe meiner Haut (47-48).
now feel less and less safe as Black Women visitors to ride the U-bahn in Berlin lest we be assaulted or attacked?” (“Black Women” 18). Lorde and Joseph situated these current events in connection to Germany’s National Socialist past (18), as asylum homes were burning in Sollingen and right wing extremist attacks were occurring in Hoyerswerde and Rostock, among many other events that went unreported (Del Fabbro 144). The deaths of Black Germans Alberto Adriano, Antonio Amadeu, and Oury Jalloh, among others, were and remain representative of the racial violence that ensued following the Wende.

Both during and after the Wende, the collective we in the Wir sind ein Volk! mantra further excluded Afro-/Black Germans through a collective assertion of the white German nation. In the process, home or Heimat became something completely immersed in the discourse of the newly emerging ‘unified’ German nation and as Karein Goertz has articulated,

[...] the post-unification ‘new German solidarity’ with its nationalistic rhetoric of Heimat (homeland), Volk (the people) and Vaterland (fatherland) signaled a redrawing of the line between those who were considered part of the German collective and those who were not; the previous ideological and geopolitical fault line between East and West was being replaced by a division along ethnic lines (306).

No longer could the East German fulfill the role of “Other” for the West, instead, a forceful shift repositioned those with visible migrant backgrounds as excluded from the definition of “German.” However, on both sides of the collapsed border, it must be emphasized that here those with visible migrant backgrounds refers explicitly to People of Color. White migrants in Germany are often overlooked as having migrant backgrounds, since their skin color makes them

41 Audre Lorde also approached the violence of the Wende period in a poem entitled “Ost Berlin Dezember 1989.” See Piesche for the German version (50-51). Lorde also addresses this violence in the foreword to Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out (xi-xii).
42 See also Ritz, Die Farbe meiner Haut (112-117).
invisible to white hegemonic power structures. This means that the division must be understood as one that was not drawn along “ethnic” lines as Goertz notes, but rather strategically along racially constructed boundaries.

Articulating this division through cultural production, Ayim claims to have begun the year 1990 with a poem entitled “grenzenlos und unverschämt: ein gedicht gegen die deutsche sch-einheit.” Ayim addressed what she referred to as the German “U-not-y,” rather than unity through the creation of a neologism that was a play on the words *Schein* (appearance) and *Einheit* (unity), which were translated in the English version into the neologism “U-not-y.”43 In the poem, she claims that the German reunification was one that only united white Germans and furthered the lines of division elsewhere. In the first moments after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Ayim aesthetically articulated the contradictions that were visible to her in the celebration of the unified white German nation that “feiert in weiß,”44 particularly noting that Germans of Color were excluded from the euphoria of the time, from any sense of unity, as this turning point was one that caused Black Germans to be even more disoriented than previously. She writes, “Als die Mauer fiel, freuten sich viele, anderen wurde es schwindelig” (*Grenzenlos* 89). The national body and newly defined German *Heimat*, thus, impacted upon the actual physical body of the Black German subject and other subjects of Color in Germany during and after the *Wende*.

The borders of Black Germans’ own corporeal or embodied *Heimat/en* could not even go untouched, as the physical body in its inability to be inconspicuous was a threat and danger to the self. This historical tide was nothing new, but it was the time when many Afro-Germans had their first encounters with physical attacks, as East German singer Mamadee Wappler recounts in

43 See the English translation by Anne Adams in *Blues in Black and White* (48).
44 See “blues in schwarz weiss” in *Blues in Schwarz Weiss* (82-83).
The documentary film, *Yes I am!* She reports how she was forcefully shoved around the dance floor of a disco, which helped to mask the attack, explaining:

Nach der Wende ging es auch schon los mit Rechtsradikalismus und da gab’s auch schon Schuldiscotheken und dadurch habe ich auch schon meine kleinen Erfahrungen damit gemacht, mit Rassismus oder so […] Irgendwann habe ich gemerkt, bin ich hin und hergeschubst worden […] es ging irgendwie ein Lied lang und so richtig darum geschossen worden. […] Das war so meine erste Erfahrung, wo ich gedacht habe oh Shit, die ja, die werden auch irgendwie, die greifen mich einfach an, weißt du, nicht nur verbal, sondern attackieren dich schon in dem Sinne. Das war so meine erste Erfahrung, wo ich angegriffen worden bin in dem Sinne, berührt worden bin. (*Yes I am!*)

The experience Wappler had is one that is affected. She is affected by the experience of racism she was exposed to that placed her in danger and caused her to tear up during the narration of this event in the documentary film and in this way she is also affected in complete contrast to the euphoric white Germans’ celebration of the fall of Berlin Wall in media outlets. Moreover, Wappler is also affected as a result of the historical turning point of the *Wende* that not only produced a tangible loss of the national home and her feeling of belonging to an East German *Heimat* in relation to the disbanding of the state-sponsored *Jungpioniere* organization, but she also experiences the loss of the “innocence” of the GDR with regard to racism. In the GDR, she has memories of being a part of the collective and in the new BRD, she becomes aware of her perilous and precarious position that lends itself to the constitution of that very collective national body.
Being Afro-German was, therefore, not only understood by white Germans as a threat to their ‘Lebensraum’ during the Third Reich, but also viewed as a threat to the re-constitution of Germanness (as white) in the space of the reunified German nation of the present. The violent results of the Wende served as an impetus for bringing such past exclusions to light in the present—these violent, racist, and exclusionary tactics had not arisen out of a vacuum and were present prior to the historical turning point of the Wende—and for demonstrating the continuity of racism over time in Afro-German experiences thematized in their post-Wende cultural productions.

Although Mamadee’s experience might lead one to assume that the GDR was an idyllic space for Black Germans to grow up, other narratives, to be sure, tell a different story. In an interview appearing in Ayim’s edited volume Grenzenlos und unverschämt, Laura Baum articulated her feelings with regard to the concept of Heimat, during the time when she was coming of age in the GDR:


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45 In the documentary film Roots Germania analyzed in section five, Mo Asumang interviews Jürgen Rieger, a white NPD politician who is present at a right-wing demonstration. He claims that Germans are being pushed out of the cities and absurdly refers to this concept as an “ethnische Reinigung,” maintaining that foreigners are taking away space for white Germans. He states, “die nehmen uns den Platz weg.”

(Ayim, Grenzenlos 32-33)

In this excerpt from the interview, Baum articulates *Heimat* as associated with national identity in the beginning, but later defines it as something that if she were indeed to have it, she would associate with her connection to the German language as a form of expression. What is also significant in the excerpt is that Baum identifies with another form of community as a sense of *Heimat* and belonging expressed in her ability to blend in while traveling in Paris, given the larger population of people of African descent and the visibly noticable presence of an African diaspora there. This narrative move ties her notion of a sense of *Heimat* or integration, as she phrases it here, to the African diaspora in Europe. Baum continues the passage speaking about how she moved around many times in the GDR (having no stable sense of home) and how she was,

an keinen Ort gebunden, nur in Ost-Berlin habe ich über zehn Jahre gelebt; trotzdem verbindet mich nicht sehr viel damit, höchstens meine Beziehungen zu Freunden, die mich auch geprägt haben. Das ist meine eigentliche Identifikation, das, was mich und meine Persönlichkeit ausmacht, und hat mit national nichts zu tun. (33)

What is hinted at in this excerpt from Baum are the multiple layers of *Heimat* that exist as a collectively and as an individually conceived concept.\(^{46}\) For Baum, what becomes her construction of the imagined community of *Heimat* has nothing to do with the national or collective renderings thereof (with the exception of the German language mentioned above), as

\[^{46}\text{Wickham also explains that “in present day usage, the subject (that is, whoever’s Heimat is designated by that word) can still be either collective or individual” (25). I maintain it can be and is simultaneously both.}\]
she is continually excluded from this definition of *Heimat* as constructed and performed by those around her who deny her the ability to belong to the German nation or perceive her as foreign. Rather than conceptualize *Heimat* as a situated or located place, she conceives of it as comprised of the relationships and people surrounding her and the connected network she builds. This means that Baum’s *Heimat* is capable of continually undergoing change, taking on new elements and leaving others behind, instead of lending the appearance of being a stable immutable construct. This is quite significant as Baum’s understanding of *Heimat* reflects many other Afro-Germans’ configurations and performances of this imagined community in their cultural productions.

Thus, prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, Black Germans in East Germany also had similar experiences of misrecognition to those articulated by Black Germans in West Germany, having also been excluded from a sense of belonging to the white German *Heimat* merely as a result of the color of their skin and the cultural projections that accompany the social construct of race. In contrast to the exclusion faced in Germany, Baum’s travels to France as described in the lengthier passage noted above are indicative of the experiences that many Afro-Germans have in other Black diasporic spaces—in African countries and in other European countries where the Black diaspora is greater in size, such as in the United States. Although they oftentimes cannot speak the languages in these spaces, Afro-Germans, nevertheless, find themselves accepted (also recognized as Germans) by other members of the (diasporic) communities living in these locations. In some instances, Afro-Germans experience a sense of belonging based solely on the fact that they no longer perceive themselves as visibly different or conspicuous in these other geographic locations.
Since German national identity for Afro-Germans means having a German passport and oftentimes a kinship connection that bears little significance to white Germans who refuse to accept the fact that Afro-Germans exist, Black Germans articulate their existence and their own perception of what Heimat entails in cultural productions. In response to the nationalistic rhetoric of exclusion that has come to penetrate everyday experiences in the national setting, Afro-Germans construct in these works an internally embodied Heimat space that can be viewed separately from the German nation space, even if impacted by it; it is a space that lies well below the surface of the skin. Afro-German conceptualizations of Heimat are fluid and flexible and less tied to (national) geographic space(s), although they can also be located in space and time. Identified with language, people, and a sense of (be)longing and self that goes beyond national identity/belonging, since in most cases it is denied them by fellow citizens, Afro-Germans therefore imagine their community or Heimat differently than white Germans. In contrast to exclusionary constructions of the nation that are associated or conflated with a singular notion of Heimat—one that is determined by the colonizer of this space, Black Germans seek a more inclusive framework for the possibility and existence of many Heimat/en.

**Nation, Heimat, Diaspora: Imagined Communities of Stagnation or Transformation?**

“Was heißt für dich Home, Heimat, Homestory?”

During the month of September 2013, a series of events, readings, performances, and concerts took place at the post-migrant theater Ballhaus Naunynstrasse in Berlin-Kreuzberg under the title

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47 Possessing a German passport and being integrated still do not allow the Person of Color in today’s Germany to be considered a part of the nation by the vast majority of white members of German society (Robinson 2).

48 This line is taken from the script to the play Homestory Deutschland. Erlebt-gelebt Schwarze Deutsche Geschichte oder In Verbindung mit den Ahnen that was printed in ManuEla Ritz’ autobiography Die Farbe meiner Haut: Die Anti-rassismustrainerin erzählt (158-174).
Black Lux: Ein Heimatfest aus Schwarzen Perspektiven. This title invites participants and audience members to engage in a discussion of what a Heimatfest is, how it is to be understood, and what the meaning of Heimat from the perspective of Black people—more specifically, Black people living in Germany—is to be perceived as, based on the performances included in the festival. First, the emphasis on “perspectives” rather than on one or a singular “perspective” already hints at the way in which one should answer the question as it is posed in the epigraph cited from Sharon Otoo and ManuElia Ritz’ drama Homestory Deutschland: Erlebt-gelebte Schwarze Deutsche Geschichte. The cited drama was written to accompany the traveling historical and photographic exhibition Homestory Deutschland: Schwarze Biografien in Geschichte und Gegenwart that was a permanent installation displayed in the lower level of the Ballhaus Naunynstrasse for the duration of the Black Lux Heimatfest.

Structurally bearing much in common with the Black Lux Heimatfest in that different interpretations of Heimat are made visible, the historical and photographic exhibit contains this individualized element of Heimat in its representation of the plurally existing and converging/diverging Black German auto/biographies contained within it. In addition to these personalized aspects of Heimat that are portrayed, both the title of the festival and the title of the exhibition offer a collective rendering of Heimat, given that it is a single Heimatfest that brings the different versions or Heimat/en together in space and time on the venue’s stages and in the exhibition space and it is also a single exhibition that unites the individual Black German auto/biographies.

49 The title itself was making reference to a number of diasporic contexts including bell hooks’ book, Black Looks (13). One could also interpret this as an attempt to enlighten others as to what Heimat in the context of Black perspectives means, since Lux in German refers to light or that it is placing Blackness in the spotlight of the theater and performance realm and thereby lending Blackness visibility in the German cultural sphere, rather than perpetuating an unmarked hegemonic whiteness. This was made evident by the advertising publication that accompanied the series of events, which can be found at the following website: http://issuu.com/ballhaus-naunynstrasse/docs/black_lux_festivalzeitung. From here on out, I will use the abbreviated form Black Lux Heimatfest rather than the entire title.
Beyond the exhibition *Homestory Deutschland* and the *Black Lux Heimatfest*’s shared component of individualized collectivity, another fundamental commonality in the representation of plural notions of *Heimat* is the coinciding of spatial and temporal dimensions. Designed and created by the ISD in Germany and supported with funding from the Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* or *bpb*), *Homestory Deutschland* was first exhibited in 2006 in Jena and since then has been displayed throughout Germany as well as in multiple African countries, among others, Namibia, Togo, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda.⁵⁰ Comprised of a number of short autobiographical texts, many of which address the twenty-seven authors’ conceptions of *Heimat* or home, the exhibition also contains portraits of those select Black Germans whose briefly composed written texts are on display. *Heimat* as represented in this exhibition is capable of producing a multiplicity of meanings and offering a diverse array of interpretations. Yet, these individual auto/biographies also constitute a whole. The exhibition simultaneously tells the independently narrated stories of Black Germans, while producing a collective voice that unites their experiences. The auto/biographies, mostly self-written,⁵¹ allow the people presented to position themselves autonomously, while also representing the collective diasporic community of Afro-/Black Germans. As such, they produce a narrative of the imagined community of *Heimat/en* through individual differences as well as similarities. While each auto/biographical snippet presents personal information that varies, there are also points of overlap in the recollection of experiences of discrimination and/or narrations of empowerment.

Likewise, the exhibition is a space in which the past and present come together in a disjointed fashion and transform into what those who conceptualized the exhibit refer to as “einen heimatlichen Ort—einen Ort an dem ‘homestories’ gehört und erzählt werden können”

⁵⁰ See the webpage for the exhibition for more information: http://www.homestory-deutschland.de/ausstellungsorte-programm/ausstellungsorte-2006-2014.html.
⁵¹ There are some exceptions in which texts were extracted posthumously from the works of the people presented.
This “heimatlicher Ort” or home space is simultaneously one and many space/s or site/s of enunciation from which Black Germans articulate their understandings of Heimat/en. Although it may sound paradoxical and contradictory, Homestory Deutschland is accurately referred to as a “kollektives Selbstporträt” (8). It embodies the collective African diasporic consciousness of the Afro-German individuals whose stories it narrates, while refusing essentialism. As such, the exhibition marks Heimat as a site of seemingly contradictory elements, when in actuality, these elements are in dialogue with one another.

Fig. 1.1 Part of the Homestory Deutschland Exhibit at the Ballhaus Naunynstrasse

One particular element of the exhibition adds yet another dynamic to the composition of Heimat/en that it presents and performs—the display is constantly changing perspectives and its collective face/s or image/s. Constructed so that the person viewing it is required to interact with the images or auto/biographies in order to come face to face with the person who wrote the text (on one side) or to see the written text (on the other), one must turn the rotating triangle blocks on their spindles. This aspect of the exhibition reveals that the discourse of Heimat changes

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52 According to the exhibition publication, “Die einzelnen Biografien [sind] bewusst keiner chronologischen Ordnung unterworfen” (9).
53 Stuart Hall employs this term in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” He explains, “practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write—the positions of enunciation (233-234). Homi Bhabha also develops this idea in The Location of Culture as a “third space of enunciation” or hybrid space that disrupts “hierarchical claims to the inherent originality of ‘purity’ of cultures” (137).
based on which individuals are currently narrating it at any given time and how the external agent/viewer interprets this information on the receiving end. This persistent shifting of narration produces continually changing links between the spatial and temporal dynamics of the present time of Heimat/en and in doing so, they constitute “ihre eigene Raum/Zeit, überlagern sich, hallen ineinander wider und verknüpfen sich ständig neu” (bpb, ISD 9). In this way, the exhibition achieves a transitory and transformative narration of individual Black German Heimat/en and the collective Heimat.

The foreward to the exhibition publication engages this transitory notion of Heimat and its histories, stating, “Geschichten, die sich in Bewegung befinden, sind schwer zu erzählen. Sie entziehen sich den Versuchen ordnender Zugriffe, weil sie eigensinnige und verschlungene Landkarten mit ebenso eigensinnigen und verschlungenen Orten und Zeiten erschaffen. ‘Homestory Deutschland ist eine soche Landkarte’ (8). In this way, the exhibition resembles what Tina Campt has referred to as the “practice of fugitivity,” an African diasporic tradition that dates back to slavery and colonial times and that refuses or resists a static definition in the transgression of borders. In its topographical evasion, the exhibit, as well as the fugitive performance or act, nevertheless, traces diasporic routes and roots. That the exhibition itself is capable of traveling and being transported (albeit in a slightly smaller format and displayed in a different manner)—having been on display in numerous locations as mentioned above—also marks it as simultaneously nomadic. These performative acts that constitute the plurality and heterogeneity of Black German positionality through the constitution of Heimat/en as space/s,

54 Campt develops her theoretical concept in the Helen Pond McIntyre ’48 Lecture “Black Feminist Futures and the Practice of Fugitivity” that was presented on October 7, 2014 at Barnard College. A recording of the talk can be found by accessing the following webpage: http://bcrw.barnard.edu/videos/tina-campt-black-feminist-futures-and-the-practice-of-fugitivity/.

55 Clifford discusses the connection of routes to roots in his theorization of “Diasporas” (308, 316, 320).
place/s, and time/s as well as narration/s are revisited in the individual sections that form the whole of this dissertation.

While the body of this text may at times seem to be repetitive, offering multiple points of overlap in its return to previously addressed topics and/or already examined experiences of Afro-Germans, this is because the elements that constitute Black German Heimat/en as already exemplified and identified in the Homestory Deutschland exhibit are also present in most other Afro-German cultural productions. Another reason for this apparent overlap, results from the fact that the everyday racism with which all Black Germans are confronted continuously seeks to re-situate both Black Germans as non-German subjects and re-locate the shifting positions of Heimat within spatial, temporal, and contextual frameworks in relation to the hegemonic construction of Heimat in similar ways. However, the techniques through which Afro-Germans call this hegemonic construct into question and the methods by which each genre performs this task, do differ. Keeping this in mind, this dissertation is a non-linear project, since the theories I employ and the discourses approached in the cultural productions, as well as the Heimat communities produced therein, question a linearly constructed narrative that seeks one single point of origin and develops a teleological argument. To attempt to structure this work in a different way not only would be a hegemonic act that would undermine the power of Black Germans’ fugitivity, but also would reinforce the white European (temporal and spatial) worldview that many Black German cultural productions undeniably call into question through their refusal to fit the normative mold as a result of their exclusion from it.

While it certainly can be argued that many other collective German conceptions of Heimat within the larger German nation (Turkish German, Russian German, white German, etc.) can also be examined intersectionally and conceived of individually, each of these require their
own assessment in relation to the different factors that play a role in their construction. Thus, it is my goal with this project not to compare each of these separate, but unified constructions of _Heimat/en_, but rather to focus specifically on those intersectional elements that specifically shape the performances of _Heimat/en_ in the works of Black Germans. This emphasis placed on _Heimat/en_ rather than a singularly imagined _Heimat_, opens up the potential for interpreting _Heimat/en_ as situated at the interstices of the local/regional and national, but also at the interstices of the national and transnational (here, African diasporic contexts). Although Black Germans’ constructions of _Heimat/en_ evade attempts to pin them down completely, there are, nevertheless, recurring elements that signify their discursive meaning and performance in Black German productions. Many of these recurring elements are adapted from the three imagined communities of the German nation, the German _Heimat_, and the African diaspora.

**The Three Communities**

Scholar and activist Joshua Kwesi Aikins has explained the experiences that shape the _Heimat/en_ of Black people in Germany in the newspaper publication released in conjunction with the series of events occurring during the _BlackLux Heimatfest_. He writes:

> Auch wenn die Erfahrungen Schwarzer Menschen sich nicht gleichen, sich nicht auf einen gemeinsamen Nenner reduzieren lassen, so gibt es doch Gemeinsamkeiten, wie die Tatsache, dass Schwarze Erfahrungen in den deutschsprachigen Gebieten seit Jahrhunderten mit dem Mythos einer “weißen” Nation und der Fantasie weißer Überlegenheit konfrontiert waren […].” (“Black Lux- Deutschland im Licht der Schwarzen Erfahrung”)
These “connected differences” (Lorde, “Foreward” vii) in the experiences of Black Germans of which Aikens speaks situate the fantasy of a white German nation that is often conflated with a white notion of German *Heimat* as central to the ways in which Black German *Heimat/en* are imagined and performed. The African diaspora is a specter that haunts the white German national imaginary or what Sara Friedrichsmeyer, et. al. have articulated as the “imperialist imagination,” but it is also a collective community that unites these and other common experiences.\(^{56}\) Black Germans’ in their works not only seek to counter this fantasy, but also, in many ways, step outside of the countering context completely and into an entirely differently imagined and imaginative space. These re-imaginings therefore enact a transgressive decolonization of the territorialized space of a continually re-inscribed and re-inforced white German *Heimat/nation* that developed during German imperialism and was solidified in the Third Reich (Huber 47) and that has yet to be completely dismantled.

My reading of Black German cultural productions since the *Wende* period situates *Heimat* as the most integral of the three imagined communities explored here in conjunction with one another (nation, *Heimat*, and African diaspora) in Black German texts, in that *Heimat* pieces together components of the German nation (language, culture, citizenship, national symbols and/or icons, in some cases in the questioning of their value) and African diasporic elements (icons, diasporic cultural references and citations, and shared experiences that connect and unify its members across national borders) in order to produce a hybridized *Heimat* or third space that is imagined as non-exclusionary in the broadest sense possible (Bhabha, *The Location* 137).

\(^{56}\) Multiple scholars have theorized this notion of haunting (El-Tayeb, *Other Europeans*; Singletary, *Haunting*), repression (Kilomba, *Plantation Memories*), or spectrality (Campt, *Other Germans*) in relation to the African diaspora, the German nation, and the history and impact of colonialism. For more on the concept of the “imperial imagination,” see Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop’s *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy*. 
If memory as Michael Rothberg claims, can be viewed as multidirectional, as “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative” (3), I propose that *Heimat* be viewed as multispatial—inhaling both geographic and non-spaces, marking it as corporeal in both its collective and individual embodiments that integrate and adapt different elements to form community and create a sense of belonging over time. Such a reading of *Heimat* follows Andreas Huber’s articulation of *Heimat* space/s, in that they possess “vielfache[], oft überschichtete[] Bedeutungen” (71) and also reinforces Peter Blickle’s claim that the “spatial conception of identity” is the “essence of Heimat” (15). 57

Space is always contingent upon the individual and/or collective community that is performing, enacting, and constructing it as a social act from within and without (internally and externally), such as with spaces like the private home or the public sphere. Rather than read these spaces as diametrically opposed, I read them in Black German cultural productions as dialogical. In this way, my approach to *Heimat* resembles the approach that Johannes von Moltke took in his study of *Heimat* in German cinema, particularly in that it “question[s] the binaries within which Heimat has been situated” (13). *Heimat* spaces, which are fully charged with multidirectional memories, are spaces that are multiply overwritten in their meaning and *Heimat* as an imagined community and as a spatial concept is embedded within its own layers of signification established over time through newly developing and re-emerging/re-turning discourses. As a result, dualistic and/or competing constructions of *Heimat* are read as in tension with one another, highlighting the interdependence of supposedly Manichean divisions and exposing *Heimat*’s contradictions. 58

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57 Wickham also asserts that “space stands as the dominant category in Heimat discussion” (24).
58 One of the most exemplary texts to detail the inability to separate opposites from one another was Freud’s influential work *Das Unheimliche*, in which he demonstrated that that which is heimlich is always constructed in
It is, therefore, first necessary to unpack the shifting meanings of the interconnected imagined communities of the German nation, the (German) *Heimat*, and the African diaspora—all of which influence the imagining of *Heimat/en* for Afro-Germans, both in relation to how they have been constructed and performed via dominant discourses (in hegemonic contexts) throughout German national and cultural history and in the construction and production of Afro-German’s own (trans)national (hi)stories. This interconnected web of imagined communities that might be better conceived of visually in the form of a venn diagram, given its points of overlap and relations between differing characteristic elements, has been and continues to be reconfigured individually and collectively by Afro-/Black Germans. I begin with the German nation, not because it is the focus of my analysis, but because its imagined community impacted the ways in which *Heimat* came to be understood over time. Following this concept is *Heimat*, intentionally placed at the center in order to demonstrate its significance, as well as in-between position that is impacted upon and shaped both by the German nation and the African diaspora. I conclude this section with the imagined community of the African diaspora that plays a significant role in opening up new points of belonging and connection in space and time.

**The German Nation**

According to the online dictionary of the German language (*das Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*), the word “nation” can be defined as a “Gemeinschaft von Menschen, gleicher Sprache und Kultur, die in einem Staat leben; Volk.” While this definition seems to imply a collective community that constitutes the nation and also already points to an ethnic reading of the nation in opposition to *unheimlich* making the former a very part of the word that is inseparable from the constitution of one concept or the other. See *Das Unheimliche* part I.
the use of the word *Volk,*\(^{59}\) the etymological definition that accompanies the entry reads as follows, “historisch entstandene Entwicklungsform der Gesellschaft, die sich besonders in der Gemeinsamkeit des Wirtschaftslebens, des Territoriums, der Sprache und Kultur zeigt.” This etymological rendering of ‘nation’ in the German language brings the discursive construction of the imagined community into connection with the *space* of the nation, its bounded geographic territory, and additionally, its shared language, culture, and economy that defines and shapes a national community of people or what is often regarded as its *Volk.* This spatial element cannot be excluded from the conception of the German nation over time.

As Anthony Smith has articulated in his work on national identity, which of course differs from the concept of the nation that structures it, but is, nevertheless, inseparable from it, “myths of national identity typically refer to territory or ancestry (or both) as the basis of political community” (viii). In writing the myth of the nation and the identity that it creates, the community is presented as produced by and through an established kinship connection in a geographical space. Interpreting this in the German context, one can understand how the intersection of *Blut* and *Boden* became one way of (homogenously) thinking or imagining the German nation, given that territory and descent or ancestry (per)form and construct a national community.\(^{60}\) Smith also claims that national identity “suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong” (9). This sense of belonging to a nation is the result of a locatable and limited or bound geographic spatial entity, but it is also connected to the idea of *Volk* or an ethnic

\(^{59}\) Alexander Weheliye, in his entry on the word ‘Nation’ in the reference book *Wie Rassismus aus Wörtern spricht* explains the transition from the meaning of *das Volk* to *ein Volk.* The former originally referred to the lower class and oppressed peoples excluded from the nation and the latter referred to a fictional ethnicity that homogenized the nation’s people/inhabitants (450-455).

\(^{60}\) For more on the *Blut* and *Boden* conceptions of *Heimat* that developed further during the National Socialist era, see Wickam (7).
categorization of people. As Smith elaborates, he refers to the nation as a “community of common descent” (11), something that Anne McClintock similarly has referred to as a “domestic genealogy,” given that “[t]he term ‘nation’ derives from natio: to be born” (357, 90).

While the notion of common descent already places limitations on those who might belong to the nation, in his theorization of the nation, Benedict Anderson defines it as “an imagined political community,” one that is “imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). Consequently, the nation is further exclusionary in its establishment of political boundaries and its need to exclude that which it is not. It imagines itself as a collective entity in that it belongs to more than one person, something that Smith makes clear (13-14). In contrast to Anderson’s imagined communities that create an actual point of reference to a sovereign entity, Ernst Gellner’s rendering of nations interprets them as entities that “nationalism invents […] where they do not exist” (Thought and Change 174). Gellner argues for the nation’s falsity as a community, whereas Anderson interprets them as having real impact in the world. Writing in support of Anderson’s conception of the nation, McClintock’s take on the construct demands that nations be understood as “not simply phantasmagoria of the mind but […] historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed” (353). The nation as McClintock conceives of it, is a discursive construct produced by those who consider themselves members of its community. The power to articulate this discursive construct lies in the hands of the majority, in this case, white Germans.

While Gellner’s understanding of nations seems to differ from how both Anderson and McClintock conceive of them and I follow both of them in their interpretations, Gellner does, nevertheless, provide two interesting and valid criteria for what defines or marks members of a nation. They seem to follow the logic of reading the nation as a performative construct and are

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61 Smith has also maintained that the nation is conceived of as a single political community (14).
useful for the purpose of my analyses: “1 Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture” and “2 Two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation” (Nations 7). The hegemonically gendered rendering of the nation that Gellner employs here aside, the recognition of one person by another is that, which, according to Gellner, signals a person as a member of the imagined community of the nation. This means that performative acts accomplished by one person that refuse another person her/his belonging or that fail to recognize that person as sharing in the same culture, even if they actually do, can exclude a person from a nation through the act of misrecognition or denial of identity. Such is the experience had by Afro-Germans, who share German culture with white Germans and other Germans of Color, but like their fellow citizens of Color, in most cases fail to be recognized as belonging to the German national community that is imagined as homogenously white.

Contentious and vexed at best, what is today regarded as the German nation only came into being in 1871. Prior to this, the geographic location that now makes up the German nation consisted of a number of smaller principalities and regional provinces. These were united to form a Kulturnation based in a common language and tradition. According to Christoph Türcke, it was the realization of the heterogeneous make-up of nation states that led to the desire to create some sense of a unified people. This resulted in a racial interpretation that blood was what produced this constructed unity. Türcke asserts that racism played a formative role in national consciousness as it played out across European nations over the course of the nineteenth century (42). This racial constitution of the nation, unfortunately, did not end with the closure of the nineteenth century, as witnessed after World War I, as well as during and following World War II.
Over the course of German history, what is understood as the German nation today has undergone geographical and territorial/spatial transformation, following the first World War and during the Third Reich, following World War II and during the Cold War era, and again during the reunification of the two Germanies in 1990 after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the inner-German border. Just as the German nation as an entity is fraught, German national identity—as it is tied to the nation—is complicated by this disjointed history, Germany’s precarious existence, and its colonial and National Socialist pasts. Beyond this, the trajectory of German history in these particular contexts has impacted the ways in which race, gender, sexuality, and nation have intersected and continue to do so today.

The German Nation: Race, Gender, and Sexuality

According to Tim Endsor, “the questions of who or what belongs to the nation and why are always part of an ongoing process of contestation” (42-43). In what follows, I will provide brief observations on the discourses of race, gender, and sexuality as they relate to the course of Germany’s history as a nation. As these intersecting identity categories and their associated discourses have already been analyzed in detail in a number of monographs, I will only engage them on a surface level and, where necessary, go more into depth later in my analyses.

Conceived of heteronormatively in order to imagine its continued existence, the nation as an entity must reproduce itself through the conjugal family. The gendered aspect of the nation as it is introduced in Gellner’s quote cited above can also be read in conjunction with McClintock’s

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As class has played less of a role in Afro-German texts, I focus on the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality in the communities that are also integral to an understanding of one’s sense of Heimat, for as Gunning, Hunter, and Mitchell argue, “gender and sexuality influence the politics of narration, performance, and recognition” (4). I am, however, aware that class does impact the positioning of Black Germans in German society as well.
reading of the nation in relation to gender and power, wherein she writes, “all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender” (353). The most integral power is one that she views as patriarchal (353). While this is certainly accurate, race also must be made a visible factor in the performance of the German nation throughout its history and in its institutionalization of racial difference. If the nation is both racialized and gendered, then interpreting these formative aspects in the context of Germany, in particular in relation to the status of Afro-German women, reveals their multiple exclusions. They are excluded on two accounts from the conception of the German nation, both as a result of the national discourse regarding race and unacknowledged citizenship and as a result of the gender bias that reinforces established patriarchal exclusionary measures and supports the hegemonic structuring of “the Family of Man” (McClintock). In comparison, Afro-German men are excluded from the conceptualization of a patriarchal German nation based overwhelmingly on race, their gendered identity perhaps allowing them some access to the power that is the patriarchy, but any bit of this power is erased in the intersection of race with gender through their discursively constructed hypersexualization, which hinders their acceptance as part of the national body and its masculine imagined community.

Blackness and the production of racial otherness in the German nation is the result of centuries of racial, aesthetic, philosophical, pseudo-scientific, and historical discourse that produced a distinction between the civilized, moral, and intellectual characteristics attached to the white body, and the uncivilized, immoral, and unintellectual characteristics attached to the black body (‘zivilisier unt wild’ 678, Piesche “Der Fortschritt” 32-33, Chaouli “Laocoön and the Hottentots”). It also resulted in the fear of miscegeny or the mixing of races. This discourse that Susanne Zantop claims began already in the second half of the eighteenth century with German anthropologists’ responses (in particular Christoph Meiners’ work) to French
colonization in Haiti (27-32), was used to justify German Imperialism in Africa and the South Seas and shaped the racial ideologies that pervaded this period into the present.

In her analysis of philosophical discourses at the time of the formation of the German nation, Peggy Piesche points to the construction of whiteness as an a priori existence over the course of the Enlightenment first in the works of Kant and later Hegel ("Der Fortschritt" 30-39). She explains how Kant’s conception of race established a structured hierarchy of those who were enlightened and those who were viewed as incapable of enlightenment taken up later by Hegel who depicts Africa as “ein Gegenbild zur europäischen Fortschrittsdynamik” (33), as well as establishes whiteness as the European norm situated as human and outside of the concept of race to which black bodies were marked as belonging. Piesche writes, “die in diesem Zusammenhang viel beschworene Verschiedenheit unter Gleichrangigen, mit der versucht wird, das biologistische Konzept von ‘Rasse’ zu retten, verschleiert die Position des weißen sprechenden Subjektes, welches sich aus der Perspektive der Zuschreibungsmacht eben jener Begrifflichkeiten (‘Zivilisation,’ ‘Volk,’ ‘Nation’ etc) artikuliert” (33). The invisibility of the white subject, his literal writing of himself out of the constitution of race, marked whiteness as a European and German norm. These evolving discourses on race beginning already during the Enlightenment period provided German Imperialism its much-desired justification.

Colonialism, when thought of in terms of visual colonization and the discourse of racialized othering processes, endured much longer than the historically defined period of German colonialization. Scholars, such as Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, Susanne Zantop, Anne McClintock, David Ciarlo, among others, have addressed this in relation to the emergence of an “imperial imagination” in literature and the “advertising empire” in media that

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63 See Friedrichsmeyer, et al. *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy*, David Ciarlo’s *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany*, and Anne McClintock’s *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. 
persisted well beyond the official dates of German colonialism in Africa (1884-1919, officially ending with the Treaty of Versailles) and, in fact, continue to produce an othering of black bodies in Europe and Germany today. In colonial times the black body was employed to project hypersexuality, displacing any sexual desire on the part of the Western colonizing powers onto the colonized bodies. The efforts the German government undertook to prevent miscegenation “contrast[ed] black bestiality with German culture” (El-Tayeb “Colored Germans” 236). This goes for both men and women. No differentiation among rampant sexuality existed based on gender; both black women and black men were viewed as promiscuous and licentious. Anti-miscegenation decrees were first put into place in the German colonies in Africa as a result of the fear of the mixing of the races through sexual encounters between the colonizers and the colonized (Campt “Converging Spectres” 322-325).

Post-World War I conceptions of race are also inextricably tied to narratives of racial miscegenation, the hypersexualised Black brute, the fear of the invading (male) Other, and quite literally his male genitalia. These are most evident in the campaign and propaganda images that were depicted surrounding the Rheinland occupation following World War I, which was referred to as the black disgrace or shame. The children resulting from the “sexual liaisons” of Black French colonial soldiers and white German women were even referred to as the Rheinland bastards and the representation of the Black French troops was as a sexually aggressive Black brute who in a King-Kong fashion was coming to rape the innocent white German woman, her male genitalia being the primary weapon.

64 King Kong is a giant ape figure presented in the 1933 Hollywood feature film King Kong and in the lost Japanese short Wasei King Kong also from 1933, but he is not only this. The image and conception of King Kong has earlier origins that have traveled transnationally and have been embedded in different discourses. The French artist Emmanuel Fremiet’s 1859 sculpture “Gorilla enlevant une hegress” depicts an ape carrying a black woman off with the intent to rape her. Ironically, the image that Germans would later use to depict African soldiers stationed on the Rhine as barbaric apes coming to rape their white German women, was also the image that American war posters expressing anti-German sentiment during World War I employed to depict barbaric and inhuman Germans as rapists of white women beating them with a club and symbolizing military strength and German imperialism. Later, the African soldiers stationed on the Rhine would come to represent the ape figure raping the German woman. I use this
body metonymically standing in for the purity of a white German nation. The term occupation cannot be removed from its connection to colonizing land through an occupation of space, space that undeniably was not intended for Black bodies, let alone mixed race bodies. Many of the children born as a result of French colonial soldiers’ presence in the Rheinland and other encounters, were sterilized or interned in concentration or work camps during the course of World War II and Hitler’s biopolitical regime. Throughout the course of World War II, similar images to those of post World War I propaganda were employed, producing a specifically gendered and sexualized image of the black male body.

The crisis of masculinity that historian Heide Fehrenbach reveals as having pervaded post-World War II Germany (12), converged with a lessening of racial fear. In the post-World War II period, racist imagery was less overt in its depictions of African-American occupying troops who were indeed thought of as friendly enough, but were nonetheless viewed as engaging white German women in sexual encounters that threatened the sanctity of the white German nation. Fehrenbach cites that “postwar German officials, scientists, and social workers increasingly focused on distinctions between blackness and whiteness” and that the children of the postwar period resulting from African-American soldiers and white German women, “were [also] thought to embody and potentially upset the specific national racial ideologies of white domination those countries [here, referring to the U.S. and Germany] historically embraced” (Race After Hitler 10, 11). Many of the children resulting from these pairings were given up for adoption in Germany and across the Atlantic and many were to return home with their fathers, if

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term King-Kong-like to refer to the images of the Rhineland occupation because not only has the King Kong filmic narrative been interpreted as an encounter of the Western with the exoticized other as portrayed by white film producers (Erb 3) but the image of the ape raping a woman that similarities are impossible to oversee.
It was thought that a black child or a mixed race child in “white” Germany could not survive, was not wanted, and did not belong, although those who did manage to stay in Germany were ironically much more integrated into German society than African-Americans in the, at the time, still racially segregated U.S. However, they remained othered through persisting forms of racism along the color line. They also experienced gender-based racism as many of these children were thought to be promiscuous upon reaching puberty, some being pushed out of their foster homes into adoption for precisely these reasons (*Brown Babies*).

Following World War II, Blackness in the West came to be mostly conceived of as external to the German nation with cultural imports, such as film and music from the U.S. contributing to West Germany’s perception of blackness as an American national identity in its most essentialized exportable form. This meant that the trajectory that racism would take in the West was also often tied to positive forms of racism such as the black body as a dancing and singing or performing body and as a sports star or hip-hopper.

East Germany acquired and developed a different understanding of blackness as tied to the “third world” and its socialist brothers and sisters. In the GDR, solidarity, brotherhood, and friendship were the political ideals of the day. Racism was said not to exist—the fascists had supposedly been kept out by the inner-German border and the anti-Fascist protection wall—, despite the separation and isolation of refugees in the East from the rest of German society and the continued emphasis placed on racial difference. Although fraternization with African

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65 For more information on these children see Fehrenbach’s *Race after Hitler*, the documentary film *Brown Babies: The Mischlingkinder Story*, and Maria Höhn’s *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* and Angelica Fenner’s *Race Under Reconstruction in German Cinema*.

66 Discussions of the connections between East Germany and the Third World took place at the DEFA Summer Film Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in the summer of 2011.

67 For more in-depth discussions of this established racial difference, despite the GDR’s solidarity efforts, see, for example, Christine Mekonnen’s “The GDR’s Solidarity towards Oppressed People – a Double-Edged Sword,” Meghan O’Dea’s “Lucia Engombe’s and Stefanie-Lahya Aukongo’s Autobiographical Accounts of *Solidaritätspolitik*.”
students or guest workers from abroad was highly discouraged and marriages often denied by the East German government,\(^{68}\) relationships still developed mostly between African men studying or doing internships and white German women, resulting in a number of Black German children being born in the GDR.\(^{69}\) Still, the black body continued to be exoticized and othered as Piesche has explained:

In der relativ homogen geschlossenen DDR-Gesellschaft waren Schwarze Menschen ähnlichen Zuschreibungsmustern wie in anderen Ländern unterworfen: Exotisch, fremd, anders. Einer solchen Bezeichnung zugeordnet zu werden, bedeutete gleichzeitig als Angehöriger einer ‘anderen’ Gemeinschaft- in jedem Falle nicht der ‘eigenen’-betrachtet zu werden: Ausländer mit zeitlich begrenzter Aufenthalt. (‘Schwarz und deutsch?’)

Piesche points out the contradictions in the construction of a culture that simultaneously welcomed differences, but also reinforced them as part of a culturally constructed and external (also racialized) Other.

Finally, as already explored earlier in the introduction and first section, the *Wende* period experienced a resurgence of racial exclusion and othering, as a result of the re-formation of the new German nation and the desire to create a new German identity, nevertheless, still one that was conceptualized as white. This discourse persists today and was not a particularly gendered discourse, but rather affected all Germans of color at the time. Thus, race, gender, and the nation all seem to intersect over the course of German history and were experienced somewhat differently by Afro-German men and women during certain periods of time and under the

\(^{68}\) See, for example, Mamadee Wappler’s mother’s narration in the documentary *Yes I am!*, regarding the denial of her marriage application and the return of her children’s father to Sierre Leone.

\(^{69}\) For more information on foreigness and Otherness in the GDR, see Jan C. Behrends, *et. al* Fremde und Fremd sein in der DDR and for more information on the persistence of racism in the GDR despite solidarity policies, see, for example, Christiane Bürger’s article “Ein ‘richtiges Afrikabild.’ Das Koloniale Namibia und die frühe Historiographie Der DDR.”
various political and geographic forms that Germany as a nation took on in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. Keeping this all in mind, I now turn to the shifting discourses on *Heimat* and its multiple meanings.

*Heimat*

In many ways, *Heimat* resembles the German nation in its construction over time, but its multiple connotations signify its most significant aspect and its progressive potential. Having the ability to persist through its own contradictions and its own instability are the only aspects of *Heimat* that are actually stable, beyond hegemonic attempts to ossify the concept that ultimately fail. The term has time and time again been rendered untranslatable from German into English or any other language due to the cultural baggage it carries with it and as a result of its inability to be clearly summarized in a few short sentences (Blickle 2, von Moltke 6, Türcke “Vorwort,” Wickham 5-6). Celia Applegate states this definitional failure most clearly, in her summation that “[t]he term Heimat, one could argue, has entered into so many different discussions in such diverse areas of German society that it would be a great mistake to search for a solitary meaning, a single truth beyond all the white noise” (4). It is interesting that Applegate uses the term ‘white noise’ because she points to something that she is not explicitly addressing, but that is accepted as a constant hegemonic norm in the underlying and shifting meanings of *Heimat* over time, whether during German imperialism, National Socialism, the Cold War division into East and West Germany, or the Wende period. This ‘white noise’ is the fact of whiteness as the

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70 For more on the evolution of the term *Heimat* in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Applegate’s *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see Alon Confino’s *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and national Memory, 1871-1918* and Jeffrey K. Wilson’s article “Imagining a Homeland: Constructing Heimat in the German East, 1871-1914.” For a brief summation of the shifting meanings of *Heimat* over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see von Moltke’s introduction to *No Place like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema*. 
normative context. Although these *Heimat* discourses have competed with one another for relevance and often contradicted each other over the course of history, they have maintained one factor in common, the norm of whiteness as a part of the imagining of *Heimat*.

The increasing number of scholarly monographs dedicated to the concept in recent years demonstrates that *Heimat* is anything but dead. In fact, it is undergoing a “Rehabilitierung” as Türcke phrases it in the title of his work. When considered in the context of whiteness, this “Rehabilitierung” sounds like something to be feared, but contemporary interpretations of *Heimat/en*, particularly from the perspective of Black Germans and other Germans of Color, seek out the potential that lies in this rehabilitation (if conceived of inclusively) and new constitution of the word, as the sections that follow demonstrate. Although impossible to completely pin down, I will attempt to present some of the discourses and meanings associated with the discursive construct of *Heimat* in Germany.

The following definitions for the term *Heimat* are provided on the online dictionary portal *Das Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*: “a. Ort, Gegend Land, wo jemand zu Hause ist, sich heimisch fühlt; b. wo etwas heimisch ist, woher etwas stammt.” Both of these definitions, a. and b., situate *Heimat* as location, formulating its meaning as an indirect question of where something or someone is at home or feels at home, but the second definition also locates *Heimat* as the space from which something has originally come or in which it was originally situated. The second definition is subverted in the context of Afro-Germans because the origin or roots (the word *stammen*, to stem from or originate from, is tied to the linguistic signifiers tree or *Baum* and trunk or *Stamm*, as in *Stammbaum* or family tree) of one part of their identity is most often situated in Africa or in a diasporic location that ultimately traces its roots somewhere to
Africa, but the question of from where something is derived in their case is geographically located in both Europe and Africa, not simply one location or the other.

Registering slightly differently, the etymological section of the dictionary deems Heimat as an “Ort, Land, wo man geboren, wo man zu Hause ist, Vaterland.” According to the etymological definition an Afro-German Heimat would be necessarily read ambiguously, in the context of Vaterland, their Heimat would be located outside of Germany given that the fathers of Afro-Germans (in a majority of the cases comes from another country than Germany). Still, most are born in Germany and feel at home there. As demonstrated in this definition, Heimat is not just a singular place or country for Afro-Germans, since both Germany and the diasporic location of the father are attached to different parts of the the etymological definition. Of course this second etymological definition also places Heimat at a local level—where one is born is not just understood in the national sense, but in the regional sense of a Heimatstadt or Heimatort—, marking Heimat as multispacial in its definitional capacity. Such a reading of Heimat can be found in the works of Celia Applegate, Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, and Alon Confino. Confino argues in The Nation as Local Metaphor that Heimat can be individualized in its regional meaning, but still also represents the larger construct of Germanness. Appelgate’s interpretation of the concept is strikingly similar in pointing to a “disjunction [that] persists between national claims and national realities” (ix), reading Heimat as a multiplicitous concept in regards to the local and national, the individual and the collective. Boa and Palfreyman explain that, “the discourse of Heimat and the appeal to regional culture and loyalties can function in many different ways in relation to nationalism.” It can serve as “a source of communal identity more concrete and less dangerous than nation, or as a way of revaluing the nation as a heterogeneous cultural realm” (20). But what are we to make, then, of the
transnational and the national? How can or do they overlap in Heimat constellations? These questions have yet to be completely explored in Heimat theorizations more generally speaking, as well as in the texts of Black Germans more specifically. In tackling all of these levels of the regional, the national, and the transnational in assessing the performance, construction, and production of Afro-German Heimat/en, I assert that the transnational is equally as necessary as the regional level of Heimat in counteracting the danger of the national.

Christoph Türcke discusses Heimat in the context of globalization, but not in the sense of being capable of existing in multiple spaces. His discussion revolves around the regionalism that globalization brings with it, in an attempt to counter or locate the space of Heimat in an increasingly transnational world and the impact globalization has on one’s understanding of Heimat (59). Still, the question remains, how is Heimat discursively constructed and performed differently in the context of transnational connections? If Heimat is as according to Huber, “das beklemmende Gefühl der Ungeduld, sich an einem anderen Ort wohler zu fühlen als dem gegenwärtigen” (25), then modernity and transnationalism open up the door for Heimat to become a space that exists across multiple locations. This would also seem to follow the logic of David Morley, who considers that “the concept of home often remains as the uninterrogated anchor or alter ego of all this hyper-mobility” (3). Instead of supporting the idea that Heimat goes unchanged, he protests, “certainly, traditional ideas of home, homeland and nation have been destabilized, both by new patterns of physical mobility and migration and by new communication technologies which routinely transgress the symbolic boundaries around both the private household and the nation state” (3). While Morley sticks to the technological and mediated transgression of boundaries, the understanding of Heimat as a non-space/place could lend itself to a better articulation of how Heimat offers the potential to exist across and in
multiple, actual existing spaces. Eigler seemingly agrees with Morley’s reading of home/Heimat as transformative and changing spatially with the times, since she views “dominant theories of modernity” as having privileged “time over space.” In her reading of Heimat, “the affective attachment to a particular geographic place (both real and imagined) presents arguably one countercurrent to increasing ‘time-space compression’” (Heimat, Space, Narrative 30), meaning that the time compression can result, nevertheless, in a spatial dispersal and that affective attachments can be had to more than one geographic location. Nevertheless, the etymological definition of Heimat and its multiple points of locatedness would seem to contradict the first definition the dictionary provides, which would place Afro-Germans in both the African and German contexts. It also conflicts with many white Germans’ hegemonic perceptions of where they believe the Heimat of Afro-Germans is located. Yet it is not they who can ultimately determine this.

In his analysis in Heimat in der Postmoderne, Andreas Huber refers to the concept of Heimat as “die utopische bzw. nostalgische Idee davon: die entweder in die Zukunft oder in die Vergangenheit gerichtete Sehnsucht nach Geborgenheit, Aufgehobensein und Einssein-mit-sich-selbst. Heimat ist in diesem Sinne nichts Fassbares” (24). In this rendering of the meaning of Heimat Huber places it—in opposition to the aforementioned definitions of the term, aside from Eigler’s—as not tied to a physical space per se, but rather a mental or emotional state of being, the feeling of being accepted and secure. In deeming it as something that is not graspable, Huber does not mean that the idea cannot be understood, but rather that it would take on different meanings for those who interpret how Heimat within this context is to be read. In this way, the concept is marked as fugitive, much like Black German identities. The utopian aspects of Heimat mark it as similar to the African diaspora and its multispacial dynamics are an element that the
two imagined communities further share, since “zur Heimat gehört, dass ihre Grenzen ‘nicht festgestellt’ sind” (Türcke 77).

In contrast, whereas, in an attempt to homogenize and produce “one identity,” national identity “is enforced by the dominant national narrative and hegemonic memory neglecting to acknowledge the competing strands of identities expressed through a dense web of symbolism,” Heimat offers the room and space needed for telling these other stories, what Bhabha referred to as counter-narratives of the nation (Nation and Narration 9). Huber explains that it is in the act of finding one’s own (hi)story, that Heimat is produced and that “[a]us den Erzählungen entsteht ein Kaleidoskop aus Fragmenten der Erinnerung, die sich mit der Zeit und dem Raum verbinden“ (25). All of these variant meanings that mark self identity (one’s own story) as a part of what constitutes Heimat seem to correspond to the idea of German Heimat/en as conceptualized by Afro-Germans. This new paradigm of Heimat serves as a constructive and productive way in which to view identity as never stable and always undergoing change through a process of narration that is capable of placing the subject in more than one Heimatscape.\textsuperscript{71}

Germans of Color and others who have been excluded from the hegemonically conceived spatial rendering of a white German Heimat are taking the term back. They are lending it a new meaning and re-defining it for their own intents and purposes in a way that includes them in the narratives of the nation, without having to take up the dangerous elements that nationalism entails and that have excluded them in the first place, particularly on the basis of race, but also as regards gender and sexual orientation.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{71} I use this term to draw on Appadurai’s model of five scapes in which he views them as constantly shifting in the social imaginary. The five scapes are ethnoscapes, financescapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes (“Disjuncture and Difference” 296). Heimatscapes can be found at the intersection of all of these in today’s society as all five of Appadurai’s scapes impact upon notions and constructions of home spaces.

\textsuperscript{72} For a similar argument, see also Fatima El-Tayeb’s European Others.


\textit{Heimat: Race, Gender and Sexuality}

Lexically speaking, \textit{Heimat} is a feminine word (\textit{die Heimat}). It has also acquired feminine attributes over time. In his theorization of \textit{Heimat}, Blickle dedicates an entire chapter to its gendered dimensions. He claims that, “Heimat became a locus wherein ‘fusional utopias’ between male and female could be lived—at least from a male perspective” (83). Beyond this, \textit{Heimat} is also often unconsciously figured as feminine (embodied in the first \textit{Heimat}—the womb).\textsuperscript{73}

Not only has \textit{Heimat} been gendered as feminine, but it also has almost always been conceived of as heterosexual and white in the discourses surrounding it and constructing it. During the Third Reich \textit{Heimat} was tied to reproduction for the national body and the continued purity of the \textit{Heimat}’s Aryan race. Von Moltke identifies the conflation of nation and \textit{Heimat} during the National Socialist regime, remarking that \textit{Heimat} was, “virtually interchangeable with a racially defined concept of nation during the Third Reich” (7). With a return to the nation as \textit{Heimat}, the colonial spaces of Germany and the territories it once controlled and sought to regain control of were also considered part of the national space of \textit{Heimat}. Willike Sandler demonstrates that the former German colonies in Africa were considered to be part of the German \textit{Heimat} abroad in National Socialism’s call to reclaim more \textit{Lebensraum} in the spaces of German colonialism (148). She maintains that, “an African Heimat did not exist,” since National Socialism’s claim was to a singular interpretation of Volk, blood, and soil (151). This meant that while white Germans in Africa could still be viewed as part of the German \textit{Heimat} abroad, Africans never could be. Here white German embodiment in a space constructs the idea of \textit{Heimat}. Black/African embodiment is rejected and excluded from the space of a German

\textsuperscript{73}Türcke makes this claim in regards to the \textit{Mutterleib} (12).
Heimat, for as Sandler makes clear, it was the white German presence that made the Heimat in Africa possible (161).

In the post-World War II period Heimat became associated with an idyllic landscape, best represented in the Heimatfilme produced in the 1950s and 1960s in West Germany. The heteronormative discourse of Heimat was also reinforced in this period through this German genre that undeniably focused on a reconstitution of heterosexual pairings at the center of their narratives. These films similarly saw a return to traditional gender roles as von Moltke explains, “reconstructing a ‘moral masculinity’ and a ‘girlish femininity’ as socially sanctioned gender stereotypes” (82). Heimat became once again coded as feminine or maternal, removing itself from the masculine version that dominated its spatial and colonizing connotations during National Socialism (80). This was also evinced in the image of the Trümmerfrau and the resultant emasculation of the German man, as well as through the process of demilitarization of the German nation, following the loss of the war.

Since the Afro-German Women’s Movement in the 1980s, initiated in the context of queer diasporas via the Black German lesbian community, Heimat in many Black German works becomes a space that is no longer subject to the hegemonic conditions of compulsory heterosexuality. In queering the spaces of Heimat, for example, as presented in the volume Talking Home: Heimat aus unserer eigenen Feder. Frauen of Color in Deutschland, Black German cultural productions re-imagine Heimat in ways that transgress its time-honored normative racial, sexual, and gendered boundaries. I turn now to the imagined community of the African diaspora, its constitutive elements, and its influence on the construction, production, and performance of Afro-German Heimat/en.
**African Diaspora**

Diaspora, according to *das Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* is a term that is only used in reference to religious minorities. The definition reads “Gebiet, in dem eine konfessionelle Minderheit lebt.” The word is spatially determined and associated with Christians and Jews in the examples that the dictionary provides. It would appear that no other form of diaspora could exist in the German context, if read in the narrow context of this definition. Of course the definition points to the framework within which this word was originally conceived and employed, but it does not point to any sort of etymological transition over time to include other diasporic peoples that employ the term today. Perhaps, however, it also hints at one of the reasons why the Afro-German community remains unrecognized in twenty-first century Germany. As Tölölyan explains, the term diaspora “once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion” and “now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guestworker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community” (4). Diaspora, thus, not only refers to historically religious contexts, but now also refers to multiple communities that have experienced dispersal or dislocation from a supposed site of origin (Braziel and Mannur 1). Afro-Germans are counted among these diasporic peoples in Germany.

Viewing the concept in a more nuanced manner than merely as a community that has been dispersed, Campt understands diaspora as being akin to “more than an analytical tool—indeed, for many people, it is a practical and political necessity” (“Diaspora, Space” 94). In this way, diaspora is something that is not only an experience of uprootedness shared by a community, but also a desired practice in which one can engage to actively build and sustain a
sense of community and use as a means to achieve political goals and change. In the context of Afro-Germans, the African diaspora refers to both of these conceptual definitions.

According to Jacqueline Nassy Brown, the African diaspora has often evoked “racialized geographies of the imagination” (73). She views this as false, since in her understanding of the African diaspora, it is as a “social location” (73). Just like Campt and as also will be perceived by Wright, Brown reminds us that “the anthropology of diaspora must attend […] to multiple axes of difference and the often contradictory desires they produce” (91). Yet, the dominant paradigm for thinking through the African diaspora has been provided by Paul Gilroy in his theorization of the Black Atlantic, which offers an epistemology for understanding the transatlantic slave trade in the context of transnational forces that call the bounded and homogenous nation into question.

Not only often unacknowledged in Germany, Campt has argued that the Black German population is also largely overlooked in the U.S. (Reading 288), perpetuating the myth of a white homogoneous German society and ignoring any diasporas that exist beyond the Black Atlantic. In Campt’s view, there is also often an aspect of essentialism that accompanies much of the scholarship theorizing black communities that “relies on a discourse of diasporic relation in which similarity and commonality are privileged.” (Campt, “Diaspora Space” 93-94). Building on Campt’s work, Wright argues against homogenizing conceptions of the African diaspora, such as what she refers to as the über Trope of the Middle Passage (in reference to Gilroy’s Black Atlantic). She is concerned with the homogenization that occurs in reading the African diaspora as tied to a single event and argues for an additional, post-war epistemology,\(^\text{74}\) since as she writes, “we are not all arriving on the same boat, either metaphorically or literally” (“Pale by

\(^{74}\) See Wright’s “Pale by Comparison: Black Liberal Humanism and the Postwar Era in the African Diaspora” and “Middle Passage Blackness and Its Diasporic Discontents: The Case for a Post-war Epistemology.”
Comparison” 268). Similar to Brown and Campt, Wright desires an articulation of the variance in the African diaspora that acknowledges existing “power asymmetries,” rather than erasing those differences (268). This post-war epistemology Wright develops can be read as a response to Campt’s call for “an alternative model of dispora, albeit in a specifically German manifestation that has yet to find full articulation” (“Diaspora, Space” 96) It is also a model that I view as evolving at the intersecting discourses of nation and diaspora, in the articulation of Black German Heimat/en.

While I agree with Wright’s demand for the exposure of difference, rather than its erasure in thinking through the diaspora, it is important, nonetheless, to note that in the Afro-German context the African-American diaspora and its cultural imports did play a significant role in the formation of a Black consciousness in Germany. El-Tayeb expresses her feelings of connection to the African-American diaspora that enabled her to develop a sense of community, explaining that, “so etwas wie ein Diaspora-Bewusstsein entstand für mich zuerst aus der Auseinandersetzung mit afroamerikanischer Geschichte. Das war ein wichtiger Schritt, um aus der Vereinzelung und dem permanenten Gefühl, fehl am Platz zu sein, herauszukommen (Homestory Deutschland 97). Among others, Kofi Yakpo also made clear the value of African-American role models for those Afro-Germans establishing themselves in the German music scene (“Denn ich bin” 333). As such examples demonstrate, the African diaspora serves as a community through which many Black Germans can find and develop points of identification, even if the cultural contexts from which they hail differ.

The idea of a diasporic consciousness is something theorized as developing and emerging “against the notion of the nation” that, rather than recognizes diversity and difference within, homogenizes (Kalra, Kaur, and Hutnyk). According to the authors of Diaspora and Hybridity,
“diasporic consciousness is therefore potentially a site for thinking beyond the confines of the nation” (36). The potential that lies in the diasporic community lies herein. Transgressing the borders of the nation at the level of the transnational, diasporic consciousness opens up a space of existence, being, and belonging outside of an exclusionary context within the nation, marking it as a site of multiply produced and existing identities.

One cannot, thus, approach Afro-German cultural productions after the Wende without an understanding of the transnational connections that unite several African diasporic communities as well as the historical circumstances that have shaped and informed these productions. It is, nevertheless, important to expose the ways in which the African-American context cannot be equated to the Afro-German context. The African diaspora, as it is read in Afro-German texts, functions as a way of drawing on (positive) black cultural points of reference that exist outside of the German nation and enabling the establishment of a community across national borders that has shared experiences, is active in seeking recognition and exposing injustices, and places hope in transformation in the future.

Specific elements of the German nation and the African diaspora coalesce in performances of Heimat/en in Afro-German productions. Campt has argued that what “marks much of this group (Afro-Germans) is the lack of shared narratives of home, belonging, and community that sustain so many other black communities and on which they draw as ‘resources’ in numerous ways” (Other Germans, 180). Only recently (referring to the Afro-German Women’s Movement and the communities it established), she explains, has the transnational diaspora played a role in community building (“Diaspora, Space” 95). Since Campt’s initial illumination of this lack of an established community, Black Germans in their cultural productions have contributed to the development of shared narratives of home and belonging as
assessed here and these narratives are intersectional analyses that address home and belonging, nation and diaspora in relation to the complex factors of race, gender, and sexuality.

**The African Diaspora: Race, Gender, and Sexuality**

Diaspora as Braziel and Mannur explain cannot be thought separately from intersecting identitarian categories of analysis (5). This means that just as in the case of the (German) nation and (German) *Heimat*, the African diaspora and particularly the Black German diaspora must also be examined from an intersectional lens in the exploration of the paradigms of race, gender, and sexuality.

The African diaspora is much more ambivalent in its gender coding than the nation or *Heimat*, since reference is often made to the mother country or mother Africa (Bush 15) and pan-Africanism, a diasporic ideology, can take on nationalist elements of reclaiming territory that are usually gender-coded as masculine (Lemelle and Kelley 5-6). Wright has correctly critiqued theorizations of the African diaspora, in the projection of a patriarchal positioning as represented, for example, in the works of Fanon and Gilroy. She criticizes “Black nationalist ideologies heteropatriarchal definitions of blackness” and what she coins a “Black liberal humanism” that identifies as black, but refuses to acknowledge its positioning as male (“Pale by Comparison” 261-263), arguing for a concerted effort to engage in queer and feminist theorists who seek to undo the intersection of multiple hegemonies. The Middle Passage, according to Wright, is “always already masculinized” and “our epistemology, then, becomes marked by events and heroes in a very gendered way, in which an assertive, heteronormative Black masculinity is linked to liberation and the rest are often accorded special mention” (270). Again, her post-war
epistemology becomes integral to counteracting the homogenizing effect of this heteronormative and masculine rendering of the African diaspora.

Black and of Color feminist lesbians have led the way in decolonizing spaces that are heteronormative. Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moraga, and many others come to mind in this context. The Black German diasporic consciousness is one that is aware of the intersecting points of identity and recognizes not only the existence of various sexualities, but also the multiple exclusions experienced as a result of being black and gay, lesbian, or queer. Since Black German lesbian women were the founding members of the Afro-German movement, the community’s constitution was incredibly inclusive from its very beginnings.

Nevertheless, the African diaspora implies a kinship in Blackness and the shared experiences that come with this. Those who “recognize themselves as being of like kind—as sharing some basis of identity—even if they express distinct, sometimes contrary, histories and experiences in relation to it” (Brown 202) are thought to have a relational condition that unites them under the diaspora. Read within the Afro-German context, this of course excludes many family members who are white. The desire to include these family members in the creation of a network or community that constitutes a space and place of belonging enters into the configuration of many Black German Heimat/en. The reshaping of Heimat and national discourse through diasporic discourse and diasporic elements that enables inclusivity attends to what Campt refers to as the “specificities of the particular national lenses and frames through which diaspora itself becomes visible” (“Blackness, Diaspora” 64). It is the intersection of the German nation, German Heimat/en, and the African diaspora both in and through competing discourses that comes to be re-imagined in Afro-German post-Wende cultural productions to
which I attend. Returning briefly now to the discursive construct of nation, I explain how diaspora situates national belonging in a more inclusive (also transnational) space of *Heimat/en*.

**Renegotiations of the Nation through Heimat: Incorporating Diasporic Elements**

Not all elements of the nation as a construct are explicitly negative. Language, while always carrying power with it, is a national element and, particularly in Germany, is tied to the founding of a German *Kulturnation*. However, language can also be employed to empower oneself. May Ayim once stated, “Ja, und auch ich benutze die deutsche Sprache mit ihren rassistischen Elementen, die oft gegen mich selbst gerichtet sind, zumeist unreflektiert” (*Grenzenlos* 11). As Etienne Balibar has demonstrated, without the element of ethnicization, language does not serve an exclusionary purpose in the production of the nation. In “The Nation Form,” he summarizes, “the linguistic community is open, whereas the race community appears in principle closed (since it leads—theoretically—to maintaining indefinitely, until the end of the generations, outside the community or on its ‘inferior’ ‘foreign’ margins those who, by its criteria, are not authentically national)” (103). Thus, this means that it must not be avoided completely as a constitutive element of an inclusive community just because it helps to imagine the nation; rather, it can be employed in a way that exposes its very violence and exclusions as in Ayim’s poetry and as in Label Noir’s production *Heimat, bittersüße Heimat*, examined later in section three.

Language does, however, always imply an in and an out group. Those who understand and comprehend the language and those who do not. Sometimes this also intersects with class (Balibar 104). Not all German speakers are of German national identity and not all German nationals speak German. That the German language is employed in many, indeed most of the
works assessed in this project reveals that the German nation to some extent still has potency and value to the Afro-German. One cannot extract the language as a cultural costruct completely from its geographic and historical context, which is read in national terms. English is the second most widely employed language in the works of Afro-Germans and at times English and German are both used. The employment of these languages bear meaning and one can assume they are used for a strategic purpose and targeted to a specific audience, either German nationals or a larger global community, since English is the common language of members of the African diaspora and of course the language of globalization. Language, thus, is like the nation, “ambivalent and vacillating” in its representation (Bhabha, Nation and Narration 300). In narrating a different version of the nation that counters the hegemonic history of its imagined community, the nation can be re-configured. In employing multiple counter-narratives in their cultural productions, Afro-Germans disturb and disrupt the ‘clear-cut’ boundaries of racialized national identity. The borders of the geographically conceived nation seem to disappear in the transgressive moments in which their diasporic (hi)stories are told.

In a similar fashion, Heimat takes on new narrations and meanings, and is placed within an inclusive context that removes it from a violent and hurtful one, turning it into a site of healing and hope, even if it cannot be completely free from the pain of experiences of racism that continue to exist. Heimat/en as defined and constructed by Afro-/Black Germans are non-spaces/places that welcome the diversity of German citizens (particularly, but not limited to members of the Black/African Diaspora), marking Heimat also as a place of exile from which to mend the wounds imparted by the interconnected discourses of race, nation, gender, and sexuality. Afro-/Black German Heimat/en are often places and spaces visualized and embodied

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75 Carmen Faymonville has also pointed this out in her article “Black Germans and Transnational Identification” (365-366).
in the body. It is a transitory and transit-oriented locality then enables one to flee, but also to be at home. The contradictions of Heimat are what lend it the flexibility required to make it a place of exile and safety, even in the most dangerous contexts. These tensions are what make the construction and performance of Black German Heimat/en highly productive. Working through some of the tensions that the productions which I analyze in this project present and viewing the articulation of the Afro-German diaspora as manifesting itself in the hybridly and plurally imagined Heimat/en of Black Germans, they reflect what David Morley deems “a progressive notion of home, Heimat and community which does not necessarily depend, for its effective functioning on the exclusion of all forms of otherness, as inherently threatening to its own internally coherent self-identity” (Home Territories 6). Instead, these Heimat/en are produced through that which they are and not that which they are not.

So it is, that much like the imagined community of the nation that attempts to homogenize itself through its historical narration, and much like Heimat that persists through its contradictions, diaspora bears ambiguity since it references a rupture, but also a scattering of seed for a potentially positive renewal (Mannur and Braziel 4). Clifford acknowledges the potential present in diaspora, since it allows for “multi-locale attachments, dwelling, and travelling within and across nations” (Clifford 306) and Sukanya Banjeree has gone as far as stating that “amid this rethinking of spatial and temporal categories, the term diaspora has gained currency as a productive frame for reimagining locations, movements, identities, and social formations” (Banerjee 1). This is precisely how the Black diaspora in Germany employs the construct in their cultural productions, by producing and performing “non-exclusive practices of community, politics, and cultural difference” (Clifford 302). They do this in narrating, embodying, staging, imagining, documenting, and envisioning Heimat/en.
SECTION TWO
Exilic, Embodied, and Nomadic Heimat/en in Autobiographical Writing and (Spoken Word) Poetry

For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live. - Adorno

Exile is one of the saddest fates. In pre-modern times, banishment was a particularly dreadful punishment since it meant not only years of aimless wandering away from family and familiar places but also being a permanent outcast, someone who never felt at home and was always at odds with the environment, inconsolable about the past, bitter about the present and future. - Said

Heimat. Home. Homeland. Home, sweet home. Home, bittersweet home. Homeless? It is noteworthy that a substantial number of contemporary Afro-German cultural producers approach these concepts in their works, already evinced in the titles of the texts, such as in the following: the Initiative of Black People in Germany’s historical installation Homestory Deutschland and Sharon Otoo and ManuEla Ritz’ corresponding theater piece Homestory Deutschland: gelebterlebte Schwarze Deutsche Geschichten; Lara-Sophie Milagro and Label Noir’s theatrical production Heimat, bittersüße Heimat, Ika Hügel-Marshall’s autobiography Daheim Unterwegs (the title itself a citation from May Ayim’s poem “entfernte verbindungen”78), Chantal-Fleur Sandjon’s poem “Heimatlos [Versuch 984],” Olumide Popoola and Beldan Sezan’s79 compilation volume, Talking Home: Heimat aus unserer eigenen Federn; the already mentioned festival encompassing numerous Black German cultural productions that took place at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße for the entire month of September 2013 entitled Black Lux: Ein Heimatfest aus Schwarzen Perspektiven, and the recently published edited volume of poetry and

76 See Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life (87).
77 This is the opening to “Intellectual Exiles.” While marking exile as sad, Said also articulates it as possessing the potential for creativity.
78 The title itself is a citation from May Ayim’s poem “entfernte verbindungen,” taken from the next to last stanza of the poem (Ayim, Blues 29).
79 Beldan Sezan is Turkish German and the volume is a collection of poetry and short texts written by various women of color, not just Afro-Germans.
texts in the associated project run by Philipp Khabo-Köpsell and Asoka Esuruoso also titled
*Arriving in the Future. Stories of Home and Exile*,\(^8\) to name but just a few.

Particularly striking from the aforementioned titles is Asoka Esuruoso and Philipp Khabo-Köpsell’s *Arriving in the Future. Stories of Home and Exile*, which pinpoints the interconnectedness of the concepts home and exile and the experiences tied to these terms within the context of Black German lives. The title evokes the words of Eleanore Wiedenroth in her introduction to Popoola and Sezan’s collection, *Talking Home*, in which she summarizes, “[d]enn auch hier geht es um Räume, um Wege, um Heimat und Exil” (4). Both of these volumes conceptualize Heimat/home as something not pre-existing, but rather something that must be achieved, produced, and created through the journey/s that narrate/s one’s own personal experiences. It also is something that looks to a future that does not yet exist or is currently in the making or on the move. Since spaces and paths, home and exile are all interwoven in the cultural texts of Black Germans, I consider these two words (*Heimat* and exile) not as separate entities, but instead read them as intrinsic to one another. In this section, I ask what makes exile home and home exile, or to state it more specifically, I theorize the notion of *Afro-/Black German exilic Heimat/en*. The singular *Heimat* is the one from which Afro-/Black Germans are continually barred admittance, although inhabiting it. Here, I am referring specifically to the geographic space of the German nation as well as its cultural locatedness equated to *Heimat*. In response to this expulsion and in seeking to mend the wounds of the repeated rejection and denial of entry into the imagined community of *Heimat*, Black Germans produce and perform embodied concepts of *Heimat/en* that are interpreted here as self-determined and individualized

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\(^8\) The project is an effort to bring together Black German artists, performers, authors, actors, etc. in performance spaces in Germany, in online networks and fora, and in written and published form. See the project’s webpage for more information: http://arrivinginthefuture.com. In particular, the section on “Project History and Goals” provides an overview of the project coordinators’ stated objectives.
Although they are also capable of incorporating other individuals through bodily connections and emotions) *exilic Heimat/en.*

Returning to Wiedenroth, she explains further in the introduction to *Talking Home* that the space of *Heimat* “ist in den seltensten Fällen ein geographisch bestimmbarer Raum; die Erfahrungen führen vielmehr zu ideellen Orten, *unsere Heimat ist dort, wo wir geliebt werden*” (Guy St. Louis)” (5). As the quote from Wiedenroth—who here is citing a poem from Guy St. Louis published in the volume—reveals, *Heimat*, rather than assuming a geographically defined space is instead conceptualized as a “safe” and undisclosed (non-)space/place, where Black Germans are welcomed/loved. It is important to note that *Talking Home* was conceived of as a compilation of texts from queer authors of color. In this context, then, *Heimat* can be interpreted firstly as envisioned beyond the hegemonic construct of a white German nation that denies People of Color a place within or sense of belonging to the imagined community of Germans and Germanness. Serving as a site of exile, *Heimat* becomes a location of acceptance instead of rejection, allowing Black Germans to “be.” Second, the space of being loved seeks to address the

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81 Although Auge conceives of non-places specifically in reference to places like airports, train stations, and hotels and refers to these as non-anthropological sites (in the sense of ahistorical), I also employ the concept in the Foucauldian sense, combining the two notions as both a heterotopic and at times utopian non-space/place, while also arguing that non-places carry their historicity in the bodies of those who transfer meaning onto them or who enter into the spaces. Heterotopias and non-places are not necessarily inseparable in Afro-German performances of *Heimat* as my analyses will demonstrate. Furthermore, I place safe in parentheses because no space is one hundred percent safe for its inhabitants. This was most recently evinced in the attempt to create a safe living space in the theater production *Schwarz Tragen* that premiered during the *Black Lux Heimafest* at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße. Even in the all Black German *Wohngemeinschaft* or living community in the production, the space was not completely safe for those who lived in it. The intersectional lens of exclusion, as well as the ability to be hurt in one’s space/s or place/s of *Heimat* beyond the experience of racism became visible in this production. In this piece, Cyrus, a gay character and the partner of the former and deceased WG member Frank experienced some forms of exclusion and pain in the space of the home. As the review of the production in *Nachtkritik* reads, Joy, Eric, and Cyrus, members of the WG, view it as ein Schutzraum bedeutet, vor dem alltäglichen Rassismus der weißen Mehrheitsgesellschaft, ihren Zuschreibungen und den Verletzungen an Leib und Seele, die daraus für jeden einzelnen des Quartetts resultieren. “‘Wir brauchen einen Ort, wo wir so sein können, wie wir sind ohne uns ständig ins Verhältnis setzen müssen zu den ‘Anderen,’ bringt es WG-Gründer Cyrus noch mal auf den Punkt, eine Generation älter als die anderen Mitbewohner, die zwischen 20 und 30 sind” (Slevogt). Even in the safe space of Blackness, however, Cyrus does not feel particularly safe in coming out to his roommates as gay, and with reason, given that Vicky, who is Catholic, is at first unwilling to accept this new knowledge.
ubiquity of heteronormativity and its accompanying exclusionary norms across all communities, incorporating queer identities and relationships into alternatively imagined space/s of Heimat/en.

Wiedenroth speaks of some of the women in the volume as having simultaneously undergone their lesbian coming out as well as their coming out as a Person of Color (Popoola and Sezan 5). These multiple coming outs, which can be read as a breaking free of the confines of hegemonic structures and the transgressing of the long-standing constructed borders of the imagined community of a singularly perceived Heimat, are what enabled the writers presented in the volume to find and develop new and necessary forms of community, both through elective affinities as well as through the individualization and personalization of the (intimate) space of Heimat. Through close textual analysis of autobiographical excerpts and (spoken word) poetry—understood as self-narrations, I develop a concept for the performance of exile as a lived and articulated cultural practice that points to the physical embodiment and corporeality of Heimat/en in Black German texts via the Black German performer/author of these texts.

At first, the idea of an exilic Heimat may seem completely contradictory. How can a home be considered a space/place of exile, if exile is something that is most often sought as a result of political unrest, threats, or trauma experienced in the homeland and, therefore, must be found in a geographic location that is not usually the home of origin, but rather elsewhere, abroad? Conversely, how can exile be home, if it always implies banishment—that one is pushed away or distanced from home and, thus, can never actually feel at home in exile? I argue that for Afro-Germans the two terms coincide in the nation from which they seek exile (Germany) and the nation in which they must attempt to find exile (Germany), unless they eventually choose to physically uproot themselves and leave. Although they seek and must find exile in their

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82 I read these poems/texts as semi-autobiographical in that the personal is political. As such, the authors are interpreted as the narrative I.
homeland, Black Germans are also able to find exile in other corpora beyond the national body. These other bodies include the physical body of the self, interpreted as a corporeal or embodied exile, and the body of the text as a creative form of exile that is emergent in the process of cultural production.

According to Bernhard Schlink’s analysis of the two terms (exile and *Heimat*) in the essay *Heimat als Utopie*, the two terms function in their original contexts as opposites,

[d]enn ursprünglich und eigentlich ist der Begriff des Exils der Gegenbegriff zum Begriff der Heimat, die man verlassen musste. Man wurde aus ihr vertrieben, durch Gewalt oder durch Not; sie liegt irgendwo jenseits der Grenze; man sehnt sich nach ihr zurück und kehrt auch in sie zurück, wenn es die Verhältnisse dort erlauben, wenn die politische Unterdrückung endet oder die Hungersnot oder das Wüten der Seuche. (8)

While Schlink establishes the terms as dichotomous, they are actually inextricable and defined in relation to one another, leaving them much more uncertain in their differences and similarities than Schlink at first conveys. Schlink rightly goes on to argue that it is possible for minorities to feel exiled in their home country and women to feel exiled by men, but he also then extends the range of exile in order to read it as a universalizable trope when he claims that “Exil ist eine Metapher für die Erfahrung der Entfremdung, die so existenziell und universell ist, dass sie keinen Ort braucht und auch keine *Heimat* als Gegenort” (11). While it may be the case that all humans experience some form of alienation or exile that is universal (for example, in the capitalist sense, given capitalism’s wide reach) and that could be viewed as a form of exile in the metaphorical sense, the reasons/causes for a real political exile (rather than economic) and the constituting experiences that produce political exiles (at times intersecting) are always varied and differ widely, especially in regard to race, nation, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality. This
means that exile cannot be experienced as universal, since it depends upon individual positioning and the reasons for seeking exile.

My analysis of exilic Heimat en distinguishes itself from Schlink’s assessment of Heimat and exile in that it takes an intersectional approach to alienation into account, rather than dismissing these distinctive layers as something perceived of as universal. The differences do indeed make a difference. Nevertheless, I do agree with his assertion that, “das Recht auf Heimat als elementares Menschenrecht ist das Recht darauf, an einem Ort rechtlich anerkannt und rechtlich geschützt zu leben und nicht nur zu leben, sondern zu wohnen und zu arbeiten, Familie und Freunde, Erinnerungen und Sehnsüchte zu haben” (47). This is the right to which Afro-Germans stake a claim in their cultural productions. Consequently, an exilic Heimat allows them to be and “become” to employ the phrasing of cultural studies theorist Grada Kilomba (12).

For Black Germans, mutual feelings of ambivalence prove to be indicative of both exile and home in relation to the homeland or a more broadly conceptualized Heimat. It is this ambivalence that in some ways helps to stabilize Heimat. One way to understand this is, as Wiedenroth writes, as an attempt to bring “Privates und Öffentliches im Einklang” (5). Exile produces a longing for that which is lost (the homeland or acceptance and belonging in the public sphere or national domain), but also the desire to be away, to find a “safe” space (a new place of belonging or even a zu Hause in a different and more private sense). No doubt both influence each other and cannot be understood separately. Moreover, even though home is perceived of as

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83 There is perhaps a shifting understanding of Heimat with the younger generation of Afro-Germans who are growing up with self-confidence and the gumption to assert themselves in ways that earlier generations of Afro-Germans were not able to, particularly as a result of not having a well-documented history to refer back to or a tradition of Afro-German cultural productions and knowledge. Sharon Otoo briefly addressed this in her keynote talk at the BGHRA in relation to her Afro-German children. Nevertheless, racism and its exclusionary effects are still felt by Germans of all generations, making the concept of exilic Heimat/en applicable.

84 In an interview with ManuEla Ritz, she claimed that she does not use the word Heimat to refer to her space of belonging and feeling at home. For her this space is tied to her apartment and what she expressed as her “zu Hause” (Personal Interview).
being at ease, having a sense of comfortability, and feeling emotionally, mentally, and physically safe, it also produces ambivalent feelings in the pain, fear, or sadness that it can induce for everyone. The causes of such emotions again, however, can and are impacted upon differently as a result of one’s identity.

Highlighting the significance of *Heimat* in relation to Germans and identity, Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman write in their introduction to *Heimat, a German Dream*? that:

> The sheer persistence of the concept of Heimat through the twists and turns of German history suggests that it may connote a deep-seated psychological need, which may even be intrinsic to identity formation, but which is mediated differently through changing history and in different cultural contexts. (23)

Consequently, while many white Germans tend to insist upon an unchanging conceptualization of *Heimat* when confronted with the existence of Afro-/Black Germans, as will be evinced further in the texts examined, Boa and Palfreyman point to *Heimat*’s continual shifts in meaning over the years and the need to approach it from a variety of positions, as well as from within the discourse in which it is produced. In order to understand this discourse or the various discourses evolving today, it is first necessary to comprehend some of the multiple meanings attached to exile and home/*Heimat*. This discourse of *Heimat*, which has been elucidated to some extent in the first section, is examined here more closely in relation to Afro-/Black Germans and the German nation from which, and often in which, they seek exile.

In a chapter entitled “Exile, Nomadism, and Diaspora,” John Durham Peters refers to exile as,

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85 For example, the loss of loved ones, or in the German cultural context, the histories of colonialism and National Socialism.
suggest[ing] a painful or punitive banishment from one’s homeland. Though it can be either voluntary or involuntary, internal or external, exile generally implies a fact of trauma, an imminent danger, usually political, that makes the home no longer safely habitable. (19)

Exile proves to be all of the above for Afro-/Black Germans and although this definition of exile is applicable to many other “Othered Germans,” as well as other exiled Germans, including white Germans returning to Germany post World War II (known also as *Heimatvertriebene*), Afro-/Black German exile is a bi-product of the racism embedded in German society and, indeed, in every space/place, making exile simultaneously something that is forced upon Afro-/Black Germans from the outside or externally by a white German majority, but also resultantly necessitating an active seeking out of exile in order to survive racism and discrimination within Germany as well as beyond its borders. As such, some Afro-Germans attempt to seek exile in other geographic locations, while also turning inward. Wiedenroth expresses precisely this sentiment: “Bisweilen befinden sich Schwarze Menschen in einem inneren oder äußeren Exil” (5). I maintain that rather than being an either/or situation, this exile is often marked as both (internal and external) when read from the context of Afro-/Black German texts.

The trauma of *Heimat* or the banishment from one’s homeland (nation), which produces an external exile that becomes internal, is perhaps best represented in the opening pages of Thomas Usleber’s autobiography *Die Farben unter meiner Haut: Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen*. The title itself expresses that there is more to Usleber than merely his skin. In fact, it is internally that one can find and experience his many colors and/or emotions and the complexity of his existence/person. Still these are housed within the body and under its surface. Already at the beginning of his autobiography, he expresses his desire to raise awareness of “wie
schmerzhaft es manchmal sein kann, im eigenen Land nicht als gleichwertig akzeptiert zu werden” (9). On the pages that follow, he enunciates his (non-existing) sense of *Heimat*,

Für mich ist das Wort Heimat inhaltss leer. Ich kann zwar sehen, dass die Menschen um mich herum ihm eine gewichtige, oft sogar tiefe Bedeutung zumessen, aber die Empfindungen, die sie damit verbinden, sind mir unbekannt.

[...] Ich hatte keine Heimat. (11)

Usleber continues by elaborating on this explication of the term, differentiating his understanding of *Heimat* as one produced by and through the people he chooses to have around him and not existing *a priori* or tied to a geographic location, which he interprets is often the case for others from his own personal encounters and experiences. *Heimat*, in the geographical sense of its meaning, does not exist for him (11). There is quite literally “no *place* like home” and its meaning must be constructed beyond this somewhat superficial rendering thereof. Here, it is perhaps best to return to Schlink’s essay, since the situation in which Black Germans find themselves is similar to the situation in which refugees or asylum seekers also often find themselves. For them, home remains a utopia;

> daß (sic) Heimat mit der Anerkennung und der Zugehörigkeit zu einer Gemeinschaft beginnt, wird sichtbar, wo die Anerkennung fehlt. [...] Denn in ihrer Situation [die der Flüchtlinge und der Vertriebene] ist sogar das elementare Heimatrecht utopisch, das Recht, an einem Ort in anerkannter Zugehörigkeit zu einer politischen Gemeinschaft zu leben, an irgendeinem Ort, einem Ort zu Hause, einem Ort in der Fremde oder einem Ort im Exil. (41)

Since recognition is absent for Afro-/Black Germans as members of the imagined community of the German nation, the right to belong to this version of a German *Heimat* remains one regarded

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86 This is similar to the interpretation of Baum’s interview laid out in my introduction.
as unobtainable.

The trauma that makes the place of Heimat never fully habitable and “inhaltssleer,” as Usleber phrases it, for Afro-/Black Germans is the continued denial of entry into the imagined and constructed notion of a highly racialized conception of Germanness that is equated with whiteness. Jean-Pierre Felix-Eyoum has articulated a similar understanding to Usleber’s of what Heimat means to him in his autobiographical sketch published in the book version of the Homestory Deutschland exhibition, expressing, “ich möchte, dass meine Präsenz hier wahrgenommen wird, weil Heimat für mich nicht irgendein Land repräsentiert—womöglich noch mit Farben und Fahnen—sondern das Gefühl, von den Menschen mit denen ich lebe, respektiert zu werden” (Homestory 41). Yet again, Heimat can be interpreted within Schlink’s recognition model, but also moves beyond it, given that Felix-Eyoum’s right to Heimat begins with a sense of respect towards one another as individuals, not necessarily perceived of as belonging to a nation per se or as citizens thereof.

In these brief autobiographical and textual excerpts, an essentialism of identity and Heimat seems to coincide with the space of the nation—one that is tied to a racialized conception of national space and those citizens perceived of as belonging and not belonging to it. This means that the Afro-/Black German is banished from the homeland based solely on the color of her/his skin and the cultural assumptions tied to this. While this is already present in Usleber’s reference to his own positioning in regards to his country (“im eigenen Land nicht als gleichwertig akzeptiert zu werden”), issues of recognition have also been briefly addressed in the introduction and section one in the works of May Ayim and many others. In the utterance/performative taken from the poem “blues in schwarz weiss,” “Wollen Sie denn mal zurück? Wie, Sie waren noch nie in der Heimat von Papa?” (Blues 18, lines 13-14), the home of the father is read or marked as the
home or *Heimat* of origin of Ayim, despite her positioning and cultural location within Germany. According to the white German who is posing the questions in the poem, her father’s land must quite literally be her fatherland. The equation of Germanness to whiteness is reinforced by this underlying assumption that for Afro-/Black Germans home is always elsewhere, but cannot possibly be in Germany.

Poet Anna Herrero Villamor formulates this feeling as one of being in “exile in her own country,” reflecting similar content of the multiracial and multicultural hip-hop band Advanced Chemistry’s hit single *Fremd im eigenen Land* from 1992, written following the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification. Villamor expresses this exilic state of homelessness in an untitled poem published in Peggy Piesche’s collection *Euer Schweigen schützt euch nicht* remarking, “Bin heimatlos/ lose verbunden mit diesem land was mich nicht will/ ausspuckt, was ihm nicht bekommt/ elend leer allein/ wenn keine hoffnung mehr hoffen lässt/ muss man gehen/ exil im eigenen land” (69, lines 1-8 my emphasis). In the poem, the land or geographic space of the nation is anthropomorphized, its body the one spitting out the speaker in the text. In the poem, the black body is expelled in a violent and disrespectful act that expresses hatred and contempt. This act that can perhaps better be read as regurgitation, consumption, and then expellation (ausspuckt, was ihm nicht bekommt), leaves the Black German subject homeless, forcing her to seek a new home. What is also worth noting in the poem that expresses the sentiment of exile as it relates to other German authors who themselves were (writing) in exile is the citing of Bertolt Brecht’s 1933 poem “Deutschland” in line sixteen with reference to “deutschland, bleiche mutter” and in line seventeen with reference to Heinrich Heine’s famous

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87 The song title translates to “Foreign in my own country.” One of the first hip-hop groups in Germany, it was founded in 1987 and consisted of members who were German citizens with some form of visible migrant background. The refrain of the song emphasizes the fact that despite holding German passports, which they present in the video as a form of validation of their identities, they are still considered as foreigners in their own country as a result of their appearance.
Vormärz poem “Die schlesischen Weber,” written about the Silesian uprising in 1844. In a reversal of the line “deutschland, wir weben dein Leichentuch” from Heine’s poem (Line 3) to “du webst mein leichentuch/ nähst mein Abschiedskleid” (Piesche 69), Villamor demonstrates Germany’s threat to her existence and the country’s revolt against her and other people of color in the post-Wende period, as well as her necessary departure (Abschied). Yet again, Germany is anthropomorphized, but this time in its ability to weave the author’s cloak of death.

In essence, then, Afro-/Black Germans become exiled from their existing (yet still imagined in many ways) Heimat location in German society and the German nation, as well as from their German identity through the cultural phenomenon of identity denial and racial exclusion, but this exile is one that is experienced in their own country. The Heimat as nation, imagined from the gaze of white Germans, establishes borders to which those who claim to be and assert themselves as “grenzenlos und unverschämt” and who also often physically embody hybridity or borderlessness in both racial and national articulations, are deemed not to belong. By disrupting and calling into question the supposedly clearly delineated racial and national borders by way of their presence in Germany and existence as Black Germans in physically embodying the unraveling of these constructed and performed borders, Afro-Germans are exiles and exiled. This exile is externally and involuntarily imposed upon Afro-/Black Germans.

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88 This line has been interpreted in relation to Heine’s poem “Nachgedanken” in which the mother is also interpreted as the German nation. “Nachgedanken” is also cited in the Brothers Keepers song Adriano, letzte Warnung, in which D-Flame raps, “denk’ ich an Deutschland in der Nacht, bin ich um meine Schlaf gebracht.” This reference in the song about the death of Adriano can and must be read in the context of exile and the perceived need to flee the dangerous nation that threatens bodily harm (one corporeal Heimat threatening the other), since both this song and Villamor’s poem point to violent acts of the German nation and its members against people of color. Villamor’s poem declares her alertness and unwillingness to surrender to this violence, similar to the lyrics of Adriano, letzte Warnung.

89 I would like to thank Randolf Ochsmann at the University of Mainz for meeting me in 2011 and discussing these psychological concepts.

90 This refers to the phrase “borderless and brazen” taken from the eponymous poem of May Ayim and also serves as the title for an edited volume of essays (Blues 61).

91 Bhabha defines hybridity as a potential site of reversing colonialist disavowel. This enables “denied knowledges” to “enter upon the discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rules of recognition” (The Location 114).
through positions of dominance and power relations, often in the form of such aforementioned speech acts that exhibit a performative power in the white German articulation of difference, but also through other violent actions committed by the collective national corpus that are attacks on the Black German individual’s body.

As a result of this forced exile from the German nation experienced by Afro-/Black Germans and produced through white German identity denial, oftentimes, geographic locations outside of the confines of the German nation serve as sutures that connect the omnipresent African diaspora and its members via shared experiences of exclusion and racism. In these alternate geographic locations, many Afro-/Black Germans seek a tangible exile from Germany beyond the homeland, hoping to find a place of belonging elsewhere; but it is also in these spaces, that they often fail to do so. Afro-/Black Germans are instead frequently regarded as the white other upon their arrival to this location or also recognize that their experiences are different than those had by other People of Color in the new location. Additionally, some Black Germans are often not familiar with their second cultural location or another Black diasporic location and, therefore, realize that these are not the places where they feel particularly “at home” (zu Hause). As a result, Black Germans once again become cast out from a place they imagined might be homelike. Precisely these experiences are cited in Afro-German texts.

In her poetry and image compilation *Nackte Frauen*, artist Patricia Vester writes in the poem “meine Omi hat immer gesagt,” “dann gab s (sic) da noch […] die reise nach afrika um dann festzustellen, dass da alles genauso is (sic) wie hier nur andersrum” (43). This reference to Vester’s own journey to Africa echoes the Afro-Sinti-German singer Tayo’s recalling of such an experience in a personal short story written for and read at the panel discussion “No Divide and

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92 These speech acts can be interpreted as hate speech, as it is outlined in the theoretical essays of Judith Butler and in her monograph *Excitable Speech*. Butler draws on the theory of language as performative as formulated by J.L. Austin, who views the speech act as constituting that, which is uttered.
Rule” that was held at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße in Berlin at the end of June 2013. In her story, Tayo narrates her experience of being called out and marked as white in Nigeria, as Oyimbo, meaning “Weiss/Weisse” or White/white person, and once again being dispossessed from a homeland or Heimat (a space of belonging) in the geographic sense through an act of misrecognition. As a result of her lighter skin, Tayo is considered to be German in Africa and as a result of her brown skin as African or African-American in Germany. Thus, like many other Afro-/Black Germans she is always positioned outside of her current cultural location and always viewed as belonging elsewhere.

Along similar lines, in her poem “Nigeria,” Olumide Popoola discusses the overwhelming feelings experienced when she enters her father’s homeland, “leaving the plane/-this moisterous warm air surrounds me/leaving on these roads/ which aren’t even lonely at night/ this dark black night/black/coming into so much blackness I long for deadly/so much (sic) black faces/I miss in that other life/coming into so much blackness I need/so much blackness/which is not mine/which is not mine” (Popoola and Sezan 54, lines 1-14). She writes of being in the space from which her disporic connections come, but still not having the feeling of being at home, given that she articulates the blackness she experiences around her as not her own, “not mine.” She continues writing, “not my shade/ not my color/ not my country/ not/ I’m not at home/ still not at home/ still not my country/ just my origin/ one of my origins (Popoola Sezan 54, lines 15-23). She ends the poem with an interrogative; “will I ever?” (Popoola Sezan 54, Line 34). The question refers to her lack of feeling whole, addressed in the stanza before the question is posed. It is representative of the ambivalent experience of feeling simultaneously at home in the sense of

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93 The recording for the event is published online on the following website: http://daawn.fm/song/vNvIGMv7x0.
94 She also describes how she did not want to leave the house after this, but then did it anyway, just like in Germany.
95 Similarly, Mo Asumang in her documentary film, Roots Germania, questions a group of young Nigerians whether she is white or black and they respond “white.” Her narration will be addressed in more detail in section five, “Unmapping, Re-framing, and Documenting Heimat/en.”
being surrounded by People of Color in this new location, but also the acknowledgment of the inability to be completely at home culturally in this new and unknown space that results in this question. Popoola still perceives herself as different and not quite the same as those around her, as her cultural context and multiple origins mark her as distinct from the Nigerians. It is only one space of what she calls her origins, but not fully her home space, which would seemingly encompass both Germany and Nigeria and neither Germany nor Nigeria. This feeling of wholeness is only something that will be obtainable internally, since continuing to compare herself to those around her in the spaces of her origins will always result in the need to acknowledge her difference from them, even if there are points of connection. This is the ambivalence and one of the contradictions that mark the performance of Heimat/en in Afro-German texts, but it is also what makes them productive, in that they force the recognition of difference.

Afro-/Black Germans as demonstrated in these works continually seek to return to a home at home (in Germany) or in African diasporic homelike locations—to Heimat/en that do not necessarily fully exist in either context of their specific cultural location, given that a sense of belonging is in most cases denied in both spaces externally and is felt by Black Germans internally. Nevertheless, Heimat does ambiguously exist or rather persist, as Black Germans remain culturally rooted and located in their Germanness and in most cases in Germany and in their ability to produce alternative imaginings of what constitutes Heimat in their cultural productions and performances.  

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96 Ade Bantu is one example of an exception to this rule, since he grew up Nigeria and feels at home there. This is analysed in more detail in section five. For more on Afro-Germans and cultural location, see Molefi Kete Asante’s article on “Cultural Location.”

97 There are some exceptions to this, as many Black Germans situate themselves in multiple geographic locations. Victoria Robinson is currently living in the U.S., Olumide Popoola is living in England, and Chantal Fleur-Sandjon spent a number of years living in South Africa.
The Missing Connection, The Father

Julia Kristeva claims in “A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident” that, “exile is already in itself a form of dissidence, since it involves uprooting oneself from a family, a country or a language. […] Exile is a way of surviving in the face of the dead father” […] (298). While Kristeva is referring to a Freudian reading of the dead father, her comments on exile are quite revealing on the symbolic level, when placed within the context of the Afro-German diaspora. Many Afro-Germans lack a father (often, but not always the Black parental unit as mentioned above98) and have been repeatedly denied a fatherland (here Germany as Vaterland, as well as the diasporic location where the father often is, as, for example, Tayo’s narration reveals). If, then, Kristeva’s reading of exile is transferred to this context and supported by John Durham Peters’ understanding of exile as “suggest[ing a] pining for home” (20), then this longing for home can also be interpreted as the Afro-German longing for a Heimat in the sense of the dead father, his country, his culture, and his language, which often remain unknown or maintain an absent presence.

Attached to these multiple layers of desire, is the longing for the psychological understanding of the self and one’s identity or its missing pieces as tied to an exilic pining for home. Such a yearning is witnessed in the face of the dead father on the first pages of Hügel-Marshall’s autobiography. She writes:

Deutschland ist meine Heimat, auch wenn ich das Land bis zum heutigen Tag nicht liebengelernt habe. Für mich gibt es aber kein anderes, keine andere Heimat, keine Sprache, die mich meinem Vater näherbringen könnte. Doch bei dem Wort Vater, das so oft und an so vielen Orten ausgesprochen wird, verspürte ich jedes Mal den gleichen tiefesitzenden Schmerz. Ich will wissen, wer ich bin. (11)

98 Campt, Reading the Black German Experience 290.
Although Hügel-Marshall’s father is not dead in the physical sense (she later heals the rifts in this ambivalent *exilic Heimat* after successfully finding and meeting him), in the metaphorical sense, he certainly is given that he is absent from her life and unknown to her. In this sense, for Hügel-Marshall, there is no *Heimatliebe*, even if she views Germany and the German language as her *Heimat* and only actual points of reference because she has not learned to love Germany up to this point in her life.99 Although this lack of *Heimatliebe* may also be the case for many Germans, due to National Socialism and German history, this would have to be read in relation to a voluntary lack of *Heimatliebe*, the ability to choose not to love the fatherland, rather than an involuntary lack of *Heimatliebe* produced by racism and exclusion and in this case also government regulations that forced Hügel-Marshall’s African-American father to return to his own home. Understood in these contexts, Hügel-Marshall’s words express the sentiment of a person already in exile seeking to return to another home (that of the father) and the desire to know who she is completely, to understand her *Heimat* fully—in its dual locality, of which she is both a *part* and *apart*. The statement, however, also reveals her inability to come close to the father, the father’s land/country—the additional place or location of her *Heimat*, or her father’s language, an alternate voice or home within exile. Her state of being is one of exile seeking exile and one of home seeking home, of being at home in exile and being exiled by home. The father and the fatherland are metaphorically speaking “dead,” but still continually present(ed),100 and

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99 This pining is also witnessed in Jennifer Teege’s and ManuEla Ritz’ autobiographies, but in a doubled sense, as the two were both adopted. Teege writes “Jeder Mensch will wissen, woher er kommt, wer seine Eltern und seine Großeltern sind. Er möchte eine vollständige Geschichte über sich erzählen, mit einem Anfang und einem Ende. Er fragt sich: Was ist einzigartig an mir?” (246). See also Ritz pg. 31.

100 The color of her skin serves as a perpetual reminder of her lost father and white Germans continually remind her of her outsider status. Hügel-Marshall is eventually reunited with her father at the end of the autobiography, which serves as a point of healing in the narration and in her life story. Through writing her autobiography, Hügel-Marshall also takes steps towards healing the rift between herself and her homeland, as autobiographical writing constitutes an act of writing the self into the history of the German nation and thereby forcing a recognition of the Black German as a member of German society and the German nation. Michelle Wright refers to the Afro-German diasporic strategy of autobiography as “the literal writing of oneself into the nation” (*Becoming Black* 192).
must be completely recovered, if she is to attempt to heal from the trauma that this has produced. Hügel-Marshall’s skin color also serves as a perpetual reminder of the impossibility of escaping her condition of exile from and in the hegemonically constructed German *Heimat*.

Read within this context, Said’s understanding of exile from his essay, “Reflections on Exile” can be applied. He defines exile as:

[…] strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. […] The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (137)

How, then, can *exilic Heimat/en* be sites of healing, given Said’s understanding of exile as painful, estranging, and sorrowful, and given the ‘unhealable’ rifts placed between a person and their native place/s, or home (here the family as home), as can be read in Hügel-Marshall’s words? The ambivalence of *exilic Heimat/en* is what exposes their ability to be both sites of trauma and sites of healing in the case of Afro-/Black Germans. Since the Afro-/Black German is repeatedly expelled from the geographically and racially constructed *Heimat* as it is understood by many white Germans and also from the African diasporic spaces that oftentimes reverse this exclusion, marking the Afro-German once again as an outsider (as white and German), there arises the need for a continual repairing of *Heimat/en* or a new connotation altogether that evades the nationalist (and thereby racialized) notion that has hitherto served as the definitive factor of its essence. Additionally, this new constellation of *Heimat/en* is one that transgresses the exclusionary and limited boundaries of a singular *Heimat*. This is the dissident act through which
healing forms of *exilic Heimat/en* are created.

“Die Reise ist das Ziel” or “Wanderschaft”\(^{102}\): Towards a Nomadic Notion of *Heimat/en*

Even though Boa and Palfreyman assert that “[t]he core meaning of the word ‘Heimat’, its denotation, is ‘home’ in the sense of a place rather than a dwelling,” (1) this cannot be the case for Afro-/Black Germans as already outlined. Indeed, it actually proves to be the opposite since they are perpetually expelled from the place of home. Afro-/Black German *Heimat/en* are, thus, more of a dwelling (non-space/place) than a home in the sense of an actual concrete place. In a sense, *Heimat* becomes transitory.\(^{103}\)

Nomadism is a concept, which disperses of the home or center. Peters’ differentiation of nomads from exiles explains that, “[f]or nomads, home is always mobile” (20).\(^{104}\) For the Afro-/Black German, home is forcefully mobile (nomadic), due to the fact that s/he is never culturally located in the place of home by white Germans (producing exile), but always already outside of German national boundaries, despite having always been German. Home must, therefore, become transportable in both a figurative and real sense, resulting from the persistence of racism

\(^{101}\) In “A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident,” Kristeva refers to the dissident as a figure who dismantles discourse (299). Black Germans thus dismantle the white German discourse of *Heimat* in building their own discourse.

\(^{102}\) The quote is the title of Afro-German Hip-Hopper Samy Deluxe’s song on the co-produced album *Deluxe Records Let’s Go*. Musician and spoken word poet Bahati’s spoken word poem “Wanderschaft” was filmed as her first music video and published to YouTube on February 17, 2014. The video shows her journeying through the subway and streets of Berlin and the lyrics detail her travels away from Germany and back. See her Facebook page for the link to the music video: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Bahati/134268736457?fref=tnf.

\(^{103}\) Here, my reading of Afro-German *Heimat/en* resembles Eigler’s reading of Polish German Heimat. She writes, “Places of belonging are portrayed not as permanent but as transitory—not as primordially given but as socially acquired” (*Heimat, Space, Narrative* 28).

\(^{104}\) Some forms of mobility are inevitably tied to the industrial and post-industrial periods that made it possible to cover large distances in less time (particularly travel by plane, train, or automobile), and, of course, mobility also cannot be separated from capitalism and late-capitalism (all of the aforementioned associations with mobility are also inherently tied to the logic of imperialism). My emphasis here, however, is less on economically attainable/privileged mobility or the forced mobility produced by the effects of (late) capitalism than it is on the forced mobility and exile of those specifically affected by racism, existing already before these eras and used as justification for colonization.
and expulsion experienced as an Afro-German. In transporting their Heimat/en as nomads, home is removed from a territorial placement (Peters 21). The concept of nomadic Heimat/en as performed by Black Germans will be interpreted through three examples drawn from published work of spoken word poets. The first is a quote from May Ayim and the second two are from selected spoken word poems from performance artist Bahati and Chantal Fleur-Sandjon.

Afro-German poet and activist May Ayim literally embodied the idea of a nomadic sense of Heimat in her famous quote, “Mein Vaterland ist Ghana, meine Muttersprache ist Deutsch, die Heimat trage ich in den Schuhen” (Grenzenlos 89). Herein, Ayim emphasizes the transportability of her Heimat as an exilic nomad, carrying her Heimat in her shoes. While she cannot simultaneously be in both places at once, her body that houses her dual identity as well as enables her to communicate and voice herself, becomes a metaphor for Heimat. Her constantly changing positionality and resultant shifting definition of home is, although to some extent firmly planted in her shoes, still flexible and capable of being uprooted to a new location or at least moved/transported to a new space. For Afro-/Black Germans, then, Heimat and identity are assessed as being generated from a multiplicity of positionings, not just from within the German nation, as presented in Ayim’s quote that enables her Heimat to be everywhere she is. Ghana proves to be of equal valence to Germany, and in turn, it is written as the Vaterland, which would usually have been read as Germany. The fatherland is, thus, transposed to Ghana where her father and his family can be found. However, both cultural locations/parents remain integral to her identity, having produced her and her embodied Heimat.

Chantal Fleur-Sandjon’s spoken word poem entitled “Heimatlos [Versuch 984]” and published in the Initiative of Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland’s organization brochure for the

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105 Peters further refers to what he coins the doubleness of nomadism of “being at home everywhere, but lacking any fixed ground” (20-21).
twenty-fifth anniversary of the ISD’s existence is indicative of the repeated denial of entry into the geographic (spatial) and racial rendering of German Heimat by the white majority. The number of attempts to come home demonstrate the multiple denied entries into the homeland. As an exile, Fleur-Sandjon writes the poem in both English and German. As Wiedenroth explains in Talking Home, a second language offers new potential and alternative spaces for self-expression, “manchmal bietet eine zweite Sprache den gesuchten Raum, einen Raum, der Befreiung zuläßt und die engen kalten Grenzen ver-rückt” (6). This exilic dissidence that deconstructs the boundaries of language allows the borders to be shifted/crazy. Not only are the fixed borders of language shifted, but Fleur-Sandjon also describes Heimat as mobile and unbound from a comparable perspective to that of Ayim. With an intertextual reference to Ayim’s words Fleur-Sandjon writes,

ich trage meine heimat in den taschen/ fisch auf fäden sand in flaschen/
dazwischen glassplitter die nachts den weg weisen fahrkarten vom hin&her reisen
abgestempelt gelocht zerrissen denn nur auf den straßen & in bahnen glaube ich zu wissen was heimat wirklich heißt. (“Heimatlos,” lines 20-30)

Whereas Ayim’s Heimat can be read in the context of the quote, as one that is corporeal, embodied in the body/her body, Fleur-Sandjon suggests a fragmented and damaged corporeality of Heimat/en in her poem in the lines referring to glass shards and the holes punched into the torn and stamped tickets, material objects which she collects and deposits in her pockets. Similar to Ayim’s quote, the mobility of Fleur-Sandjon’s Heimat in relation to modes of transportation that carry her body to a new location, mark the transitory, as well as transit-oriented nature of exilic Heimat/en and the pain/trauma that this induces. She continues “während man andernorts nur reist/streife ich die erde/wie meine vorfahren die nomaden/ist bewegung mein heil mein
hafen” (“Heimatlos,” lines 31-34). Here, the overt reference to nomads and her forefathers makes a reading of nomadic *Heimat/en* clear and the movement to and fro, from place to place, is a wave that can set her sailing from the harbor on a new journey of healing that might mend the wounds of *Heimat*.

Fleur-Sandjon, too, is “daheim unterwegs” and will only find her way home when she must no longer forcibly flee and can be nomadic on her own terms. To this end she writes,

& when i reach it (home) i’m gonna send you an unique greet in form (sic) of a black sprouting seed & my dusty old feet that are no more in need when i reach home/ where my heart is at ease/ and i forget how to flee/ weil mein blut endlich ruhig fließt. (“Heimatlos,” lines 61-68)\(^{106}\)

The poem ends with a healing sense of home that is calm and flows peacefully as a result of a revolutionary tide of change,\(^{107}\) in which “home is/where your heart is at ease/ wo dein blut ruhig fließt/ […] seeking revolution not peace” (lines 1-3 and 6). These lines are juxtaposed to the sharp and painful glass shards and the torn and hole-punched tickets and the end of the poem thus, returns the reader back to the beginning (and perhaps another attempt to find home?) in the repetitive flow of the blood to the heart and the multiply repeated line “home is where your heart is…” Nevertheless, the journey is one that remains incomplete and is still underway, as she has not yet reached home, implicit in the word “when.” The when refers to the black sprouting seed of revolution and change that has yet to happen but must in the fugitive sense, if read again with Campt.

\(^{106}\) Watching and listening to Fleur-Sandjon perform the poem live at the event “Auf der Spree zum (Trans-) Atlantik. Eine diasporische Auseinandersetzung und poetische Lesung mit Chantal-Fleur Sandjon” sponsored by Berlin Postkolonial at the Circusschatzinsel at May-Ayim Ufer on August 23, 2012, the rhythm of the blood flow and the beating heart become part of the repetition as she sped up the lines and slowed them down, depending on which part of the poem she was performing.

\(^{107}\) The poem’s flow is achieved through repetition of words and the repetition of the soothing consonant “s” that is similar to waves. It can be interpreted as such, as a result of the content related to flow, water, sand, fish, etc.
“The true focus of revolutionary change,” according to Audre Lorde, here referencing Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire’s *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, “is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors’ tactics, the oppressors’ relationships” (“Age, Race, Class, and Sex” 123). Fleur-Sandjon’s lines point to the idea of rootedness in reference to the sprouting seed, which can be read as diaspora/dispersal as well as black political consciousness and empowerment and the need to no longer escape the dangers and perils of home as a nomad because she has achieved peace within herself—an internal healing exile from the pain of her external exile that signals a transformation from within, outward. The references to blood and the black sprouting seed in the earth remind the reader of Heimat as it has been interpreted within the National Socialist *Blut und Boden* context, but instead of supporting such a reading, Fleur-Sandjon reverses the meaning attached to this in an act of decolonizing the space of a Heimat imagined purely as white. In the poem her *Blut* seeks to flow quietly and peacefully, not by arming itself for war, but rather by producing revolutionary transformation, and the *Boden* supports the growth of the *black* seed. Yet again though, the ambivalence of exile and Heimat as a safe space is exposed in the writings of Ayim and Fleur-Sandjon. Since the body is never completely safe, no Heimat can ever be completely safe either; it is always threatened. Perhaps, then, the only truly exilic Heimat that can function as a safe non-space/place can be found in the thoughts of Afro-/Black Germans and in their resultant writings and cultural productions. Therein, they manage to find their way home or to Heimat/en defined and performed anew.
Exile in the Pen/Feder: Cultural Production as a Means of Negotiating an Exilic Heimat

For centuries, writers and other cultural producers have been forced into exile and have equally found exile in writing. Ilja Trojanow highlights the various writers of exile in his contribution on “Exil als Heimat” in the essay collection Intellektuelle im Exil. While Trojanow focuses his work on authors who actually entered exile from their native countries, such as Ovid and Conrad, his examples are, nevertheless, relevant to the discussion of experiences of writers in any form of exile. Afro-Germans although not often in actual physical exile in another country can be viewed as in exile in their own country as outlined above. As a result of their in-country exile, they also seek refuge in the pen, through cultural production. The pen provides the means through which Heimat can be expressed and constructed in writing, and also perceived and perhaps even registered, as verbal speech is often ignored or refused understanding by white Germans. The act of writing itself becomes a form of Heimat that is a non-space/place, albeit physical and visible on paper in black and white, allowing for both parts of the Afro-/Black German identity to exist in writing and in the articulation of one’s self. This is also a space mostly outside of racism, although language itself is still hegemonically structured.

Chantal Fleur-Sandjon articulates her creation of a Heimat from which she exists and through which she persists via the written word. She writes,

Als afrodeutsche Autorin, als jemand, der oft und schnell aus Geschichte/n hinausgeschrieben wird, gibt Schreiben mir die Möglichkeit, das Wort selbst zu ergreifen und Welten zu erschaffen, in denen ich mich zu Hause fühle. Zwischen

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108 One could count among the few exceptions to this rule, Olumide Popoola who has been living in England over the past few years and Chantal Fleur-Sandjon who spent a few years in South Africa.
109 This is reminiscent of the music videos and lyrics of Samy Deluxe from his album SchwarzWeiss, including “Poesie Album” and “Ein unbeschriebenes Blatt.”
und in den Worten finde ich Heimat– oder kreuere sie einfach selbst. […] In der Feder liegt Freiheit für mich, hier gibt es keine Grenzen. (Agentur Scripptz)

Fleur-Sandjon desires to be “grenzenlos und unverschämt” in the same way that her precursor May Ayim was (Ayim, Blues 61). Ayim’s *Heimat* is “die Stille vor und hinter den Worten” (*Nachtgesang*, “auskunft” 15), whereas Fleur-Sandjon’s *Heimat* is one “zwischen und in den Worten.”

Both Ayim and Fleur-Sandjon express themselves and produce their own imagined *Heimat/en* in and through writing.

This of course also brings us back to the compilation of poetry and writings found in *Heimat aus unserer eigenen Feder*. Implicit in the title and witnessed throughout the entire volume is the idea that *Heimat/en* are constructed through cultural production. Wiedenroth summarizes that via the publication of *Talking Home*:

> entsteht ein neues Netz, gemeinsame Wege, neue Wegkreuzungen, Orte der Be/geh/ung, der Be/geg/nung, des Mit/ein/ander Aus/tauschens, des Auf/bruchs. *Heimat aus unserer eigenen Feder* ist ein solcher Ort, geschaffen von den Frauen selbst, für sich und für alle, die teilhaben können. (6)

Read from these sources, writing and the space of writing becomes a place of being, of recognition, and of *exilic Heimat* that diverges from the white German understanding of *Heimat* that excludes Black German membership (and queer sexualities) and that seeks to silence the Black German voice. This creates a space of healing through the enunciation of the self in its “textured” layers, to evoke Campt’s term used to discuss Afro-German identities (“Politics of Positionality” 117).

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11 *Peggy Piesche’s volume Euer Schweigen schützt euch nicht also achieves this goal. In the introduction, Piesche writes about the contributions to her volume, “der Fokus dieses Bandes richtet sich demnach auch darauf, was*
Given the variations present in the production, construction, and understanding of Afro-/Black German Heimaten, perhaps Joachim Reidel has provided one of the most broadly applicable definitions of Heimat thus far, in his assessment of the concept in relation to the search for a lost identity. He elucidates Heimat’s existence as follows: “[v]iele versuchen und wenige finden, und nur in seltenen Fällen dämmert die Ahnung, dass Heimat überall sein kann und gleichzeitig nirgendwo ist” (8). This is the quintessence of the (non-)space/place of Afro-/Black German exilic Heimat as it is self-produced and defined in the cultural texts of Afro-/Black Germans. It is everywhere and nowhere simultaneously, transportable and yet rooted in its very transportability.\(^{112}\) It is also individually constituted,\(^{113}\) while being tied to diasporic collective experiences of racism and exclusion.\(^{114}\) But what, then, is exile? Wiedenroth poses the question in a similar fashion in Talking Home and proceeds to answer with, “Ein Außen-Stehen, ein Neben-Stehen” (5). In my reading of Afro-/Black German cultural texts, it is the space of Heimat. It is being in exile at home and being at home in exile. It is the embodiment of home spaces through exile performed in the production of cultural texts and the self. And it is multiply existing exilic Heimat/en.

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\(^{112}\) This also brings to mind the title of a forthcoming documentary called With Wings and Roots that is a comparative assessment of People of Color in New York and Berlin and their similar experiences of racial exclusion.

\(^{113}\) Afro-/Black German exilic Heimat differs based on the positioning of each individual. The intersectionality of the various elements constituting one’s identity (religion, sexuality, gender, ethnicity) situates each Afro-/Black German in a “textured” and multi-dimensional exilic Heimat. The term textured has been employed by Tina Campt to refer to the textured identities of Afro-Germans and the multiple positions from which they speak (“Politics of Positionality” 117).

\(^{114}\) According to Peters, “Exile may be solitary, but diaspora is always collective” (20).
SECTION THREE
Performing Heimat/en On Stage: Label Noir’s Theatrical Performance
Heimat, bittersüße Heimat

Transforming Home/Heimat?: Staging Race, Space, and Identity

“Heimat heißt: die Sprache fühlen
nicht nur sie verstehen
Heimat heißt vertraute Wege
kennend zu begehen
Heimat heißt Erinnerungen
Akten meiner Selbst
Straßen, Häuser, Bäume, Menschen
Akten meiner Selbst

Heimat, das ist keine Hymne
keine Hand auf’s Herz
keine Eide, ew’ge Bünde
schwör ich himmelwärts
steht der eigne Volkscharakter
einem nicht sehr nah
ist er doch vertraut, vor allem
ist er einschätzbar...?

Heimat heißt: erkannt zu werden
auch wenn man nicht will
Heimat heißt dazugehören
Laufhals oder still
Heimat: das kann überall sein
da und hier und dort
und wo immer du auch sein wirst
ist mein Heimatort...,.

wird die Heimat dir zur Fremde:
gehe ich mit dir fort.”

Although the excerpted stanzas of the poem in the epigraph above comprise the epilogue of the theater production Heimat, bittersüße Heimat, signaling the end of the performance, they also produce a beginning from which a new meaning of Heimat is introduced beyond its equation to the German nation. In the poem, Heimat is defined as a space that can exist everywhere and that is not confined to a geographic location that is a national space. The words and phrases, including hymn, oath, alliance, hand on the heart, and national character evoke images of performances or rituals of national belonging and are representative elements of both national identity and its ideological vein of nationalism. In the poem, such performances attached to an understanding of Heimat are rendered null and void. Those who are performing the imagined
community of *Heimat* introduce it in a divergent context. *Heimat*, instead of ideological or national, is the place where one can be oneself and is recognized as such. It is also the feeling of a language, rather than its comprehension and the familiar spaces of nature as well as those manmade spaces (streets, houses, and trees) that lend one a feeling of home. Finally, it is also both the space of the other and the self “wo immer du auch sein wirst ist mein Heimatort” and a space from which one can also take flight if the current home space becomes foreign to this other: “wird die Heimat dir zur Fremde:/ gehe ich mit dir fort.” In this way, the representation of *Heimat* presented is not dissimilar to the embodied, exilic, and nomadic *Heimat/en* discussed in section two. This alternative definition of *Heimat* that can change and shift its spatial composition, as well as be uprooted altogether, and that also recognizes and supports the acceptance of difference, pervades the theatrical production *Heimat, bittersüße Heimat*. Culminating in a joint recitation of a poem that voices *Heimat*, the production enacts a collective and individualized transformation and decolonization/denationalization of the space/s of *Heimat/en*.

What questions, then, do *Heimat/en* understood from within this context raise? If, as Jon Bird, et. al assert, “[t]he home we return to is never the home we left, and the baggage we bring back with us will—eventually—alter it forever” (4-5), then who or what constitutes these shifts in the conceptualization/s of *Heimat/en*, and perhaps more simply put, what is in the baggage brought back and from where is it being brought? And since home is also steeped in tradition that—although constantly changing—also ambiguously refuses to acknowledge the change inherent therein, as Madan Sarup argues,¹¹⁵ how can this change brought home in our baggage be unpacked in a non-threatening way, revealing the positive aspects of transformation in regards to

¹¹⁵ “Though we know that place is often associated with tradition, we often forget that tradition, too, is always being made and remade. Tradition is fluid, it is always being reconstituted. Tradition is about change—change that is not being acknowledged” (“Home and Identity” 93).
a constant reconfiguration of home? These are some of the many challenges that author Lara-Sophie Milagro and the theater ensemble Label Noir confront in their theatrical performance of *Heimat, bittersüße Heimat* (2009).

Label Noir is a Berlin-based ensemble comprised entirely of professional Afro- and Black German actresses and actors. It has existed since 2007 and is currently under the artistic direction of Lara-Sophie Milagro. The conception behind the group was to produce a platform for Black performers in Germany. Rather than stage their experiences of racism as one might initially perceive when encountering their first production, *Heimat, bittersüße Heimat*, the aim of the ensemble is to open up opportunities in the theatrical space for PoCs, interpreted here as performers of Color, who are not represented in the homogenously constructed German National Theaters where whiteness continues to dominate the stage. PoCs are mostly allocated roles that are specifically labeled as Black, often meaning negatively coded (drug dealers, prostitutes, etc.) or foreign (for example, asylum seekers). Race as essentializing construct as well as its linkage to a preconceived national identity are all too openly displayed in these spaces.\textsuperscript{116}

The racialized writing of theater scripts that usually identifies those specific parts intended for Black actors as black roles not only limits the roles allocated to Afro-/Black German actresses and actors because of the racial marking of whiteness as the norm/allocated race for all other roles, but also in extreme cases denies them roles altogether. This has been best witnessed in the debate that arose recently in Germany within and beyond the Black German community.\textsuperscript{117}

The two major instances of Blackfacing took place at the *Deutsches Theater* in the performance

\textsuperscript{116} Mannheim’s Staatstheater is one known exception to this. One of its members is of Turkish-German origin.

\textsuperscript{117} For more on the blackfacing problematic, see Sharon Dodua Otoo’s chapter “Reclaiming Innocence. Unmasking Representations of Whiteness in German Theater” in Micosse-Aikins and Otoo’s *The Little Book of Big Visions: How to be an Artist and Revolutionize the World*, Philipp Khabo-Köpsell’s poem published on his blogfeed in response, entitled "Applaus für Schuhcreme: grob verallgemeinert," and the following YouTube link to Label Noir’s response on Arte: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kohVc-ASsOw. This debate continues with the even more recent use of Blackface on the German television show *Wetten dass!*
Unschuld (sic!) and in Ich bin nicht Rappaport staged in January of 2012 at the Schlosspark Theater in Berlin. In these instances, the argument was made that there were not enough professional Black German actors and actresses to fill these roles and therefore Blackfacing was utilized. This eruption of blatant and manifest racism and its unwarranted excuses, also made the innocent claim that a tradition of Blackfacing does not exist in Germany and, therefore, it cannot be considered to be a racist practice.\textsuperscript{118} This is yet another example of the fact that Black Germans do not exist in the minds of white Germans and that even if they do, they are not possibly actors or actresses capable of occupying the elite cultural sphere of the German national stage.\textsuperscript{119}

In addition to this, German national theaters seem to be of the opinion that Black Germans cannot play white characters because the white audience members would either not be able to identify with the Black performers or because the roles in a production are seen as racially ascribed to the dominant race of the setting/location of the piece or the race of the author who wrote the piece. Milagro’s staging turns this notion on its head. Heimat, bittersüße Heimat demonstrates to the white members of the audience that they can indeed identify with Black actors and actresses, and with an ironic twist, in a piece in which they may not be likely to wish to see themselves reflected in the characters who are performed on the stage, but most certainly will and do, when the situations and scenarios seem all but too familiar (home-like/vertraut) to


\textsuperscript{119} See Lara-Sophie Milagro’s publication “Die Blackfacing Debatte III- Man muss kein Neonazi sein, um rassistisch zu handeln.”
them. Milagro produces a second contact zone (Pratt) within the theater (beyond the contact zones presented in the production),\(^\text{120}\) one in which Germans are confronted with Black German actors and actresses, who are at times playing white German characters. Such a staging is, thus, a reversal of the dominant hegemonic perspective, as white identity in theater and beyond is perceived as the norm and, therefore, rendered invisible. Here it is made highly visible, since the characters in Milagro’s production are performed or read as white through their racist actions or statements, but often the white characters explicitly address themselves as such in the piece, something that is not customarily the case in theater and definitely something that is not written into most theater scripts and parts (that assume whiteness as the norm), whereas blackness consistently is. The piece, thus, proves that identification in the theater does not have anything to do with skin color, but rather performance and, in this particular context, the performance of whiteness as a mere construct.

The formation of Label Noir can, thus, be read as a response and action taken to create new spaces and roles for Black German performers in the German theater scene as a result of overlapping and intersecting discourses on race, space, and national identity. Initially called LiberatioNoire, the group changed its name in 2009 to reflect the quality of the performers (Label), as well as their positioning as Black German performers (Noir) (Label Noir Website). The new name of the ensemble also presents multiple points of reference including diasporic references to the French Negritude movement in the naming as Noir (black in French) and also in relation to the word Label, which Milagro explained as referring to the level of quality of their

\(^{120}\) These other contact zones are experiential situations of racism or what Afro-German author and performer Noah Sow refers to as “der alltägliche Rassismus” in Germany, already defined as such in the title of her 2010 book and examined in detail throughout. These occurrences are presented in the production or perhaps better stated re-performed on stage, as they have been experienced in real life, although often in a slightly altered form. In an interview with Label Noir, Milagro stated that the piece was initially comprised of writings that she had compiled over the years that were based on real-life situations that she and others encountered. After some discussions with Label Noir, she decided to integrate them into a larger production.
acting. The ensemble desires to perform Classical and contemporary dramas, in which its
members are rarely afforded the opportunity to play and to break the confines of ‘marked’ roles
in the theater from a white German perspective. Their goal for the future is to be cast for a
role based simply on the quality of their acting and performance, rather than on the color of their
skin (Arte).

Heimat, bittersüße Heimat, Label Noir’s first staged theatrical production, demands
the acknowledgment and recognition of the existence of Afro-Germans in the demographic
make-up of the German nation. Implicitly tied to this is also a belonging to the German
(national) Heimat understood by many white Germans as a collective, geographically situated,
real national space that is expressive of German culture, but that is is still constructed and
“imagined” in certain ways (Anderson 6). The piece, however, does not allow its representations
of Heimat to end with this limiting definition, as Black Germans are denied access to the
nationally defined and discursively constructed Heimat in their encounters with white Germans.
The performance of a traditional Heimat rooted in some originary past—both on stage and as it
relates to performativity—unveils the everyday or episodic racism that maintains a practice

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121 Personal Interview with Label Noir. August 2011.
122 See the interview recorded for ARTE that LabelNoirProductions posted to YouTube at the following web
     address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kohVc-ASsOw.
     For even more information on the ensemble, its founding, its members, and its productions, visit Label Noir’s
     homepage at http://www.labelnoir.net/labelnoir.html.
123 From here on out the piece will be abbreviated to HbsH.
124 The “Textbuch” of the theater piece employs the term “Theaterprogramm” or theater program. The piece itself
defies categorization in terms of a play and in relation to cabaret, but bears aspects of both, as well as other genre
forms in a subversion of existing models of classification. It is in this way representative of Jamika Ajalon’s
conceptualization of the “Fugitive Archetype of Resistance,” which correlates to the cultural productions of People
of Color, in particular, those of women, that elide classificatory categories. For more on this see Ajalon’s
contribution entitled “The Fugitive Archetype of Resistance: A Metaphorical Narrative” in Sandrine Micosse Aikens
and Sharon Otoo’s edited volume The Little Book of Big Visions: How to Be an Artist and Revolutionize the World.
125 The staged and the everyday experiences or what she calls “episodes of everyday racism” reveal or unmask
themselves as performances in Grada Kilomba’s interpretation thereof in her monograph Plantation Memories (21-22).
     Kilomba’s concept marks these experiences as in a state of reoccurrence. (13) She pushes this notion further in
her assertion that “everyday racism embodies a chronology that is timeless” (13, 49).
and consequently a privilege of white authority and power. While this power prevents change and transformation from transpiring in hegemonically-defined and structured spaces, it does not hinder the ability of Black Germans to reconfigure and reimagine Heimat outside of and in opposition to these structures, as the theatrical production examined here demonstrates. Thus, an individually produced construct—defined in manifold and distinctive ways by those who inhabit it—is also staged. HbsH highlights specific areas of overlap in both white and Black conceptualizations of German Heimat/en, but also acknowledges the ever-present differences of experience that shape the concepts’ various (re)imaginings.

In this section, I first discuss the heterotopic site of the stage as a space of narrative performance of traveler’s tales. I then offer a brief summary of the theater production and its individual chapters and introduce some of the initial questions that each raises in the production with reference to Germanness, Heimat, and belonging. Following this, I examine the relationship of Heimat to performance and performativity as well as the resultant theoretical implications. These theories reveal the privilege that is performed via an assumed white German position of authority (one that is colonizing) that serves to define, limit, and fix the concept of Heimat. Finally, I analyze specific examples drawn from the production in relation to theories on parody that envision a reconfiguration of Heimat as a more inclusively imagined community. Employing parody through performativity creates a counterdiscourse that exposes the unstable performance of white Germanness and a strictly white German Heimat. In doing so, the Black German performers re-claim their own space/s of (German) Heimat/en and reimagine them on stage.
The Stage as Heterotopic Site for the Traveler’s Tale of Heimat/en

Long before the internet became a space for trying out identities (in MUDS and MMORPGs, etc.) other than our own or as it has recently been termed, for ‘online play,’ the theater was one space (later film) in which identities were negotiated and perceived, and where racial, sexual, generational, and gendered boundaries were crossed, albeit not anonymously since the person performing these identities is physically present on stage. Nevertheless, the stage provides the opportunity to perform simultaneously the self and the Other anew, time and again. No single performance is ever the exact same as the one occurring prior to it. In addition to exploring identity (for both the performer as well as for the spectator), theater enables the opportunity to discover new sights and sites, to transgress spatial borders, and to be transported in and between time and space, while staying within the same confined place. How, then, does the stage connect to the re/configuration of Heimat/en?

The stage unites time and space, both of which are elements that comprise Heimat/en. Michel Foucault has pointed to the intersection of these two elements in his theorization of the spatial heterotopia and the temporal heterochrony. It is at the intersection of time and space that oppositionally perceived spaces of (private/public, family/social, etc.) become more ambivalent. Space, as Foucault conceptualizes it, is heterogenous and shaped by a “set of relations” (“Of Other Spaces” 24). In theorizing space, he differentiates between utopias and heterotopias, articulating utopias as sites “with no real place” that “present society itself in a perfected form” (24). In contrast to the sites that Foucault deems utopias are the sites he refers to as heterotopias. He defines these sites as “counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented,
contested, and inverted” (24). The site of the stage is one example he provides as a heterotopic site.

The stage—central to the theatrical realm—is a space that can be continually re-inscribed and that can bring contradictory and opposing spaces into the same space. Foucault establishes five principles identifiable in relation to heterotopias, one of which addresses the theater. Briefly summarized, they include: 1. All cultures most likely produce heterotopias. 2. Heterotopias serve a specific purpose in societies. 3. Incongruous sites are presented side by side in heterotopias. 4. Heterotopias are connected to time (heterochronies). 5. Heterotopias provide access and closure and enable both separation and penetration of space (“Of Other Spaces” 25-26).

In an elaboration of his third principle, Foucault discusses the theater.

**Third principle.** The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another […]. (25)

If capable of being produced in a single real space, there must be something that connects these multiple spaces, which have been deemed incompatible or as Foucault describes them, “foreign” to one another. As contradictory as the sites presented on any stage may at times seem, there is a considerable overlap of meaning that is ascribed to these spaces, in particular, when understood in the context of the German word *Heimat*, a word which encompasses a number of ambivalences and can in many renderings of the term be conceived of as a heterotopic site.

*Heimat* breaks down the dichotomies of spaces (and meanings attached to them) juxtaposed on the theatrical rectangle of the stage, demonstrating that, for example, a bedroom contrasted with a public park, as they are presented in Milagro’s *HbsH*, are perhaps not as
incongruent as one may at first think the spaces to be. Nature and home spaces are both inherent to the traditional significations that have come to be ascribed to the word Heimat; its connotation is something that has been acquired over time and in varied contexts, constantly shifting and changing as already elaborated in the introduction.\textsuperscript{126} It is in these ways that Heimat reveals the faults of binary or oppositional thinking, demonstrating that spatial constructions are much more complex and nuanced than we often desire to view them as. Similarly, the sites of racism are also multiplicitous, occurring “überall und immer” (HbsH 11:04-11:05), meaning that they intrude upon the Heimat, a supposedly “safe space” and unveil its inability to confine itself from intrusion, danger, or harm. Black Germans, in their encounters with exclusionary racism, are thrown into a foreign space, displaced from their home/land and yet must, nevertheless, find a way to return to it. These and other encounters are part of HbsH.

Thus, in navigating numerous sites and landscapes, while narrating and performing home as it is tied to the German nation and the African diaspora, Milagro’s HbsH can be considered a travellers’ tale as has been elaborated by Robertson, in which he claims,

> Travellers’ tales do not only bring the over-there home, and the over-here abroad. They not only bring the far away within reach, but also contribute, as discussed, to challenging the home and abroad/dwelling and travelling dichotomy within specific actualities. At best, they speak to the problem of the impossibility of packaging a culture, or of defining an authentic cultural identity. (22)

Travellers’ tales are an excellent means for transporting and conveying the fluidity of cultures and deconstructing dichotomous boundaries that separate and divide supposedly oppositional spaces, as well as seek to mark culture as static (dwelling within a home space) and untouched

\textsuperscript{126} For more on this, see also Wickham’s chapter “Heimat—Reference, Reverence” in Constructing Heimat in Postwar Germany: Longing and Belonging.
by external influences that are always traveling and flowing in and across space/s. In performing the traveller’s tale onstage, *HbsH* employs what Claudia Breger coins an “aesthetics of narrative performance,” one that unites these often incompatibly viewed modes of transmission, narration and performance. In so doing, it juxtaposes often incompatible sites, temporalities, and spatialities in the theater and real life, in order to (de)construct, narrate, and perform *Heimat* as a heterotopic site of inclusivity that cannot base its foundation on a single cultural authenticity or package it in a suitcase. Furthermore, the performance also demonstrates that although the existence of Black German identity is often denied, it is subversively performed in opposition to the dominant narrative of a white nation and national identity, enabling Afro-/Black Germans to exist and “become” (Kilomba 12). This section and the subsequent sections of this dissertation will demonstrate that Afro-/Black German identity and *Heimat/en* often embody both sides of the dwelling and travelling binary, questionings notions of a single point of origin.

**Heimat, bittersüße Heimat’s Textured Narrative**

In the theatrical production *HbsH*, identity and *Heimat* prove to be both more than skin deep and more than the sum of culturally produced hegemonic projections and discourses; they are co-

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127 Breger believes that rather than functioning in opposition to one another, narration and performance can and often do coincide, particularly in reference to African diaspora aesthetics (4). Regarding performance and narrative performance she claims that the “necessary interplay of de- and recontextualization in the process of configuration that characterizes communication principally in and through all media” (10).

128 The second scene in the prologue entitled “die Geschichte des heutigen Abends,” unifies time and space as essential to the piece, but also subject to constant shifts and changes, “Ort und Zeit der Handlungen sind überall und immer oder nirgends und niemals, je nachdem, wer die Geschichten hört und wer sie erzählt. Heute Abend finden diese Geschichten deshalb zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland statt in (insert the name of the city in which the performance is taking place)-denn sie ereignen sich hier und jetzt zwischen uns und Ihnen-sie haben sich aber bereits unendlich oft an unendlich vielen Orten ereignet und werden sich wieder ereignen: nie genau so, aber immer wieder gleich.” This represents what Breger refers to as the “contemporary aesthetics of narrative performance“ that “finds its identity as a multifaceted response to the fact that narrative authority and coherence cannot be taken for granted, or ‘innocently’ reasserted, any longer” (11-12) and clarifies further that “[I]imaginatively, the aesthetics of narrative performance explores the redistribution of narrative authority across our complex sociosymbolic maps of the contemporary world, variously authorizing (very different) marginalized voices, insisting on the impossibility of clearly distinguishing between marginalized and hegemonic articulations, or ‘simply’ searching for new legitimations of narrative world-making” (12).
dependent and interconnected as well as created and performed. Among other aspects already discussed, it is how identities and *Heimat/en* are performed through space(s), interpersonal relationships, feelings, emotions, community, and also self-definitions that are articulated in this production.

Quite literally hitting home, the Berlin-based Milagro’s highly compelling debut-production (authored/directed by Milagro, under co-direction from Vanessa Rottenburg) was first performed by Label Noir in Berlin in 2010. Due to its initial success, the ensemble began performing the production Germany-wide in 2011 and continued to perform it until more recently.\(^\text{129}\) Constructed like a play, the work consists of a five-chapter layout that follows the Classical tradition of theater, but also subverts convention in Milagro’s employment of the word “chapter” in addition to act.\(^\text{130}\) This is, however, not the only subversive “act” in the piece. The production has no single plot or story-line;\(^\text{131}\) rather, it embodies what Foucault, in reference to the new age of curiosity, would best describe as the “paths and the possibility of comings and goings” (“The Masked Philosopher” 19) in regards to the movement of people as well as their interpersonal relationships and interactions with one another in the public and private sphere/s. The motifs presented throughout the production are love, language, issues of race and quotidian racism, exclusion, gender, representation/recognition, and cultural memory/colonial amnesia.

Collective scenes, in which all members are cast, alternate with scenes in which one

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\(^{129}\) For a detailed schedule of current and past locations and dates of performances, please visit Label Noir’s webpage: http://www.labelnoir.net. Their last performance was in Papenburg on September 7, 2013.

\(^{130}\) In the Textbuch for the production, the subtitle is “Ein Theaterstück in Fünf Kapiteln.” The acts are labeled not only labeled as *Aufzüge*, but also labeled as *Kapiteln*.

\(^{131}\) One could, nevertheless, argue that there is a progression in terms of recognition of Black Germans in the production and that the dénouement occurs at the beginning of the fourth chapter in the scene “Warten.” The changing of the street name (from *Mohrenstrasse* to *Königin von Saba Strasse*) serves as the major turning point, not only in the turn/shift of perspective, but also in taking matters into their own hands and no longer waiting for change to happen.
performer is on stage. Personal narrations—better termed sites of enunciation, intertwine themselves with the larger narrative of the production and music, video clips, poetry, and still images are all integrated into the piece, making it hard to “place” the production into any specific genre form. Each of the individual scenes that make up the chapter can function as separate entities, but also demonstrate an overlap in theme (to name a few: the supposed dichotomous pairs of self/other, inclusion/exclusion, personal/political identity, proximity/distance) through the language that is employed, since many phrases and words recur in various scenes, in order to demonstrate the multiplicity of their meanings in various contexts and perhaps also hint at Heimat’s own multiplicity of meaning. Incorporating classical music, folk songs, arias, disco, the national anthem, and other music that does not fit into one genre per se, such as the music of Miriam Makeba or that of Philip Glass, the production’s “soundtrack” seems to offer social and societal critique beyond the layers of critique found in the lines uttered by the performers. Before beginning my analysis, a brief overview of the production is necessary in order to understand its complexity and its recurring themes.

132 Throughout the entire piece, there are collective scenes in which all individuals are on stage and there are solo performances in which only one or a few performers or are acting. This hints at the individual and collective aspects of constructing the communities of the German nation, Heimat, and the African diaspora.
133 In the script, these are labeled “Standortsbestimmung und Hymne.” In my translation of the piece, I termed them “sites of enunciation and anthems.”
134 The video clips function as an added mediated layer of the piece to demonstrate what ManuEla Ritz has termed in her autobiographical text Die Farbe meiner Haut as a “Projektionsfläche”: “Oberflächlich betrachtet scheint die Tatsache, dass die Haut der Autorin etwas mehr Melanin aufweist als die der meisten Leute in ihrer Umgebung wohl kaum buchfüllend, doch wird eben diese dunklere Haut immer wieder als Projektionsfläche für rassistische Äußerungen und Diskriminierung genutzt” (10). Kilomba also describes the ‘Other’ as a projection screen for desires and pieces of the self one wishes to cast out. (44)
135 Photographs of Black Germans and diasporic Africans are projected onto the screen before the opening act in order to reverse the stereotypes of People of Color from the very beginning, portraying a range of PoCs from Dr. Sylvie Nantcha (CDU politician) and Hans Massaquoi (Publisher and Writer) to Rosa Parks (U.S. Civil Rights activist) and Nelson Mandela (South African Anti-Apartheid activist and politician), and also includes images of the performers. At the end of the production images of friends, family, (images of what one can say represent self-defined Heimat/en in its larger collective construction) and other significant photos (one of Oury Jalloh, for example) are projected onto the screen.
The Coordinates of Time and Space in Racism’s Repetition

Chapter one, “Heimat, 1. Versuch (Home, 1st Attempt),” is precluded by an opening speech, that questions who or what is a good person, to which each of the performers respond in contrasting ways. This immediately opens up different modes of interpretation for our understanding of hegemonic definitions and conceptions of what is often believed to be easily definable, through what are all too often assumed to be converging articulations or pre-existing definitions and clear assessments of value and moral judgments. The chapter then opens with a scene in the park and closes with an analogous scene in the park, both of which are scenes of encountering the quotidian racism of white Germans and, in this case, women. They present everyday (white) people as capable of being racist (despite, perhaps meaning well) and also present paths of resisting and critiquing this racism as an Afro-/Black German. The main difference between the two scenes is that one happened yesterday (gestern) and the other in the future (morgen). The white women depicted in the scenes also represent two different generations. The first scene from gestern features an old woman who seems stuck in past conceptions of race that shaped both the late founding of the German nation (verspätete Nation) and that were made into law under National Socialism. The second scene from morgen features a bio-hippie trying to embody and identify with what her idea of blackness is (an essentialized version thereof, i.e. Bob Marley, colorful clothes, dreads, etc.). An experience of racism from the present-day in the park is left unrepresented and unstaged.

One could argue that these scenes are being performed in an atemporal time on the stage that is outside of the time in which the nation is constituted. Rather, it is a diasporic time—one,

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136 The first park scene is a confrontation between a young Black German girl and an older white German who is flabbergasted by the fact that the Black girl is German and the second is a confrontation between a white hippie and a young Black German girl. The white hippie oversteps numerous personal boundaries, in particular, asking if the Black woman knows of a shop where she can get her hair put into dreads and comparing a picture of a friend of hers from Africa to the Black German girl.
which Black Germans can inhabit and from which they are not expelled. What Etienne Balibar refers to as “fictive ethnicity” of the nation—an ethnicization of a particular population in a “social formation,” is, according to his argumentation, “represented in the past or in the future as if they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions” (96). As such, the space in-between this time occurs temporally speaking at the interstices of that which has not yet transpired or arrived (in the first scenario, the two women are waiting on a delayed train).

Perhaps there is more to be read in connection to this elision. It can certainly be interpreted as an allusion to what May Ayim writes in her poem “Auskunft”: “meine heimat/ ist heute/ der raum zwischen/ gestern und morgen/ die stille/ vor und hinter/ den Worten/ das leben/ zwischen den stühlen” (Nachtgesang 15). This would situate Heimat as not yet in place or, to be more precise, as both the space and time in which the actual theatrical performance is occurring, signaling the moment for transformation and change as the fugitive future. Tina Campt theorizes this Black feminist concept of fugitivity in relation to “that which will have had to happen in order for the future to be realized.” Thus, while Huber claims that “der Passagier der Nicht-Orte [macht] die Erfahrung der ewigen Gegenwart” (88), for Afro-Germans as those passengers, it is much more the infinite presence of the non-present, or what Campt refers to as “a performance of a future that hasn’t yet happened but must.” In this moment, the recognition of Black Germans—that which has not yet happened, but must—becomes possible. If read in this context, Milagro’s play and Ayim’s poem both mark Afro-Germans as occupying a non-space in relation to Heimat and the “timelessness” or atemporality of “everyday racism” of which Kilomba writes (13, 49). This aspect of the first chapter of the production represents the no-

137 View the recorded lecture “Black Feminist Futures and the Practice of Fugitivity” on YouTube posted by the Barnard Center for Research on Women at the following address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ozhqw840PU.
time/no-space of the African diaspora.

**Sein oder nicht sein, oder Dasein? (Ayim/Heidegger)**

The second chapter of *HbsH* is entitled “Deutsch oder Nichtdeutsch: Fragen über Fragen” and beyond its reference to William Shakespeare’s famous line (“Sein oder nicht sein”), it alludes yet again to Afro-German poet and activist May Ayim’s poem, “sein oder nichtsein” (*Nachtgesang* 17-18). In an interview with Milagro, she explained the influence of Ayim’s work on her own and her interest therein, claiming that prior to the experience of reading Ayim’s literature, she would not have come to the realization that the personal is indeed political and that her experiences are not isolated from those had by other People of Color in Germany.\(^{138}\) The last two stanzas of Ayim’s poem “sein oder nichtsein” read as follows:

\[
\text{in deutschland großgeworden habe ich gelernt,}
\text{zu bedauern}
\text{schwarz zu sein, “mischling” zu sein, deutsch zu sein,}
\text{nicht deutsch zu sein, afrikanisch zu sein,}
\text{nicht afrikanisch zu sein, deutsche eltern zu haben,}
\text{afrikanische eltern zu haben,}
\text{exotin zu sein, frau zu sein.}
\]

\[
\text{in deutschland großgeworden, bin ich unterwegs}
\text{weg vom: hautfarbesein, nationalitätsein,}
\text{religionsein, parteisein,}
\text{großsein, kleinsein, intelligentsein, dummsein,}
\text{sein oder nichtsein}
\text{auf den weg zu mir}
\text{auf den weg zu dir. (*Nachtgesang* 17-18, lines 24-37, my emphasis)}
\]

Listing all of the ways in which her being or possibilities of existence are framed through hegemonic discourse and the intersectionality of identity, Ayim regrets her positioning by and for others as being both at times German and at other times African and neither African nor

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\(^{138}\) Milagro stated that she wrote similar pieces to those of Ayim, but never recognized that her encounters with racism could be ones that many other people of Color are faced with and, therefore, of significance and interest to them.
German. In some instances she is perceived as or perceives herself as one or the other, placed into one category while denied access to another, eventually leading her to avoid such dichotomously conceived categorizations that include characteristics of race, nationality, religion, political party, height, and level of intelligence altogether. She then follows with a reference to the famous “to be or not to be” quote, in an attempt to choose a path that takes her to herself and to the other “zu mir […] zu dir” (Nachtgesang 17-18, lines ). Enunciating and emancipating herself “on the way to you, on the way to me,” the end of the poem renders being or Dasein for Ayim likely as lying somewhere beyond what these paradigms for categorizing and labeling ontological being seek to ascertain.

In Being and Time, Heidegger conjectures the ontological concept of Dasein as a form of being in the world established through time (11). This universal being, which he perceives as an a priori existence (3), is something to which Black Germans are not entitled in hegemonic conditions since the possibility of their existence is always considered an implausibility in their continual misrecognition as Germans and in their denied existence as both black and German. The questioning of Afro-German identity exposes the constructed stabilized ground from which white Germans pose the question of Black German Dasein. This white German Dasein is produced through the questioning of the Other’s existence to defend the white Germans’ own existence. In relation to this, Michelle Wright explains that, “without blackness, whiteness disappears” (260), whereas without whiteness “blackness would do quite well” (“Pale by Comparison” 261), since it seemingly only ever cites itself.

Ayim’s poem and conceptualization of being resonates with Olumide Popoola’s poem “african princess,” in which she writes “i am not an/african princess/ gestrandet im fernen land/suche nach antworten/ deren fragen ich nicht kenne/ weiss nur/ den kopf oben halten kostet
ein leben müdigkeit” (Popoola and Sezan 53, lines 1-7) and “i am not tracy chapman/ whopie goldberg (sic)/ an expert in foreign affairs” (lines 11-13). Not the essentialized body of the black woman singer or actress, Popoola asserts her existence not only as an individual, but also as a Nigerian German (positioned not within the African American cultural contexts she evokes in the naming of stars Chapman and Goldberg): “i am nigerian german reality/ reality/ reality/ yes/ real (lines 25-29). This realness or authenticity can also be read as an actual ontological existence in the use of the word reality and the phrase “i am.” These examples set ‘being’ within a broader discourse, one which is always shifting and changing, depending upon its participants and depending upon which discourse is being used to frame the existence of Afro-/Black Germans, their own, or that of others.

For white Germans it would seem that the meaning of being lies in the power to decide who can be what, when, and where. For Black Germans, being is more about the recognition of the actuality of Blacks who are Germans or Germans who happen to be black. This can be and is acknowledged outside of the established discursive paradigms, for example, from within the self and from within the Black German diasporic community.

Such experiences as those described in Ayim’s poem come to the fore in the second chapter of the play in which German identity (not just Afro-/Black German identity), as well as other forms of identity, including those of gender, are probed, queried, denied, and/or misunderstood. As the press kit for Label Noir’s Heimat, bittersüße Heimat so poignantly states, “Deutsch sein ist schwer. Afro-Deutsch sein ist noch schwerer.” (Label Noir), or if read from one of the many perspectives that the title of Theodore Michael’s autobiography offers up Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu (Being German and Black Too) or being German while Black.139

139 Michael himself survived the National Socialist regime, like other Afro-/Black Germans such as Gert Schramm and Hans Massoquoi, Fasia Jensen, and Maria Nejar.
Beginning with a “Standortbestimmung und Hymne” performed by Leander Graf, an aspect of the production that is examined in great detail much later in my analysis, and a video clip entitled “Hey du!-Joggerinnen” in which two presumably white joggers stop to ask a person (gazing into the camera and confronting the audience) where he is from, the chapter then closes with the scene “Deutsch-sein.” In this scene, two white women discuss whether or not they are happy to be German. The first woman asks her friend, “Bist du eigentlich gerne Deutsch?” Her friend responds promptly with a very resounding, “Nein, Deutsche sein ist scheiß.” The first woman’s reply to this answer follows with consensus, “Finde ich auch, ich find’s auch scheiße. Wegen der Geschichte und so.” The second woman then adds to this justification of why being German is undesired, claiming, “Wenn es nur das wäre. Aber wir Deutschen sind auch so humorlos, weiße. Wir sind irgendwie immer schlecht gelaunt, ja, furchtbar. Nörgeln an allem rum, sind immer unzufrieden, selbstmitleidig, bah!” (39:08-39:32). This exchange continues until one of the women begins to discuss her travels abroad to foreign countries and her solidarity with third world countries, while the other woman tries to determine which country it is that her husband is actually from in Africa. Each of the women attempt to one-up the other in their actions of “third world” solidarity, which offers an excellent segue for the content of the third chapter.

Goodwill Hunting

“Gutmenschen” or “Do-Gooders” as the third chapter of the production is entitled, opens with a voice recording that sets the stage as a sort of news report behind the scenes of the Koodinierungshauptbüro für ein multikulturelles Deutschland or, as it is abbreviated, the KHBFEMD. In this scene, the workers are in charge of planning a public discussion on
multiculturalism and are pictured in the office after hours, when a young man, Herr Alfahid, seeks refuge from Neo-Nazis who are chasing him and is denied entry as a result of German bureaucracy and their opening/closing hours. Beyond demonstrating that good and evil are not binary opposites, this chapter of the production exposes what is behind the projection screen of goodwill and renders the “innocent violence” of such “civil” organizations both visible and audible. The chapter culminates with yet another goodwill project— that of the charity gala—, which is also analyzed in detail later.

(No More) Waiting on the World to Change

The fourth chapter of the production presents the time element as central, in particular, in its title “Warten” and the eponymous culminating poem that introduces this chapter. The opening scene of the chapter is situated in a train station where two men’s lives collide and time is of the essence. A young man who is unaware of where he actually wants to go, misses the train because he also does not know when the next one is leaving. As the chapter continues in duration, it marks the transition of Heimat representations from the staging of everyday experiences of racism, for example, to the staging of the purchase of love in an effort to better

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140 There is a scene in which a Herr Alfahid attempts to escape from skinheads and buzzes at the door of the KHBFEMD to ask to be let in for protection. Unfortunately, the office is closed for the day and will not open again until Tuesday due to the holiday on Monday. The office workers claim that due to insurance purposes and because he arrived outside of their daily office hours that they are not allowed to let Herr Alfahid onto the property. Herr Alfahid decides not to waste any more time on them after they first question him on his stance towards the Kopftuch (assuming he is Muslim based on his name). Herr Alfahid’s shadow is then shown as he runs away from the skinheads and is caught and beaten to what appears to be his death behind a projection screen that is part of the set. This all occurs while the two workers in the office are celebrating and dancing, discussing their upcoming podium discussion on violence and integration and complaining that Herr Alfahid became aggressive after not being let in and questioned.

141 The language employed in these scenes reveals the violence in everyday phrases such as “Mich ärgert es zu Tode [...]” “Wenn ich den sehe, den haue ich eine rein,” and “zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen,” etc.

142 Again, time and space coincide and reinforce Breger’s notion of an aesthetics of narrative performativity.
the world. It also addresses political issues regarding representation and colonized spaces in Germany, such as the Mohrenstrasse U-bahn. When the resistance act (“Widerstand”) occurs—as the scene with the call to action to rename Mohrenstrasse is entitled—, all of the performers take to the stage and recite a collective poem about waiting. The poem ends with a refusal to postpone change and put off the recognition of Black Germans as a constitutive element of German society and in the public sphere. The Black German collective then makes an appeal to the Bezirksverordnete (district council members) to change the street name of the U-bahn from Mohrenstrasse to Königin von Saba Strasse.

Strangers to Ourselves

HbsH concludes with the final chapter, “Heimat, letzter Versuch” (“Home, Final Attempt”). This chapter highlights interpretations of Heimat beyond the political or national and situates it within hetero and homosexual relationships, as gender and sexuality are also part of what constitutes one’s own individual understanding of Heimat. Here, themes such as proximity and distance, fremd gehen and sich selbst fremd sein become central to the narrative.

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143 This is perhaps the only capitalist critique in the production in that the man is confused by the fact that he cannot by love, since everything else is available for purchase in society. In the end, the man ends up drinking what he believes to be a love potion and another woman enters the shop to buy love.

144 Such an appeal actually occurred in 2004. With regard to the renaming of streets and creation of spaces that are not hegemonic or colonial, the May-Ayim Ufer, previously named the Gröbenufer after a German colonial military hero, was renamed in 2009 and a plaque was dedicated shortly thereafter in 2010. It is significant that this is one of the only spaces in Berlin and one of very few spaces in Germany that provide positive representation of Afro-/Black Germans in public space. As ManuEla Ritz stated in an interview with her in August 2012, “Das war das erste Mal, dass ich das Gefühl hatte, ein Ort gehörte mir.” This is important in terms of thinking of Heimat as space and as belonging to or having a right to the city and its multidirectional collective memory (for more on this see Jenny Engler’s article on “Renaming Streets” in Vol. 20 Focus on German Studies). For more information on the debate surrounding Mohrenstrasse from the Black German perspective, see among others, Kopp and Krohn’s “Blues in Schwarz Weiss. Die black Community im Widerstand gegen kolonialrassistische Straßennamen in Berlin Mitte” and the “offener Brief des Zentralrats der afrikanischen Gemeinde in Deutschland zur Berliner ‘Mohrenstraße’” and for the defense of the name of the street from the mainstream white German perspective, see “Streit um Straßenamen: Warum heißt die Mohrenstraße Mohrenstraße?” published in der Tagesspiegel and “Streit der Initiative entbrannt: Mohrenstraße zu rassistisch?” in the Berliner Kurier.

145 This is a reference to Julia Kristeva’s book of the same name that makes the claim that a sense of foreigness or alienation lies within ourselves.
performance. For example, a straight couple discusses the need for more space in their relationship and a gay couple discusses whether or not they have or would ever cheat on their partner, ultimately arguing over whether or not they would want to know this fact. Another scene stages a lesbian couple discussing love as projections and relationships/lovers as *Heimat*. Labeled as the epilogue, the production then ends with the poem “Heimat, letzter Versuch,” (“Heimat last attempt”) after which only actions and movement are seen on the stage: the changing of the street name to *Königin von Saba Strasse*; the group photographs in front of this sign; and dancing to the music of Miriam Makeba, followed by the projection of photographic images onto the screen on the stage, which undoubtedly speak for themselves. The conclusion of the production is also key to the interpretation that follows.

Now that a brief summary of the chapters of the production has been provided for those unfamiliar with the piece, I examine specific contexts and scenes in more detail that guide my reading and interpretation of the construction, production, and performance that reimagines *Heimat/en* in *HbsH*. The questions that are first presented by the piece in relation to Germanness are addressed, followed by an analysis of colonial performatives that place Black Germans outside of Germanness and the German *Heimat*, and I conclude with an analysis of music and parody’s subversive potential.

**Was ist deutsch? Was ist gut?: From Wagner to Adorno and Milagro’s Inclusive Heimat**

Milagro’s staging can be read as one example of contemporary Afro-German cultural productions that produces and performs German identity and *Heimat* as inclusive hybrid constructs from a Black German imagining thereof. This is achieved through the performance of

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146 The cast members of Label Noir chose the selected photos. They are important images of family and friends as already mentioned (including themselves), as well as other members of the African diaspora in Germany, both living and dead.
the performativity of race and cultural identity within the national sphere of German high
culture. Performance here refers to the theatrical context as a space of performing and
performativity refers to the repetition of acts that falsely perform an original (one that is always
already a copy according to Butler). Consequently, HbsH blurs the constructed boundaries and
norms of racial and national, at times even gendered and sexed roles, both on and off stage.

Performance, in the sense of a theatrical act on stage, is a term that has been utilized for
centuries. However, in the nineteenth century, performativity or the series of performed actions
that discursively construct identities did not yet exist as a theoretical concept, even if
representations of it can be found in literature dating back to the Middle Ages and Early Modern
periods. Despite this, some theoretical readings of what Germanness might be defined as hint
at a performative element thereof—one that constructs in the process of trying to define
something that has supposedly already been imagined or produced prior to its definition. This
questions any actual truth or point of origin in relation to identity.

In an attempt to pin down Germanness, Richard Wagner posed the question of “What is
German?” in an 1865 theoretical essay. A little over a century later, Frankfurt School critical
theorist Theodor Adorno in his 1969 article, which just so happened to have been published in
translation by Thomas Levin, appearing in a special edition on Heimat in the New German
Critique Journal, reevaluated this same question that Wagner approaches. In Wagner’s
assessment of the question “What is German?,” he explains that

[t]he word ‘deutsch,’ according to the latest and most profound researches, is not
a definite Folk’s name in history. There has been no people that could claim the

147 See Gender Trouble, pg. 43.
148 For more on performativity, see, among others, Butler’s Gender Trouble and Fischer-Lichte’s The
Transformative Power of Performance.
149 Texts that immediately come to mind are Grimmelshausen’s Courage and Simplicissimus.
original title ‘Deutsche.’ Jacob Grimm, on the contrary, has proved that ‘diutisk’ or ‘deutsch’ means nothing more than what is homelike to ourselves, ‘ourselves’ being those who parley in a language mutually intelligible. (3-4)

Concluding his interrogation into this question with the inability to compose a complete or concrete answer, Wagner, thus, leaves it open-ended and free to interpretation. Moreover, Wagner points to language as a definitive factor of that which makes something homelike and, therefore, German. Language, too though, is a performative act, to which I will return later on in other parts of this section.

Diverging in many ways from Wagner’s reading of what is German, but converging in others, Adorno has provided comparable understandings of the answers given to the question “What is German?” In his evaluation of the question and his own inability to adequately answer it, Adorno states, “I am unable to answer the question immediately. First, it is necessary to reflect on the question itself since it is burdened by those smug definitions which assume as the specifically German not what actually is German but rather that which one wishes it were” (121).

According to Adorno’s reading, the idealism with which the question itself is approached, presupposes that there is already an answer, which, rather than existing prior to the question, is actually retroactively constructed through discourse in an imaginary (here, national and ethnic) way. It also establishes an us/them and good/bad dichotomy; “those qualities with which one identifies oneself—the essence of one’s own group—imperceptibly become the Good; the foreign group, the others, Bad” (121). Such preconceived notions of identity and being are all but too familiar to Afro-/Black Germans whose identity is questioned from the outset and whose presupposed identity is always one, which is more often than not, viewed as external to the

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150 This linguistic conceptualization of what defines Germanness was also furthered in Turkish German author Zafer Şenocak’s polemical publication Deutschsein: Eine Aufklärungsschrift.

151 Adorno makes reference to National Socialism and the erasure of individuality for the collective body.
German nation by white Germans, serving as the negative foil against which whiteness is produced. The imaginary (both colonial and racial) is at work in the construction of a retroactive answer to the question of “Who or what is German?,” as Afro-/Black Germans are viewed from a white Eurocentric perspective as not existing and unable to exist, even as they do. It is within the framework of such questions that the production *Heimat, bittersüße Heimat* opens, setting the tone for the rest of the piece and the framework for my interpretation.

As the spotlight shines on the stage, a man with a suitcase enters. Members of the audience are left uninformed as to whether he is departing for somewhere unbeknownst to the spectator, or whether he has just arrived at his “final” destination, coming from an indeterminate location and arriving in a space that is equally indiscernible and free of demarcations. Perhaps this is just one stop along the path of a longer journey, or maybe he is lost. Nevertheless, he is on his way (auf dem Weg\(^\text{152}\)). The man’s gaze meets that of the audience. He appears to be searching for something or someone, but the viewer is unaware of what or whom it is that he is seeking. The man stops and sits down on his suitcase. Eventually, others join him onstage, taking note of his presence, while he reciprocates this acknowledgment. All of the performers onstage are thus recognized by each other and recognize the audience gazing at them. The members of the audience, too, recognize the performers, at least in this particular moment in the theatrical realm. Whether or not the performers would be recognized and acknowledged by audience members if they met them on the street (or in the subway), where it actually seems that these performers may have crossed each other’s paths on stage (in the performance) is of course a

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\(^{152}\) This phrasing made me think of another production that was written by Lara-Sophie Milagro and staged as a performed reading at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße in Kreuzberg in the context of the month-long program entitled *Black Lux: Ein Heimatfest aus Schwarzen Perspektiven*, which took place during September of 2013. The performance was entitled, *Stattdessen bin ich immer noch auf dem Weg* and one of the poems that was part of the entire pastiche carried this title as well.
different story. Precisely such public encounters that result in acts of misrecognition are later staged in the production.

The performers on the stage are all Black Germans, or are they? Do we, as spectators, know this based on their external appearance, a sole assessment derived from the fact that they are on a stage in Germany and appear to be People of Color? Are they performing black characters or white characters and how would we know this? Perhaps the performers are not even playing a role; it is plausible that they are performing themselves. Or maybe they are simultaneously playing a role, while performing themselves. As Tina Campt has probed, does image matter? In the context of German history as well as the cultural and national institution of what has remained an almost exclusively white German theater—an institution that systematically denies Afro/Black Germans access to and participation in this elite realm of high culture—, it most certainly seems to play a significant and vital ‘role’ in the immediate reading of this theatrical performance and its all Black-German cast.

As the final performertakes the stage, the opening lines of the performance resound, “Wer oder was ist ein guter Mensch?” The performers on stage debate the answer to this interrogative in a polyphonic attempt to come to a conclusion or truth, which of course has yet to be determined and remains indeterminable. The dialogic exchange concludes with a comment

153 Both white and of Color and likely of many different national identities.
155 This includes Turkish and Asian Germans and others who identify with the political term Black through common experiences of racism and exclusion.
156 It is important to note that in the Textbuch for the production, Milagro employs the word Darsteller, which in German means performer. The verb darstellen carries the meaning “to represent something.” The performers in this production are concomitantly performing and representing.
157 This can be read as an intertextual reference to Brecht and his attempt to define and stage “der gute Mensch,” with his good human being Der Gute Mensch von Szeuan, a person that embodies both good and bad, but more good than bad. This can also clearly be tied to a question of aesthetics, which returns us to theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and theories that also contributed to the discourse on race and aesthetics evolving during this time (Kant, Herder, Hegel, etc.).
158 Bakhtin’s definition of polyphony applies to the multiple voicings of meaning and is the attempt to define truth through its many articulations, thereby pointing to the inability of one meaning to be the actual or only representation or truth (21-23).
from the initial speaker who states, “Ich weiss es nicht.” This query of who or what is a good person can be read in relation to the lexically similar question of “Wer oder was ist ein (Afro) Deutscher/ eine (Afro) Deutsche?” and inevitably produces the same answer given in this segment of the production, “Ich weiss es nicht.” Appearance tells us nothing despite the significance society continues to ascribe it. One never really knows who anyone is just by looking at them, by judging their external appearance, whether in theater or in everyday life and it is here that the performance brings the two together. This makes everyday life a form of theater and theater a form of everyday life, or again, both life and theater a performance. The distinction between the two is difficult to discern, if one can even consider a distinction at all.

Resembling both Wagner’s and Adorno’s assessments of the question “Who or what is German?,” in that it remains flexible and open to interpretation and that is calls into question dichotomies and perspectives, the question of who or what is a good person in HbsH is unanswerable outside of any given context and is constantly shifting through active performances that neither negate nor confirm what is believed to be good at a certain time in a certain place or scenario. This is of course because what is good, as cultural studies scholar and sociomusicologist Simon Frith has pointed out in relation to music, is both a question of aesthetics and ethics (“Music and Everyday” 46). When a person perceives aesthetics as good, this is often the result of the way in which s/he has been culturally conditioned and equally a result of the aesthetics to which s/he has been exposed. Similarly, ethics rendered good are socially conditioned and often structured through a religious lens. Both of these discursive contexts that are connected to value judgements influence what is determined by a person to be good. This also means that that which is perceived as good is constructed ex post facto, just as

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159 Simon Frith has referred to “[t]he shifting boundary between the “staged” and the everyday” in music and here, it is witnessed on stage (Performing Rites 204).
that which is perceived of as German also is, as witnessed in Adorno’s answer to the question of what is German. Social and cultural conditioning shaped by discourse produce the constructions of both what is considered good and what is considered German. It also shapes what is considered as *Heimat*.

**Voice, Speech, and (Mis)Recognition: In Search of *Heimat***

“Heimat, was auch immer das heißt.” This is one of many lines uttered by a white German woman who doubts her understanding of her own self-identity as well as her conceptualization of the word *Heimat* in *HbsH*. Fraught with tension and steeped in history, *Heimat* is constantly in flux and continually questioning and shifting its own positioning (often also internal) (Riedl 8), much like identity. Nonetheless, it still manages to find points of material fixity, for example, in home spaces (private places, such as apartments or public places, such as parks, etc.) or in language, despite the fact that the construction of language itself is not a constant and continues to be modified through ongoing external, as well as internal, influences. *Heimat* is—if at all definable, contradictory and ambivalent; it is both becoming and non-existent in its becoming; it is personal and political, private and public, protective and destructive, geographically grounded and yet simultaneously a non-space/place. In this case, it is also shown to be bitter and sweet, painful and comforting, and dangerous and laughable/seemingly innocent.

As visibly non-white, Afro/Black German subjects are denied entry into the German national space and German national belonging. African Studies scholar Susan Arndt exposes whiteness as the constitutive hegemonic (“diskursiv und strukturell”) factor “des ‘Hauses Europa’” (25). Narrowing her focus in on Germany, she writes “Mit Blick auf Deutschland zeigt sich dies exemplarisch: Der biologisch begründete ‘Volkstum-Begriff’ (ius sanguinis), der sich
über Kriterien wie ‘Abstammung’ oder ‘Blutsverwandtschaft’ konstituiert, bewegt sich im Rahmen der diskursiv und strukturell präsenten Nähe von Deutschsein und Weißsein” (25). The perpetual reconstitution of Germanness as whiteness is best witnessed in the exclusion of Black Germans that is produced through the white German’s denial of their identity via the questions examined already in chapter one: *Wo kommst du her? Woher kannst du so gut Deutsch?* and *Wann gehst du zurück in deine Heimat?* It is precisely these questions and interactions that are staged in the first chapter of the production, *Heimat 1. Versuch*. As a result, the first attempt to ‘come home’ in Milagro’s traveller’s tale is inevitably denied, as implied in the chapter title’s employment of “first attempt.”

While seated on the park bench, the young Black German girl is joined by an older *Oma* (the role is written as such in the script and the word carries a somewhat negative connotation in German and literally means old lady/grandma) who addresses her in English (with a very thick accent) to ask if the seat next to her is free. The young girl nods in response and while reading, her telephone rings and she answers. Her speech is performed through utterances and responses to the unheard person on the other side of the telephone connection in Bavarian German and later, upon hanging up, is evaluated by the white German woman as “hervorragend.” The old lady, assuming that the girl is foreign and confused by the young girl’s puzzled reaction to her compliment, explains her assessment further, “Deutsch ist eine wirklich schwere Sprache. Die Fälle. Die Endungen. Aber bei Ihnen stimmt einfach alles. Sie machen keinen einzigen Fehler.” She then retorts that the old woman does not make mistakes either, which results in the old woman laughing and explaining that she is German. To which the young girl then replies, “Ich

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160 This also brings to mind Chantal Fleur-Sandjon’s poem “Heimatlos [Versuch 984]” in its articulation of multiple attempts to construct and establish a mental state and a physical space of *Heimat* that was discussed in section two.  
161 This linguistic device is likely used to show the generational discrepancy between the old white lady and the young Afro-German and also likely positions her as having grown up during the era of National Socialism and the Third Reich.
“Ach was?” The old white lady then proceeds to question the young girl as to whether her parents are from Africa, phrasing the question more as a statement than an interrogative and upon the girl’s non-response, expresses that she must be adopted (14:02-17:02).

Figure 3.1 A scene from “Yesterday on the Park Bench.”

It is ironic that the old lady first does not register that the young girl was speaking a regional dialect while on the phone—something most non-native speakers are unlikely to be able to perform. This means that she only partially was heard and understood by the woman, and not just once, but multiple times thereafter in the subsequent questioning and probing of her identity and parental lineage. Such acts can be read as what I would like to refer to—in order to emphasize the constructed nature of these performances as they are tied to discourse—as colonial performatives of everyday racism. This term is founded upon Kilomba’s explication of everyday racism as, “the restaging of the colonial past, but also as a traumatic reality, which has been neglected. It is a violent shock that suddenly places the Black subject in a colonial scene” (13). These performatives remain a part of what comprises the German imperialist imagination that persists in today’s Federal Republic and that still equates Germanness with whiteness.

(Friedrichsmeyer, et. al. 5-7, 18-25), while also constructing imaginary knowledge of Africa and Africans or their descendents. Blackness is still imagined as that which is to be located only outside of the boundaries of the German nation, while at the very same time, the German nation constitutes its identity through that which it is not and cannot be considered to be.

The performative of listening or rather not listening in this case, is an act that refuses the Black German speaker a voice, even if he or she is actually speaking, and enacts a colonization of the German language from a privileged position of whiteness. It excludes the Black German speaker from inhabiting the space of the German language or commanding the language—*beherrschen* or to command a language in German contains the word *herrschen*, which means to rule, thus, carrying the connotation of dominating someone or something. In fact, the opposite happens in which the white ruler determines who can maintain control over and possess the language and the space/s of that language as *Heimat*. In following this line of argumentation, we can turn to Grada Kilomba’s monograph *Plantation Memories* that presents us with the visual presence of this revoked voice and the inability to be heard. In the well-known image of Escrava Anastacia, the colonized subject’s mouth is covered via a mask that prevents her from speaking. In the context of everyday life as an Afro-/Black German, the speaker’s mouth may not be bound, but the words coming out of it still remain unheard. Thus, today, in the postcolonial context, the colonized can and do speak, but are not fully heard.\(^{163}\)

Gyatri Spivak first posed the question “Can the subaltern speak?” in her seminal postcolonial text of the same name (78). Reading the subaltern through Gramsci’s class-based conception thereof, but also through an intersectional lens in the context of India (eg. the overlapping categories of working class, black, female), Spivak ponders the possibility of the subaltern to have agency and a voice in the multiple colonized positions from which she may or

\(^{163}\) See Spivak’s essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” and Kilomba (21-23)
may not be able to speak and, particularly, questions if this is possible in the discourse that is produced by theoretical scholars about her (90). Her conclusion at the end of the essay is that “the subaltern cannot speak” (104). J. Maggio, in his interpretation of Spivak’s essay, rightly asserts that hearing and speaking go hand in hand, as speaking is dependent upon a listener to whom one communicates. He, thus, re-articulates Spivak’s question noting that the subaltern can indeed speak and asking instead, “Can the Subaltern be Heard?” This allows for the agency of the subaltern, but her disavowal from the hegemonic positioning of the listener.

Elaborating further on Spivak’s question in the German context, Hito Steyerl and Encarnacion Gutierrez Rodriguez pose the question, “Spricht die Subalterne Deutsch?,” while Nikita Dhawan purports that “migrants in the postcolonial German-speaking context can be understood to be subalterns, who cannot be heard by the hegemonic dominant culture” (“Can the Subaltern Speak German?”). In the context of everyday life as an Afro-/Black German, the speaker’s mouth may not be bound (s/he can actively resist through language), but the words coming out of it, nevertheless, often remain unheard by the white German who does not listen or only listens selectively. As such the white German subject orders things and people in the way s/he sees fit in a performative act that revokes the voice of the Black German speaker, through an act of masking or shrouding their Germanness in Blackness to the point of its disappearance, thus, re-silencing the Black subject and throwing her back into a colonial context. This recreates the hegemonic power positions as they were during colonialism, albeit in a distinctive way.\(^{164}\)

Although, as Andreas Huber so rightly states, Heimat “soll immer das sein, was sich ein eventueller Ansprechpartner in einer bestimmten Situation, bzw. in einem bestimmten Lebenskontext darunter vostellt” (58), in other words it should be that which they can imagine or

\(^{164}\) Kilomba writes, “the unequal power relations of ‘race’ are then rearticulated in the unequal power relations between spaces.” (33).
believe it to be, this is not the case for Afro-Germans. Their understandings of their *Heimat/en* are denied and nullified through everyday colonialist performatives enacted by white Germans that refuse to hear and thus deny acknowledgment of their identity. Have we really reached the postcolonial *stage*, then, or is the colonial continually coming back to haunt in the racist present?

In regards to her analysis of hate speech and its ability to perform social domination—through which the subject becomes interpellated in the performative act of language—Judith Butler renders hate speech as an act in which the subordination of people is made possible through an articulated verbal statement (*Excitable Speech* 18). Following the work of Mari Matsuda, Butler states, “hate speech is understood not only to act upon its listener (a perlocutionary scene), but to contribute to the social constitutions of the one addressed (and, hence, to become part of a process of social interpellation)” (*Excitable Speech* 18). Butler’s *Excitable Speech* draws on J.L. Austin’s work *How To Do Things With Words*, particularly his theorization of illocutionary acts and his assessment of the performative enactment of language that actually produces that which it articulates through speech in the speech act itself. Austin refers to this more succinctly as the “performance of an act in saying something” (98). Intent, as Austin makes clear, is an important aspect of any speech act (99). The performative enactment of speech though, according to Austin, does not always express the intent of the person uttering it. This means—in the context presented here—that speech acts can be perceived as innocent by the speaker, even if enacting and performing hate speech.

One blatant instance of hate speech is performed in this scene when the old lady questions the young Black German girl about her origins. She states:

> Und wissen Sie, ich habe Sie gesehen und habe mir sofort gedacht: die ist doch nicht reinrassig Deutsch! Da steckt doch noch irgendetwas anderes mit drin.
Fragen Sie mich nicht warum, aber das war einfach meine Intuition als ich Sie
gesehen habe. Und wissen Sie, es ist auch so: wenn man jung ist, na da ruft einen
natürlich die große weite Welt, aber Heimat bleibt doch immer Heimat, und egal
wie schön es woanders ist, irgendwann bekommt man eben doch wieder
Sehnsucht nach Zuhause. Das wird Ihnen ja sicherlich mit Afrika genauso gehen.

Ihre Eltern sind doch aus Afrika, oder? (17:55-18-36)

In referring to the young Black German girl as “nicht reinrassig Deutsch,” she returns to the Blut
and Boden conceptualization of German Heimat that excludes anyone of Color from belonging.
The word reinrassig is originally a zoological concept that refers to purely bred animals.
Employed within the human context the term was used during the Third Reich and literally
translates as the purity of the white Aryan race that was imagined as constituting the white
German nation. The racial propaganda tied to the term and the subsequent biopolitical war
machine was used to expel and exterminate all who did not fit this category and were perceived
as others, including Jews, the Roma and Sinti, and any person of mixed-race or a so-called
inferior race.

It is through the repetition of these questions and statements that they obtain validity over
time. Their power is in the performative moment, but one that asserts a colonial positioning
identifiable in the past in the context of German colonialism and miscegenation decrees, as well
as is the context of German National Socialism that built on colonialism’s existing racial
paradigms. As such, the young Black German girl is expelled from Germany by the verbal
comments, again thrown back to a time and place that is not hers. Despite the claimed innocence
behind these statements, their historicity is revealed in the theatrical production’s framing of
Vergangenheitsbewältigung in relation to both colonialism and National Socialism. Furthermore,
the Black German becomes interpellated as a non-German subject, her positioning constructed through this social interaction that places her outside of the German *Heimat* container.\footnote{Doris Bachman-Medick refers to the German *Heimat* as a container-like object that has an originary model as its base. In the context of Afro-German conceptualizations thereof, her model does not hold. For more on this see her monograph *Cultural Turns*, particularly pages 292, 295, and 298.}

Even if these questions posed by the old white lady in this scene on the park bench are intended to be innocent and “gut gemeint” (wer oder was ist ein guter Mensch?), they, nevertheless, demonstrate the violence of these “good” intentions. The imposing questions and statements re-draw the boundaries of a German national and racial *Heimat* concept, while at the same time transgressing and intruding upon the personal space of *Heimat* that is inhabited by the Black German subject. As such, language functions as a means of positioning people and can indeed be exclusionary in the process;\footnote{May Ayim’s poetry also often places language and the violent nature of it at its center. See her poetry volumes *Blues in Schwarz Weiss* and *Nachtgesang*.} but language itself does not function alone.

In accordance with this positioning of people through language, Butler argues that Althusser’s work on the interpellation of the subject is that which structures Austin’s analysis. Interpellation, as Althusser perceives it, is determined by hegemonic structures and dominant ideology that constitute subjects. The person in the dominant position interpellates the subject, subjugating her/him (162-165), meaning that the subject is always already being shaped and formed by discourses and social constructs that act upon her/him. Such interpellation is witnessed in the excerpt above, in which the white German performs a speech act that subordinates the Black German denying her German identity. Despite this hegemonic displacement of the Black German subject, Butler maintains that subversive opportunities exist, which can inhibit the site of enunciation of hate speech (*Excitable Speech* 20). It is these opportunities that also present themselves in *HbsH* and in this scene to which I now turn.
Subversive Heimat Performances

Subversive opportunities are taken up in this scene by the Black German girl in order to articulate her Heimat as rooted in both Germany and the German language. As Butler explains, “to be addressed injuriously is not only to be open to an unknown future, but also to not know the time and place of injury, and to suffer the disorientation of one’s situation as the effect of such speech” (Excitable Speech 3). Precisely this context is presented in the scene on the park bench in which the young black girl asks the old white lady what time it is, “Schuldigung, wissen Sie eigentlich wie spät es ist?” (18:38-18:43). Although this follows Butler’s logic of disorientation, I argue that there is irony in this statement made by the young girl, as she appears to know exactly what time it is, in her reference to the train schedule that follows, “Also eigentlich sollte der Zug um kurz nach halb hier sein, jetzt ist es viertel vor zwei. Aber so ist es mit der S-bahn, mal kommt der Zug, mal kommt er eben nicht” (19:00-19:11). In a return to the no time of diaspora in which the S-bahn sometimes arrives and at other times does not, the girl’s action returns us to Campt’s theorizations of black feminist futures and the practice of fugitivity. Here, the fugitive aspect is the ability to escape the questioner’s power, by returning the power to the young black girl through her own questioning that subversively removes her from the white lady’s dominant hold.

The questioning of what time it is along with her facial expressions of realization and her

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167 This scene can also be read in relation to Culler’s theorization of language, identity, and signs that references Saussure. In Literary Theory, Culler refers to Saussure’s analogy of the timetable for the London train system as the framework for which a particular train achieves its identity in relation to the others (the train comes at a certain time or arrives early/late, nevertheless, it depends upon the system) (77-78). While Culler explains that the relation of signed to signified is arbitrary and relies “on convention not natural semblance” (78) in the case of the signifier Afro-German (containing the word German), the German signifier seems unable to be understood by the white German in this context as referring to a German based solely on that person’s semblance. It is precisely this discourse that reveals the absurdity of the denial of Afro-German identity through the convention of racism. Beyond this, the delay of the train can also be read in the context of the German nation as late/verspätet, thus, tied to the production of a racial definition of Germanness.
knowledge that the woman has ignored her comments/refused to hear to her in regards to the fact that she is German also suggest an intentional questioning of the time, in order to distract the woman from her perpetual questions and to demonstrate the white woman’s own preoccupation with herself. In an ironic turn, the young girl’s questioning results in the old white lady’s disorientation, as witnessed in her expressions. The young Black girl then returns knowingly to the previous conversation, “Entschuldigung, haben Sie mich eben was gefragt?” To which the old white lady responds, “Ja, ja, die ganze Zeit versuche ich Sie etwas zu fragen! Ich wollte Näheres über ihre Herkunft erfahren, denn ich interessiere mich nämlich für fremde Kulturen. Aber Sie scheinen nicht zu hören, was Sie nicht hören wollen.” The young Black German girl then responds with an ironic tone in her voice, “Ach, das kenne ich, wenn die Leute einem nicht richtig zuhören” (19:35-19:55). When the young girl asks the old lady to repeat her question to her after this comment, the old lady is flustered and claims to have forgotten the question (in her performance, it appears to be knowingly so); the old lady then decides that it is late and she must be hastily getting on her way.

As evidenced in this close analysis, the question and comments made by the young Black German girl demonstrate her ability to navigate the gaps of hate speech and find modes of resistance that halt the hate speech and demand recognition.168 The act of hate speech can ‘place’

168 Fraser asserts in her publication “Heterosexism, Misrecognition, and Capitalism: A Response to Judith Butler” that her conception of being misrecognized is: “to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a peer in social life—not a consequence of distributive inequity (such as failing to receive one’s fair share of resources of ‘primary goods’), but rather as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of interpretation and evaluation that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem.” This lack of respect is thus viewed as an impediment to parity of participation. Fraser elaborates her definition in “Why Overcoming Prejudice is not Enough: A Rejoinder to Richard Rorty,” wherein she suggests a reinterpretation of recognition as that of equal “status” (also witnessed in the above quote). Whereas most scholars have misread Fraser and either conflated her concept of recognition with identity politics or taken her stance as one that reads recognition as less important than redistribution (Butler, “Merely Cultural” 39), Fraser makes neither of these claims. She does, however, in accordance with Rorty, view identity politics as potentially dangerous since it distracts from the actual source of injustice, thereby functioning as an act of displacement (23). Moreover, she deems a change at the structural level as necessary to achieve transformation in the “cultural patterns that subordinate people” (24).
a person, but it can also displace him/her as Butler asserts, “[e]xposed at the moment of such a shattering is precisely the volatility of one’s ‘place’ within the community of speakers; one can be ‘put in one’s place’ by such speech, but such a place may be no place” (Excitable Speech 4). This is the ambivalence of hate speech and also the ambivalence of the lives of Black Germans who are considered a contradiction in their existence and who are often placed by an external agent into a place of non-existence for them. Resultingly, they are presented with a quite literally imagined Heimat, to which they do not belong, or at least only partially belong, depending on each individual’s own interpretation and understanding of his/her Heimat.

This forced displacement and the resulting exile produces the necessity to reconfigure both concepts (Heimat and identity) as determined from within (internally) rather than from without (by others), as having meaning beyond the homeland or nation, and as produced through the recognition of difference and not by this difference. Consequently, Heimat and identity as they are negotiated in the context of Milagro’s stage production come to emphasize a shared German history among all Germans and become something more than those elements that so many white Germans reduce them to in their interactions with Black Germans and other People of Color in Germany, e.g. race; blood; Volk; soil; and nation. The task becomes how to break through these hegemonic structures and reformulate Heimat in a non-essentialized, non-exclusionary way and parody is the means through which to achieve it.

Parodying Origin through Music: Schlager and National Representation

While often viewed as a visual spectacle, the theater is just as significant in regards to the auditory nature of its performances. Sound and music tend to allow the viewer to interpret visual images and spaces as they are presented from a different perspective, thus, calling into question
the meaning conveyed through images and visual perception alone. From the very beginning of Milagro’s production, the importance of sound and listening is emphasized (already demonstrated in the first analysis). Beyond this, the focus is on orality, as well as the written narrative and how the two might differ in transmission and dissemination. As the opening narrator of HbsH, who enters in his pajamas carrying a fairy tale book, states:

Wir werden heute Abend eine Geschichte erzählen, eine Geschichte in fünf Kapiteln. Nichts an dieser Geschichte ist erfunden und nichts ist genauso passiert. Denn die Geschichte verändert sich, je nach dem, wer sie erzählt und je nachdem wer sie hört und es gibt nicht zwei Menschen auf dieser Welt, die ein und dieselbe Geschichte gleich hören oder gleich erzählen würden. Darum handelt es sich auch nicht nur um eine einzige Geschichte, sondern um die Geschichten jeder und jedes einzelnen, der sie hört und der sie erzählt und der sie weitererzählt und dem sie weiter erzählt werden. (10:17-11:00)

While emphasizing the authority and power of the person narrating the story and the re-telling of the story to others based on their own version of what they heard (orality), the introduction also implies that the positionings of those onstage and in the audience vary and that this will inherently impact upon the way in which the piece is understood and interpreted. Can the Black German come to be heard in the telling of his/her story, and if so how might the story of Heimat or Heimaten as narrated by Afro-Germans ‘sound’?

HbsH parodies the notion of an original white German identity and Heimat, by revealing cultural practices that are repeatedly employed to construct a (phony) original that is always already a copy (Butler, Gender Trouble 43). To quote Frau Schmitz in the play, (who speaks here in regards to love), “oft ist es sogar nahezu unmöglich die Fälschung vom Original zu
underscheiden” (1:35:00-135:05). While almost the entire production functions as a parody, the parodies of an origin of whiteness tied to German Heimat and identity are examined here using two specific musical examples drawn from the play that involve German Schlager (and the mentioning of a few others applicable to my reading of these samples); they are the charity gala and one of the three Standortbestimmungen und Hymne— the integrated and individualized performances that are incorporated into the middle three acts.\textsuperscript{169} Such an analysis aids in answering that question which Butler and Spivak pose, of “who sings the nation-state?, \textsuperscript{170} especially, if read in connection to anthems. Here, the Hymne have been denationalized and alternatively personalized, but perhaps in posing the question differently, one can ask whether or not it is the nation that is actually being sung or something altogether different, particularly when an anthem—national or otherwise— is sung by a minority group seeking representation. For in the reconfiguration of the concept of an anthem, for whom and to what end it is sung? And, yet again, who is listening or heard when singing the nation?\textsuperscript{171}

Music, just like culture, is never created in isolation and is not produced without external influences as it transcends geographical boundaries and can register on multiple levels, not just at the level of language. It can also be parodied and re-appropriated. Since national music genres have become influential on global scales, the “true” origins of a particular genre become hard to pinpoint and may never be pinned down as a result of constant adaptation in the process of the

\textsuperscript{169} These were originally meant to alternate with each performance so that every member would have a chance to create a piece of the production and perform his/her identity on stage. As far as I am aware, only Dela Dabalumanzi, Moses Leo, and Leander Graf have created and staged these pieces. In the performance at Papenburg, only Dabalumanzi and Graf performed, as Leo was not present.

\textsuperscript{170} See Butler and Spivak’s \textit{Who Sings the Nation-State?} The title of the text references Herder’s construction of the nation in Herder’s \textit{Von deutscher Art und Kunst} as he articulates the Volkslied (often sung by the people) as one of the main German cultural artforms and calls on the Germans to create their own form of drama within a German historical and cultural tradition of the time or Zeitgeist, rather than simply adapting the model of the Greek tradition (3, 51-54, 88). Herder’s conception of culture and history supported the idea of Germany as a \textit{Kulturnation}.

\textsuperscript{171} This question is clearly not only relevant in the German context, but also in the American context, where a young Mexican-American donned his ethnic clothing when singing the United States national anthem at a Spurs basketball game and was racially denigrated by members of the audience. The response of which was to bring him back to sing it again at the next game.
development of music—which resembles and reflects the process of cultural change. One can, nonetheless, follow certain points of their emergence and mark their changes over time.

Christoph Marek’s evaluation of German Schlager and American pop music is of particular interest when considering the global flows of music, but also the construction of national identities through music. Noteworthly is the cover of his book *Pop/Schlager: Eine Analyse der Entstehungsprozesse populärer Musik im US-amerikanischen und deutschsprachigen Raum*, published in 2006. It features an image of the African American performance artist Richie Havens juxtaposed to the white German performance artist Hansi Hinterseer. Already on the cover, the nations or in this case also language regions (as the text discusses both Austro-German and German-German *Schlager*), have been constructed in regards to race, although analysis of the racial construction of nation in this music does not play a significant role in the body of the text with the exception of a few comments in regards to the exoticization of foreign lands in *Schlager* music. Despite the attempt to inscribe these national contexts within racialized paradigms or racialized paradigms onto their national contexts, it is impossible to erase the overlap of the genres and the concomitance of the evolution of pop and *Schlager* music. To be more precise, the divisions along lines of race and genre are merely constituted as such and are, indeed, imaginary.

Along similar lines, pop music, as it developed into Schlager in the German context, has been interpreted as merely an imitation of the American version, as Marek elaborates in his work. “Deutsche Popmusik” he claims, “ist seit jeher stark vom Kopieren und der Imitation des angloamerikanischen Vorbildes geleitet” (3). However, *Schlager* are also the modern form of *Volkslieder*, have “Austrian roots in the popular arias of opera and operetta in the second half of the nineteenth century,” and their melodies have influence from so many genres that it is
impossible to list them all here (Simon 87). The elusiveness of origins in music is brought to light in Marek’s statement through his employment of the words copy and imitation and the boundaries between pop and Schlager become blurred, if not completely indeterminate. One cannot pinpoint a single origin, but instead, there appear to multiple points of origin, which produced the Schlagerlied.

Further assessment of the varied contexts from which this music arose is revealed in Marek’s analysis of the problematic historical placement of Germany and the German-speaking world. At first this region prevented nationalist aims in its Schlager music, but despite this maneuver, later saw them integrated into the (racialized and nationalized) body of texts. In relation to this phenomenon, Marek explains,

Während Pop in den USA und England aus diversen sozialen Problemlagen und Konstellationen langsam gewachsen ist, handelt es sich bei Pop in unserem Sprachraum um eine Kultur, die eine imitierte bzw. übernommene ist, gegen die sich die problematische Geschichte des deutschen Sprachraums stemmt. Anfangs wurde Pop hier als Bedrohung angesehen, später von den Jugendlichen in Kooperation mit der Kulturindustrie durchgesetzt und schließlich neuerdings mit deutschem bzw. österreichischem Nationalgefühl angereichert. Während die Popkultur in den USA und England immer eine inklusive, d.h. der Alltags- und Offizialkultur eingeschriebene war, ist Pop im deutschsprachigen Raum immer exklusiv und fremdorientiert. Sobald dieserorts versucht wird, Pop national zu erden, tappt man in die Falle des regressiven Nationalismus. (xii, my emphasis)

Thus, the differing socio-historical contexts from which music is produced created the need for alternative modes of national articulation in the German-speaking world. Nevertheless, racism
and exoticism pervade in Schlager texts as the ‘regressive nationalism’ at which Marek hints and that Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter have equally thematized (249).\(^\text{172}\) Beyond the nationalist context, “colonial fantasies” are equally prevalent in Schlager as Sunka Simon revealed in her analysis of orientalist images in the genre (102).\(^\text{173}\) Perhaps it is for this reason that Milagro chooses to integrate Schlager songs into her theatrical production, in order to break down the notion of origins by parodying the exclusionary and nationalist discourse in which the songs engage.

According to Mary Louise Pratt, “[w]hile subordinate peoples do not usually control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what gets absorbed into their own and what it gets used for” (36). She elaborates this idea introducing Oritz’s term of transculturation by which she assesses the process of adaptation of the dominant culture by those subordinated, as taking place within a contact zone (36). It is through parodic adaptation that a reversal of the symbolic pattern is achieved, a reversal that reveals the power inherent in that symbolic pattern (Butler, *Gender Trouble* xxviii). Despite the fact that *HbsH* takes up the challenge of shifting the representation of Africa and Black Germans from a white German/Eurocentric perspective to one from a Black German postcolonial and anti-racist perspective; the charity gala seems to serve as a particular turning point in the production. It occurs at the end of the third chapter entitled, “Gutmenschen” or do-gooders—yet another identity that is symbolically constructed and parodied herein.

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\(^{172}\) They claim, “Its musical components signify German *Heimat* and social context, and it is typically associated with nationalistic exclusion, ethnic national defensiveness, and regrettably romantic delusions about the natural and social environment. […]. Its long tradition posits it squarely within the German historical and cultural context.” They then mention the revival of the Schlager post-*Wende* from its early times in the Weimar period with reference to Jewish singers and groups such as the Comedian Harmonists, stating, “the ambiguously ironic undertones of this revival reveals a characteristic uncertainty and insecurity about the rediscovery of this tradition in postunification Germany […](249).

\(^{173}\) Simon’s article discusses the rise of Schlager party in the post-unification period and draws continuities between pre and post-war culture and the imaginaries they produce (87-89).
This scene of the chapter integrates at its beginning, a brief repetition of a musical bar from “Chicago,” as the showgirls taunt the host, Johannes B. Buckman—his name is a reference to Johannes B. Kerner, a famous German talk-show host who has moderated numerous charity galas including the 2013 ZDF holiday season charity gala “Ein Herz für Kinder,” but could also be read as a reference to Johannesburg, South Africa and the Buckman company situated there. The name can also be interpreted as the buck man in the sense of making big bucks and money, since the charity gala is quite literally capitalizing on suffering (selling cds as part of a benefit with only a tiny portion going to the charity organization). The host’s name, thus, reflects the hybridity of this newly imagined community or space that is provided no exact location, although it is implied that it is in Africa as the show host states, “Während Afrika sich zur führenden Wirtschafts- und Industrie-Macht entwickelt hat, geht es mit den Europäern immer weiter Berg ab.” Shortly thereafter, an introduction to the context of the charity gala is presented; “Ja, wie Sie ja alle wissen, hat meine Sendung heute einen traurigen Hintergrund. Es geht mal wieder um—Europa” (1:06-39-1:06:42). First, Africa is presented as having a leading economic industry, and then, the host calls for aid for Europe as a result of climate change that has caused “Sturmfuten in Sachsen, verheerende Trocken – und Dürreperioden in Bayern, Hagel in Nordrhein-Westfalen” (1:06:54-1:07). Next, Buckman introduces the Schlager or hit song “Ein Indiojunge aus Peru” and the song is played with its refrain: “Ein Indiojunge aus Peru, Er will leben so wie du, Er will leben, doch die Türe bleiben zu für den Indiojunge aus Peru,” after which he clarifies what was heard, stating, “Tja-wunderschönes Lied, aber die Zeiten ändern sich. Heute braucht Europa uns!” (1:09:00-1:09:06) Buckman informs the guests that 1/2 cent for each purchased CD will help European children in need (“Spenden Sie meine Damen und Herren! Ein halber Cent pro verkaufter CD geht an europäischer Kindernot”) (1:09:43-1:09:49),
and finally, he introduces the new lyrics to the song as, “Ein weißer Junge aus Karlsruh” (109:52-1:09:54). He tells the audience to sing along while two of the showgirls approach the audience in a Brechtian breaking of the fourth wall in an attempt to gather monetary donations for the victims of these terrible natural disasters caused by global warming.\footnote{There are a number of Brechtian elements of the \textit{Verfremdungseffekt} that are present in the production. \textit{Verfremdungseffekt} (distancing effect) as a political tool is meant to break the identification of the viewer with the characters on stage and to reinforce the staged reality before the viewer. This, according to Brecht, was one of the fundamental aspects of his “epic theater,” which he contrasted to the Greek tradition. Brecht’s goal was to produce critical viewers who would be politically moved to consider the socio-historical circumstances being staged and their own actions as implicated therein. The first Brechtian aspect of the production is the introduction in which the story is framed within a frame, explaining that the story is not made up, but also not exactly occurring in the way it did in reality. The projection screens with the integrated video clips are also Brechtian. The songs, although not coming from a real chorus, could be considered Brechtian commentary. Finally, the breaking of the fourth wall, in which the characters remove the distance between the audience and the performers, so as to enable the audience to think critically rather than be carthartically involved, is another element and the one addressed here. For more on Brecht’s epic theater and \textit{Verfremdungseffekt}, see \textit{Kleines Organon für das Theater}, especially pages 25-27.}

The donations here function to justify the goodwill of the donors. Here the overlap between the global capitalist (neoliberal) system and exploitation and race is revealed.\footnote{In \textit{The Wrath of Capital: Neoliberalism and Climate Change Politics}, Adrian Parr addresses this intersectionality, explaining that, “capital organizes bodies into consistent subjects along the lines of class, race, gender, citizenship, or species” (110). Neoliberalism refers to the advanced forms of capitalism in today’s society and to the lessening of government restrictions to promote economic opportunity (Parr 16).} By buying a CD, you can feel better about yourself, but you also get something out of it for yourself.

To return to the definitions of who or what is a good person, in this case, the answer becomes both, “Das was anderen nutzt” and “Das, was mich selbst glücklich macht” (5:27-5:30), which are answers given in the beginning of the piece’s dialogic and polyphonic exchange of \textit{HbsH} to the question “Who or what is a good person?” Here, they allow the consumer to overlook the inherent malevolence of capitalism by highlighting the good sides of their deeds and suppressing the rest.

As Marek has put forth, some of the main stereotypes of a \textit{Schlagerlied} include “hungernde in Afrika und die Stellungen der Frauen” (40). Articulated as such, the \textit{Schlagerlied} reinforces dichotomies and patriarchal norms. While the stereotype of the starving African is
reversed in this staged parodic performance of Ebstein’s *Schlagerlied*, the positioning of women in patriarchal society remains intact through their sexualized dancing and their subservience to the man/host, demonstrated in the female performers’ actions.\(^{176}\) Thus, the parody in and of itself does not suffice in displacing the intersectional injustices at work in the construction and representation of imagined communities (as presented here, continents) through discursive practices in cultural productions, in particular in *Schlagerlieder*. Nevertheless, in breaking the fourth wall in this instance, the performers interpellate the audience in what is often considered under the rubric of white charity in Germany.\(^{177}\) Here, however, the role is reversed in that the donations are for Europeans and not Africans as is often depicted on billboards and through organizations in Germany that combat hunger, desire to build schools, etc. The song also serves to preserve essentialization in that Germany becomes representative of Europe. The natural disasters are said to be occurring in Germany, but the entire continent and its peoples are referred to here (Europeans).

Edmund T. Gordon and Mark Anderson have addressed this problematic standpoint. In drawing on the work of past scholars, they argue that “prominent theories of Black cultures and identities rely on forms of racial or cultural essentialism that collude with Western understandings of race, culture, and nationalism” (286). This, too, must be overcome in order to create an inclusive and hybridized *Heimat* that encapsulates elements of both the national and diasporic positioning, albeit from a non-essentialized and exclusionary standpoint that allows for individualization and subjectivity from all positions.

\(^{176}\) They are seen winking at him, giving each other dirty looks as they try to impress him, touching him as they hand over the microphone, etc. Only one of the female performers can be read as trying to break this stereotype as she attempts to sing a solo, rather than just be a background singer, which results in an angry Buckman.

\(^{177}\) The psychological need for whites to have a feeling of needing to give to black people to feel good about themselves as it is tied to charities and other organizations serving so-called “third world countries” in need. See also the documentary film entitled *White Charity*.  

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Since race and gender is inscribed through repetitive performances by individuals and also in cultural practices, Katja Ebstein’s Schlager being one example, the parody in this scene is employed to reveal the performed norm of whiteness as well as dominant gender roles. Its result is laughter from the audience upon hearing the new lyrics.

As Judith Butler claims in *Gender Trouble*,

The loss of the sense of “the normal,” [however,] can be its own occasion for laughter, especially when “the normal,” “the original” is revealed to be a copy, and an inevitably failed one, an ideal that no one *can* embody. In this sense, laughter emerges in the realization that all along the original was derived. (138-139)

Transformation is, thus, achieved through the parody of the German Schlager and German culture is transported and re-imagined/re-positioned within the context of the African diasporic homeland, representing Africa from a positive perspective. The role of “white charity” is also reversed and a questioning of the stereotypical perception of Africa and its inhabitants as a “third

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world country” in need of aid is achieved through an inversion of its discursive representation.

By parodying the Schlager, its new version emphasizes the significance of the original version in the construction of the “Other” and the other (its imitation). In this case, not just the Black German is recognized as being Othered, but any Person of Color (here, a Peruvian boy). This is an inclusionary move that demonstrates the similar experiences of exclusion shared by all POCs in Germany. It is through the exposure of whiteness as norm in the first version of the song that makes the black body invisible and unheard and in the new version that is capable of making the black body seen and heard in its upsetting of this norm, that parody is achieved. The parody further reveals the differences of perception when the original is countered from a postcolonial perspective, as whiteness becomes denaturalized and de-centered as the norm and the mediated structures of the colonial imagination are unveiled. Nevertheless, the binarisms produced in the original are reproduced in the parodied version (here/there, us/them, etc.). Thus, the questions arise as to how to move beyond these modes of thinking to envision an inclusive Heimat and in what creative and productive ways this can be achieved.

Parody, has been argued by Rosi Braidotti, to be capable of disrupting the power of various hegemonic and exclusionary structures of society. She argues in her theorization of nomadic subjects that what is:

politically effective in the politics of parody, or the political practice of “as if,” is not the mimetic impersonation or capacity for repetition of dominant poses, but rather the extent to which these practices open up in-between spaces where alternative forms of political subjectivity can be explored. In other words, it is not the parody per se that will kill the phallogocentric posture, but rather the power vacuum that parodic politics may be able to engender. (28-29)
Braidotti reasserts the potential in the politics of parody to enable a “power vacuum” in which change may be envisioned and from which transformation may result. And although a power vacuum is produced through parody in relation to race in this scene, the sexism inherent in patriarchal society and in Black Nationalist positionings of the diaspora is made visible, depicted through the actions of the showgirls and their subservience to the host of the show. This, too, must be overcome in order to create an inclusive Heimat. Similarly, the production of gender and gender binaries (that which often leads to sexism) as well as the constructed norm of heterosexuality must also be overturned. Therefore, I now turn to another example of parody that exposes the supposed original as a copy in relation to these performances of identity, as they are portrayed in the integrated Standortbestimmungen und Hymnen or sites of enunciation and anthems of the production. The word anthem is more familiar in the context of national anthems, not individualized and personalized ones, as they are presented in HbsH.

**Individual Modes of Narrating and Performing Heimat: Parodying the Collective Concept**

Another instance of musical parody occurs in Chapter 2, “Deutsch oder Nichtdeutsch,” the title of which is a parody of Hamlet’s famous words in the eponymously titled drama by a king of parody himself, William Shakespeare. Here the personal and individual aspects of Heimat and identity come into (the) play. While cultural identity and self-identity differ in some regards, they also maintain some commonalities. According to Stuart Hall, cultural identity is “[n]ot an essence but a positioning” (226); indeed, so is self-identity. In HbsH, room for individual expression of the self comes in the form of Standortbestimmungen und Hymnen, self-created pieces of the work by the individual actors in the performance that are then integrated at
particular interludes.\textsuperscript{179} They each vary in relation to the way in which they are told/sung and are similar to autobiographical narrative performances and narrations of the self.

Moses Leo, one of the performers in the ensemble, chose to take a highly poetic approach to \textit{Heimat} in his \textit{Standortbestimmungen und Hymne}—performing a monologue that presents the untimely murder of his father in South Africa, directly prior to a planned visit to see him for the first time. In the case of Dela (Gakpo) Dabalumanzi’s and Leander Graf’s \textit{Standortbestimmungen und Hymne}, stories of their childhood and family come to the fore and are narrated through different media and music. All of these sites of enunciation and hymns focus on particular questions of identity and hint at the ways in which each person identifies him/herself in relation to Germanness, the African diaspora, and global contexts, as they narrate, sing, and voice their own personal anthems of \textit{Heimat}.

These \textit{Standortbestimmungen und Hymne} also function to temporarily ground the individuals in the telling of their own stories and highlight the multiple levels of narration in the telling of a story and history of both a collective and an individual. The differing experiences of each person are taken into account and made visible through this element of the production. Accordingly, the multiple layers of narration or polyphony at play in the production in general, not only counter the white German attempt at creating monophony, but once again blur boundaries, particularly in this instance between fictional and autobiographical representation and narrative, and lived experience and performance; both of which cannot of course be understood as completely oppositional to one another. Autobiographies are always subjectively told, creating in many ways a fictional representation of the self or at most an incomplete or

\textsuperscript{179} The performers of the sites of enunciation and hymns are meant to change with each performance, but they remain in the same place in the sequence of the production, according to the \textit{Textbuch} script.
disjointed narrative of the self. Lived experience, memory and performance overlap in many areas as the self is always being performed differently in a range of contexts (a range of parody or imitation) in this form of self-narration. The all too often accepted distinction between these assumed opposites becomes markedly difficult to articulate or perhaps even overtly paradoxical (as witnessed in the title “bittersüß”) in Milagro’s production. Furthermore, every (hi)story is mediated through a medium, whether it is a person, a text, or an image.

Approaching both his own life story and history, Leander Graf integrates national and diasporic identity, focusing on competing collective/individual narration(s) in his *Standortbestimmung und Hymne*. In regards to national identity and the migrant identity in European history’s *narrational* context (what I deem a national and racial hegemonic narration, but what is clearly also gendered in the sense of who is included and excluded from this narration), cultural studies scholar, Fatima El-Tayeb has argued:

> National identity revolves around the production and institutionalization of a common past. [...] In Europe, migrants and their descendants are routinely denied access to this common history. At the same time, they live with the national past as much as the native population, while frequently simultaneously functioning as its Other. (El-Tayeb 4)

Consequently, Leander Graf comes to present his personal (hi)story by recalling childhood memories of being egged and talking about his uncle who believes in the *Judenlüge* (35:56-35:58; 33:58-34:00). In this way, he makes the landscape of German cultural memory his own and also contributes to the multidirectionality of German cultural memory that has left him and

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180 Ulric Neisser refers to this as “episodic memory,” comprised of that which is “recalled” and that which is “forgotten” (1).

other People of Color out of the doubly exposed picture of Heimat and memory. He also chooses to integrate the two most popular Schlager songs of Zarah Leander—who has also been known for her parody of Marlene Dietrich—, Ich weiß es wird einmal ein Wunder geschehen and Davon geht die Welt nicht unter (34:33-35:20; 36:16-37:09) from the film Die Grosse Liebe into his individualized piece of the ‘collective’ Heimat puzzle. These Schlager can be read here as volkstümliche Musik, blurring another boundary between folksy music and folk/Volk music and its creation of a national and regional image. Moreover, it is important to note that the folk song itself, is often an imitation or parody of other songs, as it commonly makes use of existing tunes or modifications thereof.

Again, returning to Marek, here, is helpful. He assesses the overlap in various musical genres explaining the more nuanced shifts that occur in musical forms, all of which borrow from those, which preceded them,

So waren der Gassenhauer, das Couplet, berühmte Operettenmelodien und auch Lieder mit volkstümlichen Anstrich das Musikalische Basismaterial, aus welchem sich der Schlager herausbildete. Es ist erwähnenswert, dass der Übergang zwischen diesen einzelnen musikalischen Gattungen fließend war, und keine genauen Grenzen zwischen den einzelnen Liedformen auszumachen waren. (95)

So it is, that one cannot speak of Schlager without acknowledging the volkstümliche elements from which it developed and the unclear borders that led to its development. This reflects the

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182 This is Rothberg’s term. See his monograph Multidirectional Memory in which he defines the multidirectionality of memory as “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive not privative” He also asserts that “th[e] interaction of different historical memories illustrates the productive, intercultural dynamic” (2).

183 Die Grosse Liebe is labeled as an example of the Nazi Heimatfrontfilm and was a very successful film (Lowry 89). Films classified under this genre were not overtly political propaganda, but, nevertheless, supported the war effort. Lowry also reads the film itself as “marked by ambivalence between escapist entertainment and a political message” (89). Additionally, he refers to the success of such films that embedded their “message into popular entertainment,” which is exactly what Schlagerlieder succeed in doing (89).
positioning and cultural border-crossings of Black Germans.

Employing Zarah Leander’s famous Schlager, Graf’s piece presents the layering of parody and imitation through song and through his own name: Zarah Leander/ Leander Graf, bridging supposed culturally and discursively constructed racial binaries, as well as sex/gender binaries with the overlap of his name Zarah Leander/Leander Graf. This ambivalence in narration is also reflected in the ambivalent presentation of the characters for which Zarah Leander has been cast in her performances, as Lutz Koepnick so accurately assesses in his chapter “En-Gendering Mass Culture: The Case of Zarah Leander.” He argues,

Not only did all of the most important female stars of the Third Reich—Zarah Leander, Marika Rökk, Lilian Harvey, and Kristina Söderbaum—enter the German culture industry from abroad; in the case of Leander and Harvey, they also deviated conspicuously from the politically desired typology of woman as the domestic soldier of racial reproduction; they projected onto the German screen cosmopolitan sensibilities and forms of sexual agency that infringed on the overall inhibition of visual pleasure so characteristic of Nazi cinema. (Koepnick 163)

As Koepnick points out, the very construction of women performers during the Third Reich as female stars was one of extreme ambivalence and Zarah Leander’s image was used as a screen on which to project certain sexual desires and fantasies, but also was subverting precisely these projections in her performances which often queered gender (165). This is similar to the situation in which Black German women have found and continue to find themselves as a screen for the projection of sexual desires and white male fantasies of colonizing the Black female body or eating the Other (hooks 22-24). Such projections (for example, an encounter in the disco of a
white man and a Black German woman) are actually shown as film clips integrated into the production via the projection screen. They break up individual scenes and serve as part of a doubly coded *Verfremdungseffekt* in the distancing that is created and inscribed onto the Black German’s gendered body and serve as a reminder that this is a performance (here, in the Brechtian political sense that should push the viewer to engage the production and its content critically). Black German women’s bodies, however, are not the only black bodies that have been sexualized and exoticized in Germany. Graf’s gendered and sexed body queered in the evocation of Zarah Leander’s songs also becomes one that is racialized over the course of his performance. As a result, he not only decolonizes and transgresses the space of National Socialist *Heimat* and the racialized body of the nation it represented, but he also facilitates the inclusion of both a queer body and the queer diaspora into *Heimat* constructs. One can read this queering of *Heimat* as exposing the ways in which “queer articulations of desire and pleasure both draw from and infiltrate popular culture” (Gopinath 266),\(^\text{184}\) as well as national culture. As Sunapreet Arshi, et al. argue, “in the transculturative moment they [the materials Black Germans select to appropriate] are seen to be re-appropriated, hybridized, and turned-back by the colonized” (234). Here, the viewer experiences this transcultural moment in *HbsH* via Graf’s site of enunciation and hymn.

Examining Graf’s Standortbestimmung beyond the queering of gender, Graf also connects his own personal identity to the atrocities of the Nazi racial and propaganda state through Zarah Leander. Her image quite literally became the representative face of German *Heimat* and identity under the NSDAP with the production of the film *Heimat* in 1938,\(^\text{185}\) even though she was

\(^{184}\) Gopinath’s theorization focuses on the queer diaspora in South Asia, but her framework for analysis supports my reading of Black German cultural productions as intervening in the discourse of the nation to reconfigure and queer the site of home. See “Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora: South Asian Sexualities in Motion.”

\(^{185}\) The film poster for the movie simply depicts the title of the film with Leander’s headshot appearing on it.
actually Swedish. Graf’s story diverges from Zarah Leander’s as a result of his skin, that although it can still place him in danger in Germany and marks him as an outsider to a constructed racial hierarchy that privileges the white body and excludes the Black body from belonging, still manages to protect him in other ways. He articulates his experiences of racism as a result of his skin color and the cultural associations tied to it, as preventing him from becoming a supporter of Nazi ideology that appears prevalent in his family, when discussing his uncle’s defense of Nuremberg. He states, “[d]as ware ein ziemlich braunes Schicksal für mich gewesen. Aber zum Glück habe ich meine Haut, die mich gerettet hat” (34:04-34:13). It is his biracial identity or “brown skin” that quite literally saves his own skin from the brown shirts (National Socialists) and enables him to preserve his own sense of Heimat despite its past “brown” appropriation.

Graf’s Standortbestimmung und Hymne, thus, approaches national history and the past, embedding and weaving it into his present and making it into “Die Geschichte des heutigen Abends” (as the scene in the prologue is titled), through two different meanings of the interpretation—the history and the story of this evening. By situating his life story within the context of German national history and memory, Graf is able to demonstrate his collective identity as a German, but also his contrasting diasporic positioning. These sites of enunciation and anthems reveal the “textured identities” of Black German subjects, which make it possible to maintain “plurality without fragmentation,” as Campt has argued (“Politics of Positionality” 117). The theater production itself represents this concept, as it consists of a mixture of genres from poetry, to video clips, to music, and individual and collective pieces that manage to construct and create the appearance of a unified whole—however open-ended and incomplete they may actually be—through their intertextuality. Graf’s individual piece reveals the “textured
parody” of a world of imitation, through his overlapping and interlacing of layers of parody of an identity and German Heimat—one that claims a restricted origin in whiteness, but instead is revealed as unstable, ambivalent, and contradictory.

**Inclusionary Heimat: Moving Beyond Parody and Imag(in)ing a New Community**

Just as Black German identity negates an exclusively white definition of the German nation and a singular Heimat to make room for Heimaten, Black/Afro-Germans also break down the borders of the nation to coalesce with the imagined community (Anderson) of the diaspora on stage. Heimat functions as a contact zone in which cultures are not static and identities change and shift as well as the history and stories produced therein. As Joachim Riedl asserts “Heimat ist demnach nicht, wo der Mensch herkommt, Heimat ist, wo er hin will“ (7). Where then does ‘the’ Black German want to go with this plural identity? To a reconfigured (non-)space of inclusion that is German Heimat. Signaled in the title of the production, the transition is one from a bitter tasting Heimat to a sweet one, a place and space in which Black German identity is no longer denied. Rather, it transcends the confines of the seemingly fixed nature of the concepts Heimat and identity from “white” German and African diasporic ethnocentric perspectives and the binaries that these oftentimes produce. As Butler asserts, there is no original (Gender Trouble 58). Everything is imitation—one achieved through performance. Parody reveals this imitation and the phony borders it seeks to establish. Parody also reveals difference through performance. Here the difference is the positioning of the Black German. By employing parody, the similarities and differences between white Germans and Black Germans’ conceptualizations and performances of Heimat/en become evident (in addition to the racist structures in Germany), but the binary division between black/white and German/non-German also is unveiled as a
performative through what Erika Fischer-Lichte dubs the “transformative power of performance.” Furthermore, while Black and white German conceptions of Heimat may and indeed do differ from one another, they also overlap and intersect through shared history, cultural memory, and language, among others, as HbsH demonstrates.

Milagro’s production, HbsH, can therefore be classified as what Pratt refers to as a pedagogical art of the contact zone in that it breaks down binaries and “parodies the structures of authority” (39) that have been normalized and produced through performed repetition in the dominant hegemonic culture, therein educating white members of the audience on the misrecognition of Black Germans, and empowering People of Color who are present to re-claim the space/s of German Heimat as their own. In the Standortbestimmung und Hymne, the first steps are taken to reconfigure Heimat in an inclusive way on the individual level. So how, then, does one move beyond a discourse of parody that only seems to recreate the binaries that one hopes to transcend on the collective level?

The second scene of the fourth chapter of HbsH entitled Widerstände introduces a collective appeal to the city ordinance to rename the Mohrenstrasse to Königin von Saba Straße or Saba Straße. The underground or subway station of Mohrenstrasse (which in real life is located in Berlin-Mitte and was renamed in 1991 following German reunification\(^{186}\)) serves as the place of continual return in the piece and the space in which people from various walks of life cross paths. It is a crossroads, a sort of urban topos that creates and produces, as well as performs, meaning. Heimat as tied to space and place is itself ambivalent, a site of both oppression/repression and a space from which resistance to hegemonic constructions can be produced. Jamika Ajalon has argued that “the ‘underground’ and/or the peripheral are locations that are simultaneously a site of repression and resistance” (128). That the underground station

\(^{186}\) For more on the history of this space, see Engler’s article “Renaming Streets.”
should serve as the site of much of the performance and as the space that can be reconstructed and re-signified comes, then, as no surprise. It is a space in which movement is constant and encounters with others are inevitable. It is also a site where time and space coincide, where the present is future-oriented and where a vision of a destination can be achieved (the *Wohin* of Reidel’s *Heimat* concept), but the destination itself is never final (*zwischen gestern und morgen*). Yet again, Ajalon’s theorization of the FAR resonates, as she claims that “the life of the nomad is a chosen lifestyle in which there is no ‘final destination’ […] However, even the ‘nomad’ will eventually need to find a temporary resting place—a Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ)” (129). The subway station, thus, serves as a TAZ in the context of the staged narrative.

Stations have often been interpreted as spaces without history, identity, or meaning as Auge has theorized (92). Yet Milagro reveals the falsity of this theory in the integration of the *Mohrenstraße* subway station. Here, she shows how this space is tied to the space around it and the people who use it, as well as how meaning is inscribed through naming, which in this case reveals the historicity of the space. The station is simultaneously a transitory space and a non-space, one that remains intact, despite those who are only passing through, but it is continually subject to historical occurrences and transformations.

The first transformative aspect of a reconfigured inclusive *Heimat* is particularly evident at the end of the fifth chapter of Milagro’s production, when the subway station is renamed and a sign is hung in place of the *Mohrenstrasse* sign. The re-naming of the space to *Königin-von-Saba*

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187 Although this is Auge’s term and he views non-spaces as ahistorical, I disagree. In particular, the site of the subway station in this production as well as the one in real life are examples of historically and culturally laden non-spaces, like the space of *Heimat*. Not only is the re-naming of the subway part of this historical space that re-covers the historical past and produces a new historical imaginary, but also, the architectural re-construction of this station has been highly debated since it was renovated after World War II, given the debate revolving around the marble that was used to re-build the station after the war. Many believe it came from Hitler’s nearby and destroyed *Reichspalast*. For more information on this, see Sven Felix Kellerhoff’s article in the *Berliner Morgenpost* entitled “Spuren der Steine.”

188 Appadurai refers to a similar space, developing his own term for this as well, what he coins a diasporic switching point (172).
Straße, or Queen of Sheba, an African Queen who is mentioned in the religious writings of Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, constructs an inclusive space of belonging that transcends white patriarchal norms and is furthermore open to a number of religions, not just one dominant one. This brings to mind the Enlightenment ideals of tolerance developed and promoted in Lessing’s play *Nathan der Weise*.

In the final chapter of the theater production, “Heimat, letzter Versuch,” a freeze frame in the form of one of the characters taking a photo functions as a documentation of this historical moment—that symbolizes both past and present. It preserves a positive representation of Black Germanness in and beyond the community portrayed on stage and symbolizes their belonging to the space of German *Heimat*. This is also a message conveyed to the audience members present.

![Image 3.3](http://www.labelnoir.net/bilder_heimat.html)

Figure 3.3 End of Chapter 5, “Heimat, letzter Versuch”

After this freeze frame, the actors begin to dance to the music of Miriam Makeba, also known as Mama Africa, a South African performance artist who is mythologized as the woman who sang South Africa out of Apartheid. Makeba was banned from her country and sent into exile, as a result of her political activism. Eventually though, she was able to return home. It is interesting that although the fatherland or father’s land for Afro-Germans is often found in

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189 Image accessed from Label Noir’s homepage: [http://www.labelnoir.net/bilder_heimat.html](http://www.labelnoir.net/bilder_heimat.html).
Africa, that a woman is chosen to represent the diaspora in this moment. Perhaps this is an attempt to re-write the Black Nationalist and patriarchal discourse on the African diaspora as one that is also influenced by women and therefore also an effort to further inclusion in this diasporic framework. It is also a move performed to include the white German mothers of Afro-Germans in their diasporic family, as many of the final images projected onto the screen in the slideshow to Makeba’s song are of friends and family members.

One other reason for the feminine representation of the diasporic homeland could be read as the connection to May Ayim, who has taken on a similar role for many Afro-/Black Germans to that which Makeba embodied for her South African people. Explicitly, Ayim’s activism within the Afro-German community, her role as one of its founding mothers, and her talent and success as a writer contributed to her recognition as one of the first major Afro-German cultural producers, serving as inspiration for those who have come after her, not least the author of *HbsH*, Label Noir’s own Milagro. The parallel of Ayim to Makeba is drawn through the final image that is projected on the screen following the personal, political, and artistic images chosen by the actors and actresses. The final movement of the performers is to stand guard around Ayim’s image. She is the Miriam Makeba of the Afro-German diaspora exiled within her own country and Makeba’s world music moves the Afro-Germans on the stage in an affective moment that heals the wounds inflicted by racism and exclusion in the German *Heimat*.

Parody in the production finds its end here. Although the song is presented in relation to German conceptions of *Heimat* rather than its initial or original one, it is not meant to be mocked or to displace any perceived “norm.” Instead, it opens up the meaning of *Heimat* to include diasporic notions of the concept. Following Plato, Rancière views choreography as a ‘good’ form

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190 The first international Black German literary prize was created in her honor and awarded to Olumide Popoola. See Piesche and Küppers’ *May Ayim Award.*
of art that discursively produces a sense of community that “sings and dances its own proper unity” (14). But choreography itself as Rancière points out is not free of its contradictions (18), another reason why it is applicable to the performance of a Heimat-like community for Afro-/Black Germans, who find themselves in a constant state of ambivalence in relation to their home/land. In the end, a place of healing and celebration has been formed. The performers are simultaneously themselves and the Other (the characters they have performed) on stage. They are ambivalent subjects that embrace the supposed contradictions within themselves, producing a calm energy, which moves across the stage in their performance of their diasporic/nomadic and individualized selves.

As Roland Barthes postulates in “The Grain of the Voice,” “[T]here is an imaginary in music whose function is to reassure, to constitute the subject hearing it […]” (250). Thus, the Black German becomes a subject that inhabits the space of Heimat in hearing the music and also does so through the politics of aesthetics that enable the Black German to be an individual in the collective unit, possessing his/her own “free movement” of the body (Rancière 18). The ability to express oneself in the form of individually variant choreography at the end of the piece, but still have a similar emotional response to the song is demonstrated in this culminating collective scene. Heimat is performed as a space of exile that is both individual and collective, painful and healing, bitter and sweet.

Such a transformation and performance creates a hybrid non-space (the subway) and place of belonging and recognition—that represents national, cultural, and diasporic identity to

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191 Rancière theorizes the politics of aesthetics (what he argues as always intermixing), defining aesthetics as “the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience” and politics as revolving around “what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time” (13, 62). The relationship between the two offers room for either “domination or emancipation” and can be achieved through “bodily positions and movements, functions of speech, [and] the parceling out of the visible and the invisible” (19).
German citizens and foreigners, as well as tourists who may travel in and through this space. The baggage brought back and unpacked consists of the experience, often exilic, of Afro-/Black Germans in Germany that reconfigures the space/s and tradition/s of Heimat. Heimat bittersüße Heimat is in many aspects, a bittersweet symphony that can be played on repeat in order to perform the inclusion of Black German identity in the narrational Heimat. Butler argues that parodic repetition, in its subversion, will displace “the norms that enable the repetition itself” (Gender Trouble 148), but displacing the norms is, in and of itself, insufficient. Transformation means acknowledgment of change and recognition means moving beyond parody to a form of representation that requires no Other and no dichotomy to express the self. As such, theater functions as a heterotopic site where recognition can be achieved and spatial boundaries—often established via binaries and differences—can be crossed through parody, performance, and choreography. Parody, through its repetition of sameness and difference in HbsH, becomes the initial means through which parity in regards to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and national belonging in Germany might therefore be imagined, performed, and enacted.

Consisting of an all Black German cast, Label Noir’s performance of Lara-Sophie Milagro’s theatrical production, Heimat, bittersüße Heimat, reclaims the public sphere onstage. In doing so, it performs a hybrid German identity in a nationally defined (white and homogenous) space (the theater and the geographic space of the nation), therein disrupting the nature of these spatial constructs and ascribing new meaning to them in the act of demanding the recognition of Afro-/Black Germans as citizens of the German nation and members of the imagined community of the German Heimat, thereby decolonizing existing and evolving space/s of Heimat. Milagro’s production functions as a countertheater to the ubiquitous staging(s) and performances of homogenous white German national identity in the cultural space of German
theater. The very act of taking the stage as a Black German is a political move to re-envision national identity in more inclusive terms, encouraging both recognition of Afro-/Black Germans in Germany and—to employ the use of deconstruction to language—a re-cognition process among white Germans as to who is included in German national identity and Heimat and in the realm of German national culture, by making Afro- and Black Germans visible, vocal, and audible in a site where they often go unseen and unheard.

192 In Black Bodies, White Gazes, George Yancy uses this term to refer to Black resistance as “an affirmation that carries with it an ontological repositioning of the being of black embodiment as a significant site of discursive (and material) self-possession” (112).
SECTION FOUR

Imagining Heimat/en through the Hip-Hop of Samy Deluxe

Hip-Hop Performed as an Imagined German Community: German National and African Diasporic Crossroads

This section begins to some extent, where the previous section ended, with an emphasis on music. Specifically, the visual representation and lyrical content of Afro-German hip-hopper Samy Deluxe’s music as well as the accompanying album covers and music videos are at the center of this analysis. Discursively produced and historically structured sites of Heimat/en performed through hip-hop are addressed in this section, particularly with regard to their constitution from an Afro-German male positioning. First, however, I offer a brief overview of the performative aspects of hip-hop that shape these performances.

From its early stages, the hip-hop scene in Germany has been extremely heterogeneous, existing in multiple sites and in multiple forms, similar to hip-hop’s development elsewhere. In spite of hip-hop performers’ attempt to establish and perpetuate a single authentic narrative and visual representation of hip-hop’s origins through the employment of symbolic elements that perform a hip-hop life/style or in many cases represent the discursive construction of masculinity (dollar/monetary signs, big flashy cars, being surrounded by numerous attractive women) the donning of hip-hop garb (ball caps, baggy pants, bling etc.), and the utilization of certain speech/phrases, the instability of this narrative performance (Breger) is evinced in the ability to

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193 It is not my intention to recap the history of hip-hop in Germany as various other scholars have already documented this. For more information see among others Sascha Verlan’s 20 Jahre HipHop in Deutschland. 194 One could argue that these are actually elements that developed particularly with rap and that they do not represent the political aspect of hip-hop as it initially developed; the art of hip-hop was not meant to be co-opted by capitalism, given that it started on the streets in order to engender a counter-public sphere, even if it did later become a way out of the streets for many of its performers.
adopt and translate hip-hop’s performative origins across cultures and languages. In this act of translation, the copy that constitutes the original’s supposed essence is exposed (Ismaiel-Wendt, Stemmler 197).

Still, hip-hop constructs an imaginary form of belonging to what Samy Alim in his analysis of hip-hop language has called the “hip-hop nation.” This linguistic discourse also produces the narrative of its own development through the proliferation and dissemination of specific symbolic language as well as via its adaptation (“Street Conscious” 290-291). Today, this “hip-hop nation” would have to be perceived of as a transnational and multilingual entity—something that it has always been, but often has failed to acknowledge. In fact, Alim himself views the hip-hop nation as “global,” in addition to “transcultural, multilingual and multiracial” (“Changing the World”). While one might assume such a statement to be a contradiction—how can a “nation” be global?—, every constructed and imagined nation has come into existence through the process of globalization and continues to ambiguously exist, despite each imagined nation’s efforts to claim an essentialized and individualized version of itself by way of constructed and oftentimes performed notions of race and ethnicity, culture, and/or language. In reality, however, nations are much more porous than they are imagined to be, as detailed in section one.

Despite the permeability of nations by the global flows of music, hip-hop as an art form is one that on some levels is “culturally specific” as Alim points out (“Street Conscious” 290). This means that it is rooted in the culture(s) in which it is produced, even if it is transferrable and translatable. Just like the nation, hip-hop does bear distinct elements that connect it to a specific socio-cultural and political context. As such, the discursive production of the hip-hop nation

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195 While Alim is dealing specifically with hip-hop in the U.S. and African-American hip-hoppers, this statement is certainly applicable to any form of hip-hop within the heterogeneous hip-hop nation.
resembles that of the imagined construction of the cultural and linguistic nation and its members. Noteworthy is the overlap of identity markers and producers on different levels of the hip-hop nation and the culturally determined entities of what are today political nations or nation-states (e.g. rituals, costumes, and language, among others). As Gabriele Klein in her contribution to *Translating HipHop* explains:


In the process of its construction, then, hip-hop becomes essentialized, despite its diverse forms that have always existed and continue to evolve globally and locally. Nevertheless, what the
quote from Klein overlooks, but perhaps hints at in the end, is the fact that there are those hip-hop artists who do not fit this mold, who escape the confines of hip-hop’s essentialized image to focus on creating their own unique image as an artist. There are also those artists who utilize market tactics in their donning of hip-hop garb or in the advertising of their own brand name, while simultaneously seeking to set themselves apart from the masses. This means that there is no one-size-fits-all hip-hop attire, despite its attempts at a homogenizing narrative. Yet, this imaginary and constructed narrative of hip-hop—that in most cases is the most visible and widespread representation thereof—still maintains a linear trajectory of the art form based on a supposed origin that, while not actually existing, is constructed retroactively. In this way, the narrative of the imagined community of hip-hop erases the range of different cultural practices of hip-hop artists worldwide in the same manner in which national narratives—harkening back to tradition and myth—erase the existing diversity of the nation’s inhabitants, citizens, and culture(s).

This ‘canonical’ and origins-based invention of not only the hip-hop nation, but also the German nation and its inseparable, yet otherwise imagined Heimat are de- and re-constructed through performance in Samy Deluxe’s œuvre vis-à-vis his insertion of the performative self into both the diasporic hip-hop nation’s imagined narrative and the German nation’s contemporary and historical imaginary in the act of hip-hop. The “authenticity” constructed through mono-cultural origin narratives of hip-hop, the German nation, and the singularly conceived (white) German Heimat reveals the inability of these constructs to evade completely the discursive power structures that shape and produce their substantiating (narrative and national) boundaries, particularly in relation to aesthetics and race. Ironically, though, it is precisely the opposite of this purported authenticity that lends the hip-hop genre its global
appeal, as articulated in Ismaiel-Wendt and Diedrichsen’s response to the question, “Was macht die globale Anschlussfähigkeit von HipHop aus?” (197). They answer stating:

Diese Frage beantworten wir hier zugegebenermaßen tautologisch: Es ist der prinzipielle Modus des Übersetzens, der Wille zur Transformation, zur Zirkulation, zur variierenden Wiederholung, der Unglaube an ein Original, der im HipHop gestaltet wird und der ihn so anschlussfähig macht. (197)

Having identified the essentialism observed in the hip-hop nation’s origin narrative, in providing an answer to their posed question—one that they label as tautological, but one that also contradicts the aforementioned construction of the hip-hop nation—, the authors conclude that it is the very fact that hip-hop lacks an original that informs its universal appeal. This is most visible in the copy and transfer of text, music (sampling), adaptation, and re-/appropriation that is indicative of hip-hop. Ismaiel-Wendt and Diedrichsen go as far as arguing that hip-hop questions “die noch oft aufblitzenden fixen Ideen über Monokultur und Heimat” (197). Thus, although at times re-affirming an authentic hip-hop nation, the act or performance of hip-hop de-constructs and questions precisely the idea or notion of the authentic/original, even in the context of the German discourse on Heimat, which is often a hegemonic white German understanding thereof.¹⁹⁶ Both the hip-hop nation and the (German) nation are, thus, equally performative. With all of this in mind, hip-hop seems to be a logical site from which to question, re-define, and perform German Heimat anew and to remove the “stable ground“ from underneath a singular purported idea of Heimat to make way for multiple Heimat̲en.

Focusing on the hip-hop of Samy Deluxe, I trace three specific examples of the shifting performance of the overlapping communities of the German nation, German Heimat, and the African diaspora, particularly as presented in Samy Deluxe’s album cover images and in two

¹⁹⁶ Questions already addressed in section one and section two.
selected music videos. This section addresses both self-representation and the body as a site of *Heimat* performance or belonging through intersectional analysis, and it opens up new perspectives for interpreting the German nation as *Heimat* in a non-essentialized form. This new *Heimat* constellation is a combination of the German nation and African diaspora presented in what I refer to as an inclusive *BlackWhite* aesthetics that is derived from close textual analyses of Samy Deluxe’s cover albums, in addition to the songs and corresponding music videos “Dis wo ich herkomm” and “Poesie Album.”

**Shifting Positionings and Malleable Identity: The Man(l)y Identities of Samy Deluxe**

In this first part of this section, I concentrate on the interpretation of the cover images of three albums, beginning with Samy Deluxe’s second album *Verdammtnochma!* (2004), then moving to his fourth album *SchwarzWeiss* (2011), and ending with his most recent and sixth album *Männlich* (2014). By not only embedding these album covers both in the discourses, which they evoke and that have shaped the intersections of racial and gendered identity construction in and beyond Germany, but also drawing on enunciative acts from the lyrics of select songs on the albums, I analyze the ways in which Samy Deluxe establishes a sense of post-war diasporic Afro-German masculinity that situates and positions him in relation to *Heimat* constructions. Constructing his identities through his own performances, he also simultaneously exposes the superficiality of performative acts that assume an accessible racial, national, and gendered core. This construction of post-war Afro-German masculinity as a site of ambivalent *Heimat* is a discernible element present in his entire oeuvre, as will be made evident in the first music video’s analysis that later builds upon this very framework.

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197 It can be debated whether or not this is actually his sixth album, since the V in Deluxe could stand for five. In this case, the album released under Deluxe’s assumed alter ego, Herr Sorge, would not be considered as counting among Samy Deluxe’s albums.
Produced both in and through discourse, gender and race are performative acts. These acts also have the potential to be subversive, as already demonstrated in the application of Butler’s theory of performativity to the interpretation of Milagro’s *Heimat bittersüße Heimat* in section three. As such, these categories must be simultaneously viewed within the socio-historical and cultural contexts that have conditioned the very performances of identity, but also understood as consciously performed, malleable styles. To put it simply, as Stuart Hall has, “identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past” (225). To this, I also would add, the present.

In the 1970s, hip-hop began emerging in the U.S. and by the 1980s many of the U.S. military base locations in Germany were sites, although not the only ones, around which small enclaves developed for migrant communities in Germany to engage in the increasingly transnational culture of hip-hop. The transfer of American culture to West Germany through American cultural imports and the transnational flow of music and film (groups such as: the Sugarhill Gang and Grandmaster Flash and films such as: *Wild Style* and *Beat Street*)

(Verlan 88-89), paved the way for the emergence of hip-hop in Europe. Hip-hop has been perceived and stylized as a predominantly male genre, but this is not to say that female rappers have not and do not exist.

With specific reference to Germany, hip-hop is often interpreted through the hegemonic lens of history, and it is perceived as having developed as a mostly white art form. The most visible group in German hip-hop history is *Die Fantastischen Vier* (Verlan 44-46). This is in opposition to the dominant reading of hip-hop as an almost exclusively black cultural form in the U.S., to the extent that rappers like Eminem are seen as cultural exploiters and imitators. The reason that other parallel and even earlier emerging hip-hop cultures in Germany have been lost

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198 See “was es heißt, wenn man in söflingen auf hiphop steht.”
to the narration of German hip-hop is that many of the first generation of hip-hoppers in Germany, particularly those with migrant backgrounds, were initially rapping in English, Turkish, and other non-German languages (Odukoya, “Fill the Gap” 144). This poses of course the question: what constitutes German hip-hop, the language of its production (and here, I am specifically referring to rap music, which is just one element of the originally conceived of hip-hop culture that entails MCing, graffiti, breakdancing and rapping) or the space of production, or is it perhaps both? In addition to autobiography and spoken word poetry, which in some ways is generically similar, hip-hop has been one of the main outlets of Black German expression, particularly men, employed to question and critique German society and politics as well as quotidian forms of racism persisting in Germany today.

In the first section of this dissertation, I provided a brief historical background to the evolution of race, gender, and sexuality as tied to the German nation. It is the evolving and often overlapping discourses of “science,” philosophy, and history as well as the racial propaganda and colonialism they produced, which inextricably link the cultural paradigms of race, gender, and sexuality. Blackness, according to Michelle Wright, “cannot be 1) limited to a particular national, cultural, and linguistic border, or 2) produced in isolation from gender and sexuality” (5), and “one cannot divorce the Black Other and Black subject that follows from the specific historical, cultural, and even philosophical discourses through which s/he is interpellated” (Becoming Black 28). Along similar lines, Roy Jerome writes in Conceptions of Postwar German Masculinity, “an analysis of masculine identity must include an investigation of specific socio-historical events that have conditioned that identity” (4). Evolving over time in multiple and often contradictory or competing contexts, it is these discourses that must be continually re-considered during my analysis and interpretation of Samy Deluxe’s hip-hop.
In a 2011 article, Gender Studies scholar Fatima El-Tayeb describes Samy Deluxe’s performance as being sexist and “black machismo” (*Pride* 481). While I would agree with her estimation on some accounts, I maintain that his performance has the ability to change and that in recent years it has shifted to become, in some cases, but by no means all, more politically aware of his own hegemonic positionings in relation to gender and sexuality. With the release of his latest album, *Männlich*, Samy Deluxe questions societal constructions of masculinity, while at the same returning to certain hegemonic positionings that, for example, situate the female subject as a femme fatale. In addition to his continually changing self-performance, his range of musical style has constantly undergone change, from producing songs that resemble hardcore hip-hop to ones with reggae flair. This inability to be placed into one generic category, a fugitive aspect of his performative identity, is one among many reasons I consider Samy Deluxe’s work to merit closer attention.

Focusing on masculinity in the hip-hop of Samy Deluxe instead of gender performance in the cultural productions of Afro-German women affords an opportunity to engage with the persisting hegemonic power structures in the realm of compulsory heterosexuality, particularly as it pervades hip-hop culture and the production of masculinity therein, and it makes possible an engagement with the construction and performance of race through popular culture. It also facilitates a questioning of not only the ways in which, but also how and why, gender, nation, and race might be performed differently both by and for Afro-German men, without excusing sexist or misogynistic viewpoints.

The questions remaining, then, are: who is Samy Deluxe and why is he the focus of this

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199 “The blatant sexism of popular MCs like Samy de Luxe (sic) or Moses Pelham, who do see themselves as advocates of the black German community at large, is a betrayal of a tradition of Afro-German resistance” (El-Tayeb, *Pride* 481).
section? Born in Hamburg in 1977 to a Sudanese father and a white German mother, Samy Sorge, alias Dynamite Deluxe, Sam Semilia, Big Baus of the Nauf, Wickeda MC, Herr Sorge, and probably best known as Samy Deluxe, has been a mainstream musician since his 2001 debut album bearing his stage name *Samy Deluxe*. Already gaining in credibility in the 1990s through his attendance of jams Germany-wide, he is likely the German hip-hopper with the most accolades to-date. According to an issue of the American magazine *Billboard*, dating from December 2002—before some of his biggest albums had yet to be released—, “Samy Deluxe is undoubtedly one of Germany’s most successful hip-hop acts and one of the few boasting a gold album (150,000 units) and an Echo award” (Furnis 50). Additionally, he has been the recipient of other awards including the MTV Europe Music Award, the Echo Award, the Bravo Otto, and the Comet Award, to name but a few (Görg 399).

*SchwarzWeiss*—Samy Deluxe’s album from 2011—reached number one on the German charts, while his album *Verschwörungstheorien mit schönen Melodien* released in 2012 and marking a major transition in his past music to a sort of pessimistic apocalyptic mood under his assumed alter ego, Herr Sorge, only hit the top 50. The release of this album demonstrated yet another shifting of his performative identity and image to a figure that reminds one of a cross between the whimsical characters of Willy Wonka and the Mad Hatter, as recently played by Johnny Depp, albeit with a more rugged style. This shift in Samy Deluxe’s performative image and musical style is likely one reason for the limited market success that this album received. His most recently released album that debuted in 2014 under the title “Männlich” made it to the top five and presents yet another shift in his hip-hop identity, one that returns to a harder image of himself with regard to his performed gender identity in the cover image, but that actually questions precisely this construct or projection in the lyrics to the songs on the album.
Similar to the album cover for *SchwarzWeiss*, Männlich’s cover image represents the coinciding factors of race, masculinity, and gender in Germany, presenting Samy Deluxe’s face on one half of the image and a skeletal image of his skull from an x-ray on the other half of the image. Through the coinciding discourses of medicine and science, what Alexander Weheliye has referred to as racializing assemblages that continue to constitute black bodies, as well as the intersection of a performed hardcore masculinity presented in Samy Deluxe’s gaze on the cover image, the cover presents the hegemonic conditions through which the black male body is inscribed through both race and gender. Nevertheless, the lyrics of the songs on the album simultaneously undo the performance and reading of a violent and aggressive black masculinity that rather than exist as an internal reality is performed and/or inscribed upon the body. This is one way in which he questions the interpretation of black male bodies within the context of global hip-hop, but also a way in which he questions the discourse and production of race in the German national context.

Samy Deluxe’s economic success on the German market prove that his voice and musical self have undoubtedly arrived, at least at the top of the music charts as a circulated commodity, but the continued exclusion from German national identity and the reinforcement of his non-belonging that he faces at the level of the quotidian that is thematized in a number of his songs narrate a somewhat different story. Regardless of this commercial success, Samy Deluxe’s hip-hop productions have not yet served as the basis of much analysis in the scholarly realm, where

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200 See Weheliye’s *Habeus Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*.

201 The cover image evokes, among other historical references, the skulls of Nama and Herero—some of which were recently returned to Namibia—transported to the Charité Clinic in Berlin during German colonialism and upon which medical analyses were performed to produce and construct racial difference. See David Knight’s “‘There was Injustice’: Skulls of Colonial Victims Returned to Namibia.” The cover image can also be read in relation to other German racial discourses such as the German propaganda campaign initiated following the occupation of the German Rhineland by Black French troops that depicted those soldiers as aggressively dangerous and hypersexualized bodies.
the academic trend has been to focus attention on either cultural production in the German
capital by Berlin-based gangsta rappers, such as Bushido and B-Tight signed to the Aggro Berlin
Label\textsuperscript{202} or the overtly political group Brothers Keepers.\textsuperscript{203} Formed as a transnational anti-racism
project,\textsuperscript{204} the Brothers Keepers became most famous for their single \textit{Adriano, letzte Warnung},
which was written and performed in response to the murder of Adriano Alberto in Dessau in
2000. Supporting this anti-racism initiative, Samy Deluxe joined the Brothers Keepers in their
political performance of this song, and the making of its music video, as well as the educational
tour that followed.\textsuperscript{205} Additionally, Samy Deluxe also founded his own organization
CROSSOVER e.V. that is dedicated to opening up opportunities for disadvantaged children and
youth of diverse cultural backgrounds (Görg 389).

Given both the lack of scholarly engagement with Samy Deluxe’s work in the academic
setting and the multiple registers of discourse his oeuvre evokes in relation to the black male
body and its (non-)belonging in the German national context, I engage both his albums, their
lyrics, and some of his music videos that while undeniably inciting criticisms, also offer

\textsuperscript{202} The label no longer exists. Furthermore, these rappers received a great deal of attention from the German right
wing and Neo-Nazi scene, as a result of many of their often nationalistic and misogynistic lyrics. See Maria Stehle’s
2012 monograph, \textit{Ghetto Voices in Contemporary German Culture: Textscapes, Filmscapes, and Soundscapes},
specifically the chapter entitled “Ghetto Soundscapes.” While Stehle’s focus is on the ghetto voices, as the title
implies, she does offer a brief analysis of Samy Deluxe’s song “Dis wo ich herkomm” as a comparative point to
demonstrate how nationalism can be framed in a different way from the approach of the gangsta rappers she
evaluates. Still, she does not provide a close reading of the song and its music video, but rather a summation of its
thematic content and a few conclusions drawn from this. In addition to Stehle’s monograph, for more on Bushido
and Fler, and, in particular, the cooptation of hip-hop, see also Joshua Kwesi Aikins’ “Dossier HipHop Zwischen
Mainstream und Jugendprotest.”

\textsuperscript{203} See Fatima El-Tayeb and Mazon and Steingrover’s introduction.

\textsuperscript{204} The Brothers Keepers project is also interesting in that although the musicians are Afro-German, their focus is
not limited to Germany, but also incorporates the African diaspora. For more on the Brothers Keepers see Robinson
(7) and “Die Brothers Keepers Story” in the \textit{Black Book: Deutschlands Häutungen} (345-349) and Alexander
Weheliye’s contribution “Stranger in My Own Country, My Volk to Come: Peoplehood in Recent Diaspora
Discourse and Afro-German Popular Music” (161-179) in \textit{Black Europe and the African Diaspora} as well as
Tayeb’s “If You Can’t Pronounce My Name You Can Just Call Me Pride.”

\textsuperscript{205} See Weheliye’s contribution to Murray Forman’s \textit{That’s the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader} and Fatima El-
Tayeb’s article. This group will be discussed in more detail in the final section that examines a documentary based
on the lives of some of the members of the Brothers Keepers’ and Mamadee from the female version of the group,
Sisters Keepers.
provocative and productive standpoints from which to re-imagine contemporary Germany outside of or next to the historical conundrum in which it continually finds itself caught—the National Socialist, as well as the colonial past. Furthermore, I consider Samy Deluxe’s diverse musical repertoire and employment of various musical genres to be representative of the constant (re)positioning and (re)writing of the self (both as musician and as Afro-German). As he himself states,


(Samy Sorge, *Mensch und Marke* 387-388)

Not only have the topics that Samy Deluxe addresses and represents shifted radically throughout his oeuvre, but also, his ideas themselves could at times be considered radical, as my analyses demonstrate.

**Performing Black German Postwar Masculinity: What’s in a Cover?**

A quick glance at the covers of each of the albums shows Samy Deluxe’s re-fashionings of his performative body at the center of all of them. Conveying “the hip-hop body” as “an index of hipness,” cultural theorist Miles White states that it “is anything but static; it is dynamic and fluid, signifying meaning that functions within a broader socio-cultural context” (22). One must, therefore, pose the question of what cultural analysis can be drawn from the hip-hop body presented on Samy Deluxe’s album covers and what meaning it might signify.

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206 For instance, he has transitioned from more gritty in the beginning of his work to more mellow reggae and now to a more pop-like rap with his December 2012 album, defying generic categorization and convention.

207 One exception to all of his album covers might be the cover for the album *Samy Deluxe*. Although the cover does not present the physical representation of Samy Deluxe’s performative body, the metonymic substitution of the dollar sign stands in for Samy Deluxe and can be problematized in relation to commodity fetishism.
The first album cover that I examine is the cover of the second album entitled *Verdammtnochma!* This album cover pictures the hip-hopper donning a baggy leather sports jacket, a Boston Celtics cap, and wearing both a silver and a gold chain—the latter bearing the initials of his pseudonym SD, which is also the symbol for the San Diego Dodgers. The green vest he wears over the jacket is held in a firm grasp with his hands in fists and a gold ring on his left hand is thus made visible. His eyes cannot be seen, as the shadow of the ball cap is too dark to allow access to his gaze, so this part of him remains anonymous. His mouth is pursed in an almost aggressive fashion that demonstrates his hardcore manliness and makes the image seem more intense.

Beyond a presentation of his masculine hardness, on the left-hand side of the cover album image, the title of the album *Verdammtnochma!* is visible. On the right-hand side of the cover is a symbol that resembles the American dollar sign and appears to be constructed out of emeralds, spicing up the image with some non-traditional bling. The logo this dollar sign forms bears three of Samy Deluxe’s hip-hop personas and names, Sam Semilia, Samy Deluxe, and Wicked MC. This move already marks Samy Deluxe as performing a non-static identity or even simultaneously multiple and potentially contradicting identities.

The initial associations that this image evokes are not dissimilar to images of African American hip-hoppers at the time, who themselves donned such garb that was a visible marker of hip-hop style in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As White asserts in his reading of American hip-hop:

- the wearing of ostentatious jewelry, including expensive chains, earrings, and ‘grillz’ (full frontal dental overlays, often made of gold and encrusted with diamonds), tattoos,
- stylized athletic apparel or brand-name urban street wear, as well as the display of the
shirtless torso are ways that visually display masculine power and sexuality by privileging the objectified and spectacularized body. (25)

Not only is the image of the body on the cover of the album one of this objectified and reified masculine body meant to be consumed and meant to consume as a male, but it also ties into racial narratives of the consumption of the Other (367), as bell hooks has theorized in her subchapter of Black Looks, entitled Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance.

No doubt hip-hop is a musical form that is most often associated with the United States, but it, too, is consumed worldwide. The most visible and hegemonic reading of hip-hop, places it as an American product, oddly genuine in its replication of specific signs and symbols, and the employment of the codes, marking an authentic, but also essentialized image of hip-hop (24).

The donning of basketball gear for the cover photo for this album reminds the viewer that in Germany and in popular culture, as well as in the U.S., blackness is often equated to American Basketball players because it is as hip-hop scholar Todd Boyd mentions “one of the few cultural arenas [...] dominated by Black male participants” (106). He continues arguing that Basketball is “a sport where race has been normalized through performance, and class starts to assume a prominent position in articulating Black masculinity” (106). The same of course is true for the cultural arena of hip-hop as it evolved in the U.S. and was adapted to other cultural contexts. Although he grew up in a single-family household, class does not play a central role in Samy Deluxe’s performance of masculinity, at least not to the extent that it has in hip-hop in the United States. Nevertheless, the intersection of racial constructions in the U.S. and in Germany through the cultural arenas of hip-hop and basketball demonstrates the overlap in

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208 Class is neither at the center of his societal critique, nor is it something often thematized in his music, although it is addressed in his song “Musik um durch den Tag zu kommen” and in the music video to “Dis wo ich herkomm.” In contrast, racism is almost always thematized. This is because a person’s race usually trumps their class positioning in forms of discrimination. One example would be the inability to accept someone of Color as a member of the middle-class, as a result of racial stereotypes and white privilege.
commodification of black male bodies and their “personas” in these spaces (117), since the image of Samy Deluxe on this album cover also speaks to a uniformity of a capitalist masculine identity that quite literally markets itself in the realms of both hip-hop and sports. It is also hardly ironic that a google search of hip-hop garb produced an image of the rapper Nelly positioned in the exact same way as Samy Deluxe modeling his line of clothes, under the brand name Vokal. One can all but assume that this image was a point of reference for Samy Deluxe, as the brand became popular in the late 1990s and early 2000s and lost its desirability right around the time following the release of Samy Deluxe’s album *Verdammtnochma!*

These transcultural references that situate the Black German body within an American cultural context within Germany not only point to American cultural imperialism and mainstream images of U.S. Blackness in Germany, but they also point to the influence of the U.S. in the post-war construction of a (West) German identity. Both the representation of the black body as basketball player and as hip-hopper are images that permeate the German racial imaginary or imperialist imagination of an essentialized notion of blackness in contemporary times. Here the black body is presented in its non-threatening form, as it is visually produced as outside of the German nation and *Heimat* to which it actually belongs and sold to Germany for consumption purposes.

If the album cover is placed further within the context of German national history in regards to the development of a capitalist society evolving in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one could interpret the image as the colonization of the black male body for profit, the commodification of that which has already been exploited. In the American context one could read the image in the same vein with regards to slavery. Nevertheless, in both of these instances, the black body is subversively taking back and owning or performing the very wealth

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209 For more on this see Singletary’s “Haunting and the Black Diasporic Experience” (3-7).
that was stolen from it and produced through it, via methods of exploitation. Since race sells in the sports and hip-hop world, it is used to the advantage of the black male body in both the American and German context, as it is the black body that makes the products desirable and hip to a majority white audience who are its main consumers. Nevertheless, in this context, it is Samy Deluxe who mostly profits from his performance in selling the product. Not only is he selling the product, but also it is actually his performative self that is being marketed as a hip-hop commodity.

Beyond his ability to capitalize on this type of hip-hop performance in the marketing of his body, there is actually an underlying element beyond this surface reading that explains Samy Deluxe’s initial self-styling as the U.S. version of hip-hop. Diasporic sites, such as the U.S., have developed as sources of transnational identity building, community building, and belonging beyond the German nation and Heimat from which Afro-Germans are often excluded and in which they only recently have become aware of their rich history in Germany and, thus, established positive role models. Kofi Yakpo, a performer in the group Advanced Chemistry makes clear this association with African-Americans, “Gerade bei vielen Brüdern und Schwestern war die Identifikation mit den Afroamerikanischen Vorbildern besonders groß—die Gründe dafür liegen auf der Hand. [...] Viele Afros übernahmen daher damals lieber den Habitus und die Musik von ihren US-amerikanischen Vorbildern” (“Denn ich bin” 333). Yakpo, it seems, was not alone in his desire to find a point of reference for producing and constructing an identity, as well as finding a space of belonging. Samy Deluxe seems to have also looked to the U.S. for

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210 This is similar to the way in which many products were marketed in the German imperial empire, as seen in analyses undertaken by Anne McClintock in Imperial Leather and David Carlo in Advertising Empire. Both approach race, gender, and the nation in imperial advertising. American Studies scholar Silke Hackenesche’s research on chocolate and the black male body. See also Silke Hackenesch’s dissertation “From Cocoa Slavery to Chocolate City: Chocolate as a Racial Signifier in the Constructions of Blackness” and Wulf Hund, et. als Colonial Advertising and Commodity Racism.
this. Nevertheless, he has been quoted saying “Ich wollte die deutsche Version der amerikanischen Rapper sein, die den “larger-than-life”-Style in ihren Videos zur Schau trugen” (Mensch und Marke 388). Although aspiring to be like the American rappers, Deluxe, nevertheless, does not want to actually be American. He articulates his wish to be the German version thereof, marking his own translation of the hip-hop nation’s authenticity into the German cultural context, in which he is at home.

Returning to the cover image and other performances that it presents beyond Samy Deluxe’s wardrobe, it is best to circle back to the theorist Miles White, who explains that “in hardcore styles of hip-hop, facial expressions are used to telegraph hypermasculinity and ideals of physical and psychic hardness that are critical in the construction of performers’ persona” (24). The grimace, the facial expression that Samy Deluxe bears, represents this hardcore hypermasculinity and smiling is understood as its opposite, a presentation of “weakness, feminization” (White 24). As Samy Deluxe writes in his autobiography, Dis wo ich herkomm, (Dis where I’m from)—the title for which is taken from his third album and the book published in 2010 under his pseudonym, “doch besonders für Rapper—überall auf der Welt und immer mehr auch in Deutschland—ist Härte vor allem ein Synonym für Männlichkeit” (136). Although hardness has been a characteristic trait of masculinity for at least the last century, performing hardness is a particularly representative element of the hip-hop music genre.

Further presenting his masculinity on the album Verdammtnochma! in the song “Warum” in which he objectifies women, Samy Deluxe raps, “Jeder hat ne Schwäche! Bei mir ist es das weibliche Geschlecht! (Ladys!)” (verse 2, lines 11-12). He refers to becoming weak when seeing a shirt cut so deep and a dress so tight and short (verse 1, lines 1-3) and explains the male gaze as a gesture that women must endure; “Schauen wir uns eure Körper an, da müsst ihr wohl mit
leben!” (verse 1, 16-17). It is through his heterosexuality and his references made to other hip-hop stars such as LL Cool J and Shaggy, who he wishes to have “mehr weibliche Fans” than that he performs his masculine self (verse 2, lines 14, 17). While masculinity is often established in opposition to the feminine gender that is implied and constructed as weak (White 24, Charlebois 24), this weakness is reversed in Samy Deluxe’s verbalization that the female gender is the very part of what he conceives of as his own weakness, something that a hardcore form of masculinity is not meant to have. The dichotomy of gender is no longer split as the feminine weakness becomes a part of himself, deconstructing the masculinity he attempts to perform. In performing a stereotypical version of masculinity, Samy Deluxe reveals masculinity’s reliance on women (and their sexualization) to construct itself, breaking down any clear-cut gender binaries.

Thus, while this album performs man(ly) identities, it also serves to undermine precisely those categories through performance by styling the Afro-German male body within what are interpreted as African-American cultures of masculinity (hip-hop and basketball) and by producing gender as stereotypes, while at the same time de-constructing them. While gender is revealed as performative, it does not remove the power from the hegemonic positioning that Samy Deluxe establishes in his lyrical performative/enunciative acts.

The second cover, for the album BlackWhite, unites what has been produced through discourse, particularly “scientific” and philosophical discourses over time, as two binary oppositions in the racial imagination and in the German racial states of the past. As Tina Campt argues in her monograph Other Germans in reference to Black Germans living during the Third

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211 As Maurice Berger, et al rightly explain, masculinity “implicates women as well as men” (3).
212 This is of course not something strictly depicted in the works of Samy Deluxe and other hip-hop artists, but can be found in both earlier lyrical and literary texts. Arthur Schnitzler’s dramatic works (such as Reigen) from the turn of the century are just one example of the sexualization of women in the production of hypersexuality.
213 I place scientific in scare quotes here as the so-called science of the past in reference to the construct of race has been proven a pseudo-science and the concept of race as established through supposedly scientifically identifiable human differences has been proven not to exist.
Reich, “in the societies in which they lived, the categories of Blackness, Germanness, and gender were both internally contradictory and contradicted each other [...]” (Campt, Other Germans 6). This positioning of Blackness, Germanness, and gender as contradictory, remains intact today and Samy Deluxe addresses this on his album SchwarzWeiss, even verbalizing this contradiction in the title song, “Schau mich an ich bin SchwarzWeiss/ Gegensätze ziehen sich an/ Das wusste ich von Tag eins,” but rather than support the notion of Black and white as oppositional, he asserts their affinities for one another.

The title of the album, while keeping the supposedly incompatible and contradictory colors Black and White separate, at the same time combines them to make one compound word. It has value in its unifying power that evokes a Du Boisian sense of African diasporic double-consciousness—of the self split into two, yet united into one (Du Bois 7), but also in that it suggests Afro-German poet May Ayim’s first poetry compilation Blues in Schwarz Weiss and the poem from which the title of the volume is taken (82-83). Both Samy Deluxe and May Ayim’s cultural productions establish the missing connection (in Ayim’s poem “blues in schwarz-weiss,” the hyphen that sutures black to white to form black-white) that joins the two dichotomous constructs of race as well as the seemingly incompatible African and European identities/Heimaten attached to them through their corresponding filial bonds. This combination of the two is capable of de-constructing a supposed singular and static origin, through the subversive practice of marking race as ambivalent, albeit still intertwined within hegemonic power structures. It also follows Butler’s reading of norms in Undoing Gender, wherein she

214 Paul Gilroy also thematizes double consciousness in a similar context adopting Du Bois’ term in The Black Atlantic. Gilroy writes on the opening page: “Striving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness. By saying this I do not mean to suggest that taking on either or both of these unfinished identities necessarily exhausts the subjective resources of any particular individual. However, where racist, nationalist, or ethnically absolutist discourses orchestrate political relationships so that these identities appear to be mutually exclusive, occupying the space between them or trying to demonstrate their continuity has been viewed as a provocative and even oppositional act of political insubordination.” (1)
states, “the question of what it is to be outside the norm poses a paradox for thinking, for if the norm renders the social field intelligible and normalizes that field for us, then being outside the norm is in some sense being defined still in relation to it”(Butler, Undoing Gender 42). This norm is of course identified as heteronormative white masculinity, as Maurice Berger, et al. reveal in their volume Constructing Masculinity (2-3).

In an effort to make this norm visible, the backdrop to the album cover and profile image of Samy Deluxe is white, marking race as a projection, but also as the invisible screen on which all other identities are constructed and projected. Samy Deluxe’s portrait created by graphic designer Wes21 (Remo Lienhard) at the center of the album cover is presented in what appears to be a graffiti-like image created with partially dripping and running paint from a spray can, but also what appears to be brush strokes. This image portrays him both through “the eyes of others” (white Europeans and their scientific and philosophical discourse) and through the artistic and diasporic tradition of hip-hop that merges this double sense of self in the representation (Du Bois 12). The diasporic hip-hop aesthetic of graffiti, thus converges with the German national aesthetic norm. Subversively, the black and white on the page meant to contrast one another, end up merging and mixing in the face and hair.

The cover image undeniably evokes the profile images used in nineteenth-century studies, such as Josiah Nott and George Gliddon’s Types of Mankind, Or Ethnological Researches (458) used to establish racial categories, racial difference, and a racial hierarchy with whiteness as the norm. But other elements that subvert these hegemonic conditions are also present. One could read the running white paint as a money/cum shot, tied to objectification at the level of capitalism. It can also be read in the context of sexuality, marking his mixed race

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215 While Maurice Berger et. al. refer to this as the stereotype of masculinity, I view it as the norm, given that discourse constructs it as such and that power (individual and institutional) is at play in defining what is the dominant masculinity. This does not, however, deny that other forms of masculinity can and do exist.
body as the site of racial miscegeny (the black dripping paint can be interpreted as the German idea of a blood-based nationality) and marking himself as a category all to its own on the racial hierarchy—a category, nonetheless, that is non-existent in the original that performs itself as an original (Gliddon’s typology), but that is exposed as nothing more than a mere copy to return to Butler. This performative act deconstructs the performed identity of race that it parodies, but also points to the invisibility of Black Germans in the racial narratives of the German nation and Heimat, since in the imperialist imagination Blacks are only considered to be of African origins/decent.

Other dimensions tied to the racial binary are the “racist constructions of blackness [that] associate it with denigration, impurity, and nature” given that the “devaluation of performance in Western intellectual traditions simultaneously coincides with the devaluation of black people as subjects of inquiry in the academy and in society” (27). To counter these aesthetic hegemonic conditions, Samy Deluxes develops his own BlackWhite aesthetic (an aesthetic of contradictions) that is neither/nor, but both/and, positioning himself in a white European tradition or at least battling for his place among other men as a purveyor of German culture as a Black German. This reading of the album cover is supported in the lyrics in “Hände Hoch” and “Poesie Album.” He raps:

Dies is ne Kultur dies is mehr als Unterhaltung/ [...] /Dies is schwarz weiß ja ich heiß euch herzlich willkommen/ Mehr als deutscher Rap dies is allgemeine Bildung (hebt die Hände hoch)/ Kaum aufgenommen, schon n Klassiker/ [...] /Dies is keine Promotour, dies is deutsche Hochkultur/ [...]/ Tiefsinnige Lyrics meets Phrasengedresche/ Hör wie elegant ich diese Sprache hier spreche/Als ob ich diese dunkle Hautfarbe nicht hätte.”

(“Hände Hoch” verse 2, lines 1-5, 10-11; verse 3, lines 8-11)
Similarly, in “Poesie Album,” (analyzed in more detail later in the section) he raps, “Ich bin so Schiller so Goethe so bitter, so böse/ noch immer der größte Poet, der hier lebt” (“Poesie Album” verse 9, lines 1-2). In a battle for cultural representation, these lexical performances write the Black (German) male body back into the history of the German nation and also re-place him in the German literary Heimat through both references to Goethe and Schiller of the German Classical period as adjectives to describe himself and through his reference to his own cultural productions as German high culture. High art remains something inaccessible for Black Germans and in connection to this, Boyd writes that “as a consequence of the limited opportunities […] to participate in the ‘legitimate’ art world in the past, we have often seen a renegotiation of those arenas that were available. This is best represented in music […]” (113). Thus, the disruption of constructed racial and aesthetic categories through the insertion of the Black German self into these discourses challenges the performances of cultural and racial hegemony that exclude Black Germans, as articulated in the cover image of and the lyrics to Samy Deluxe’s album SchwarzWeiss. This struggle, however, is not his alone. It is one that May Ayim and other men and women of Color in Germany faced and continue to face.

The final album cover I briefly analyze is the cover for the 2014 album Männlich. The album’s cover image once again signals the coinciding factors of race and gender for Afro-Germans that have marked them as Other throughout the course of German history. Picturing a skeletal image of his skull from an x-ray on the one half of the image and Samy Deluxe’s face on the other half, the cover again depicts a hardcore image of masculinity in his chosen facial expression. But this cover, I would argue, asks us to look further beyond the surface’s projections and performances, which produce an essence to uncover what is to be found behind this masculine performance—that both gender and race are neither biologically determined nor

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216 Boyd writes this in relation to the African American context, but it is, nevertheless, applicable here as well.
traceable to the actual structure of the body itself beyond its exterior construction through these paradigms. Samy Deluxe encourages the listener to do so visually, via the x-ray image that completes the other side of his face.

Coming back to White, “the performance of hardcore masculinity rejects the softening of one’s facial features in favor of the cold, hard stare intended to project strength and inspire fear if not respect” (24) and this is the stare we see on the cover image. This, however, does not explain his employment of such a hardcore representation of masculinity, one that is aggressively depicted and could be interpreted in relation to the racial conceptions of the Black brute following World War I and during the Third Reich (see Section One). Why make this the cover of an album entitled Männlich? I believe that this move is intended to question precisely the long-held essentialized image of hip-hop masculinity, but also of Black German masculinity and sexuality. This is most clearly demonstrated in the song entitled “Penis” on the album, a collaboration featuring rapper Flo Mega. The song’s title in the realm of hip-hop and when placed in relation to the album cover can not only be read in connection to the images of the black “horror” on the Rhine—those hypersexual and aggressive images of the black male body threatening to penetrate the white female (or German nation), but yet again to the hardcore (hetero)sexuality of male hip-hoppers. Nevertheless, what the song presents is something entirely different. Samy Deluxe instead questions, “warum sieht das Herz nicht weiter als das Auge/ kein Schwanz der Welt ist härter als Liebe und Vertrauen” (hook, lines 1-2), and Flo Mega critiques the fact that a man has to be strong and hard, arguing that “schon der Gröinemeyer fragte ab wann ist ein Mann ein Mann/ scheint die Männheit ist seit zwanzig Jahren keinen Schritt vorangekommen” (“Penis” verse 3, line 1-2). Referencing the song “Männer“ by famous German

217 This should not, however, overlook the fact that one’s race can be felt. The painful experiences of racism can and do impact the physical body.
rock singer Herbert Grönemeyer in the line “wann ist ein Mann ein Mann?” points to the recognition that gender is a social construct. Grönemeyer’s song “Männer” released in 1984 on his album 4630 Bochum offers societal critique of the construction of masculinity. The song presents the multiple sides of men, ranging from their ability to be strong and weak. He sings, “Männer haben’s schwer, nehmen’s leicht, außen hart und innen ganz weich, werden als Kind schon auf Mann geeicht” (refrain, lines 1-3). Reading this in conjunction with Flo Mega’s use of the neologism Männheit to actually only refer to men (the word humanity in German is Menschheit), the social construction and performance of masculinity is seen as unfit for contemporary times, but yet we keep returning to it. Perhaps in this context, it is actually best to return to the cover image itself. Is it a cold stare or is there something more to it? My reading presents it as promoting a critical look at the paradigms and performance of race and gender that the album and cover engages.

The cover image on the album Männlich presents what I interpret as a return of the gaze, a looking back that is oppositional, read as what bell hooks refers to as an act of resistance. This would mean rejecting a reading of the black male body through racial and gendered hegemonic structures that interpret the image as an adaptation of the performance of hardcore masculinity. Instead the image unveils Samy Deluxe as interrogating the viewer’s perceptions and inscriptions of the black male body (as racialized Other) and, in doing so, calling the performance of race and gender, as well as nation into question.

Hardcore masculinity, said to demand respect, is something that Samy Deluxe actively critiques and questions in his autobiography, written four years prior to the release of the album, Männlich. In it, he asserts:

Dieser Weg führt unwiderruflich zu einem unnatürlichen, wahrscheinlich gewaltsamen

For Samy Deluxe, hardness is further interpreted as power (Dis wo ich herkomm 145). He explains that “wer macht hat und sie positiv einsetzt, um andere weiterzubringen verdient Respekt. Wer seine Macht missbraucht wird höchstens gefürchtet, aber nie respektiert” (145).

The album’s cover functions as precisely that—an attempt to be respected rather than feared by calling the hegemonic reading into question. The cover, in evoking racialized and gendered projections presents the hegemonic conditions through which the black male and Black German body is inscribed by these social constructs (and through them is also positioned as outside of German national belonging), but it also undoes the performance of essentialized and stereotyped black masculinity that seeks to represent a presumed internal reality. It is, instead, merely the projected surface that says nothing about what really lies beneath it.

Conceptions of gender and race can be deconstructed by those who are performing them, as evinced in this analysis of Samy Deluxe’s hip-hop persona. However, they are also constantly subjected to the hegemonic systems that discursively produce and constantly seek to re-enforce them as well as subject to the recipients’ acknowledgment of the performativity of identity. In attempting to deconstruct race, however, gender must also be de-constructed, as the two are inextricable in the German context. One cannot be undone without undoing the other, and in the process of undoing, the self is continually constituted anew. Thus, in answer to his own
questioning of who he is, Samy Deluxe writes in his autobiography, “Wahrscheinlich ist die Antwort: Es gibt keine, zumindest keine endgültige. Was bringt es mir bis ins kleinste Detail zu definieren wer ich bin, wenn ich mich ständig verändere?” (Dis wo ich herkomm 18). This statement is strikingly familiar to Wright’s understanding of the idea of Becoming Black. To return and end with her theorization, she states that the conceptualization “asks us to understand any and all negotiations of the subject—white, Black, or otherwise—as negotiations always already in the making, and not the final word” (26). As this analysis of Samy Deluxe’s post-war Afro-German masculinity has shown, gender and race are just identity ‘covers’ under which any true self—a self that is undergoing constant change—might seemingly lie and lie.

**Performing a Post-war BlackWhite Heimat: “Dis wo ich herkomm”**

While the first portion of this section engaged the covers of Samy Deluxe’s albums in a reading of post-war Afro-German masculinity, this part of section four zooms in closely on the album “Dis wo ich herkomm” (2009). Particularly, I consider the hit single that lends the album its title as a performance of post-war BlackWhite German identity and Heimat produced through the genre of hip-hop and the medium of the music video. This is achieved both through the evocation of symbols at the local (Heimatstadt) and national levels (Heimat) and through the employment of cultural and (trans)national references at the global and diasporic levels. They discursively locate and embed the Afro-German subject in the Heimat of the historical past and in present-day Germany, to offer what Samy Deluxe refers to as a new perspective “auf den ganzen Scheiß” (“Dis wo ich herkomm” intro, line 2). Furthermore, the lens of the camera also contributes to this distinct perspective or vision—in a double sense of its meaning—via both the
frames of recognition that the music video establishes and the utopian future it attempts to capture, which already presents itself as a possibility in the present.

First, I establish the framework for a positive interpretation of post-war Germany as it is articulated in Samy Deluxe’s autobiography. Then, I transition to my analysis of the lyrics and, most importantly, the music video’s filmic representations of German Heimat that I interpret as a combination of the aesthetics of two specifically German post-war film genres, the Trümmerfilm and the Heimatfilm. In returning German Heimat to a regional space, locating it in the city of Hamburg, which is his hometown (Heimatstadt), Samy Deluxe performs the collective Heimat as an inclusive community to which a diverse array of individuals can and do belong and, as a result, decolonizes the spatial imaginary of Heimat. This re-envisioning of post-war Heimat once again renders it as represented through both the individual and collective body as discussed and analyzed in the context of Label Noir’s theatrical production, Heimat, bittersüße Heimat, in section three.

**Time for a Positive and Subversive Turn?: A New German Wende(zeit) or “Das neue Deutschland”**

Und bin ich hier für meine Leute am Kämpfen
Denn auch wenn sie nicht scheinen wir haben die Sonne im Herzen
Und auch wenn alles so grau ist, alles so kalt ist
Die Bevölkerung schlecht drauf ist und die Kultur so veraltet
Hat dies Land das Potenzial ein buntes Land zu sein
Aber das passiert nicht von ganz allein
Oh nein, nein, nein, nein, nein
Wir müssen was tun, wir müssen noch so viel tun
Und keine Zeit uns auszuruhen die Arbeit ruft

Bis die, ah bis die, ah bis die
Bis die Sonne rauskommt! OOOOhh!
Alles hier ist viel zu grau
Wir brauchen viel mehr Farben im Land
Bis die Sonne rauskommt
Alles sieht so eintönig aus
Ich nehm mir den Marker raus und mal's an die Wand
Even if the lyrics cited above in the epigraph hint at a subversive take on re-envisioning Germany as a country full of diverse colors (Farben) through the illegal and dissident hip-hop act of graffiti, Samy Deluxe did not always maintain a position of wanting to better the German imagined community or nation into which he was born and from which he was simultaneously excluded based on his mixed race background. Rather, he often thought of fleeing his nation to find refuge or exile in another African diasporic space, one where he felt that belonging would not be denied him on the basis of his skin color. It was not until after traveling to the U.S. and witnessing the division amongst races and cultures within the urban landscape of San Francisco that Samy Deluxe shifted his perspective of Germany, recognizing the ironic twist that this experience provided him in relation to his own identification with his native country (20). In his autobiography, Samy Deluxe describes this ambivalent relationship to his homeland as one that was fraught with tension and even hate as a youth, but that shifted after spending time in the land of his childhood dreams:

Mein jugendlicher Heimathass und Fernweh nach Amerika sind aus dem Grund besonders wichtig, weil mir ausgerechnet in den Staaten bewusst wurde, dass an Deutschland doch nicht alles Scheiße ist. (26)

Although the U.S. had been a place for which Samy Deluxe had yearned as a young adult and although his identity as a Black German was rarely further questioned when he was there, as was almost always the case in Germany (62), his yearning for America proved to be tied to a superficial utopian ideal that is often attached to the American nation and further promoted in the
Drawing connections between the current state of affairs regarding the U.S. urban population and its division according to race/culture, Samy Deluxe reveals the masked racist continuity in contemporary America, exposing what he considers similarities between the era of the 1950s and 1960s and the present:

Als Außenstehender in den USA hatte ich schon den Eindruck, dass die, die man mittlerweile “African American” nennt, und die, die sich absurderweise als “Caucasian” bezeichnen, seit den Zeiten von Martin Luther King und Malcolm X und John F. Kennedy ein bisschen aufeinander zugekommen sind. [...] Früher war der Status separate but equal, getrennt, aber gleich. Und heute? Ist es im Grunde genauso. (28)

According to Samy Deluxe, the development of parallel societies in Germany resembling those he witnessed in the U.S., is simply impossible given its small size and perhaps also the pervasiveness of its collective culture. He elaborates on this, remarking:


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218 In “Hip-hop am Main, Rappin’ on the Tyne: Hip-hop Culture as a Local Construct in Two European Cities,” Andy Bennett discusses this image of the U.S. “nation, its people and culture” as the Baudrillardian “cinematographized” construct of the U.S. He reveals that this is an image that many German hip-hoppers have of the U.S. (215).
While on the one hand this assessment is accurate in that all Germans inevitably take part in and consume or at least encounter the diverse representation of German culture by default, as a result of Germany’s comparatively small size, on the other hand, this perspective is in many aspects naïve. It overlooks the exclusionary mechanisms inherent in the collective, mostly white, Eurocentric, mainstream culture to which Afro/Black Germans are denied participatory parity.219 This not only occurs in the established mainstream discourse, but also through the reinforcement of homogenously and hegemonically constituted white cultural spaces like the theater, which I emphasized in section three in relation to the Blackfacing debate and casting. Hip-hop music may be welcomed into and hailed by the German mainstream or collective culture, but it is often marked as a diasporic cultural tradition that hails from the African-American context, rather than as an indigenous genre, particularly when the performers are of a migrant background. An actual recognition of Afro-/Black Germans as both German citizens and producers and performers of a specifically German culture, has yet to come to fruition at all levels in German society, regardless of the obvious increase in Germany’s racial diversity.

Still, Samy Deluxe rightly points to the differences in experience and the contrasting forms of racism existing in various African diasporic spaces and communities. In the excerpts from his autobiography he both cites and sites the socio-historical contexts through which race has been and continues to be culturally produced, framed, and inscribed. This revelatory moment, which led him to establish a new relationship with his homeland—one that sought to re-assert and affirm his identity as a Black German and literally to change the face of Germany—is performed both in the song “Dis wo ich herkommn” and its accompanying music video.

It, thus, took this journey to the African diasporic space of the U.S. for Samy Deluxe to

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recognize that not everything that glitters is indeed gold and upon his return home, he began to identify more strongly with his *Heimat* as homeland and to assert his own Germanness, as well as advocate for a more positive *Deutschlandbild* or image of Germany: “Und Deutschland, mein Mutterland, das Land in dem jetzt auch mein Sohn aufwächst, wird langsam besser als sein Ruf. Zum Beispiel in Sachen Rassismus” (27). In relation to this shift in perspective, Samy Deluxe also explained elsewhere that as he got older his “Ziele und Werte” changed and with this “auch [s]ein Bild von Deutschland” (Sorge, “Mensch und Marke” 388). Over time, he altered his own judgment of the country of his nationality, beginning to view it in a much more positive light. The initial lure and appeal of the U.S. that took Samy Deluxe on his transnational journey—one that many Afro-/Black Germans undertake in their lifetime of travelling to an African diasporic space—commenced with certain expectations that failed to be met, as is often the case. This new perspective of Germany is presented in the lyrics to the song “Dis wo ich herkomm,” in which, rather than “diss” Germany as he had done in prior songs (and ironically the homophone in the title voices exactly this, but “dis” is actually slang for “this” in German), Samy Deluxe raps, “und ich wollte selbst schon weg von hier man ich war drauf und dran/ aber dann hab' ich gesehen, dass dis wo ich herkomm” verse 2, line 17-18). It is, thus, through a trajectory not dissimilar to those described in classical German *Bildungsromane* (educational narratives), in which the protagonist ventures out into the great wide world (*die Fremde*) to gain new insights and impressions in order to return home in the end with new knowledge that changes his perspective of the space from which he initially departed (*die Heimat*), that Samy Deluxe articulates a turning point within himself in relation to his German *Heimat*.

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221 “Weck mich auf” is a song that refers to Germany as an nightmare from which Samy Deluxe wishes to awaken.
222 See also Bower 393. She argues that this represents both “a critique of his country with an affirmation of his place in it.”
Vergangenheitsbewältigung: The Plea for a New Germany from an Afro-German Perspective

Not only are the songs of Samy Deluxe individual affirmations of the (political) self as an Afro-German (hip-hopper) in a society in which “whiteness” is still viewed as the norm, but they also articulate the collective character of a nation whose own identity has been complicated as a result of its National Socialist past that still lingers in its present. This past, which has made it difficult for many Germans to foresee a positive future for themselves and their youth and for the youth to enact change and further progress in their country, is a quandary explicitly addressed in the lyrics to “Dis wo ich herkomm.”

Although Samy Deluxe chooses to take his own turn toward assessing the positive aspects of his native country and actively working to better it, he remains aware that other major impediments, especially the Nazi past, continue to hinder Germany from acquiring a positive image throughout the world. This, too, is the face or image of Germany he seeks to change, as he raps: Ich schau mich um und habe Zweifel/ wie es weitergehen soll in diesem Land das meine Heimat ist/ Und ich sehe ein, dass die Vergangenheit hier nicht einfach ist/ doch wir können nicht steh’n bleiben/ weil die Uhr immer weiter tickt (tick - tack) (“Dis wo ich herkomm” verse 1, lines 10-14, my emphasis).

In these lines, Samy Deluxe lays claim to the German nation (Land) as his Heimat, but also speaks of the impact of the nation’s past in the present. The lyrics serve as a call to action on the part of Germans to help move the country and its self-image forward, while acknowledging the difficulty of this task, as a result of Germany’s historical past. It is particularly the Nazi past that pervades the country and its individual members’ consciousness, and it is also this past that

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223 Among others, see the songs “Weck mich auf” and “Generation” on the albums Samy Deluxe (2001) and Verdammtnochma! (2004).
is sold on the global market as an essentialized and packaged representation of Germany, predominantly in media representations such as film and many of which are Hollywood productions disseminated from the U.S.

Addressing the topic of the American image of the German nation and its position vis-à-vis hip-hop, a November 2000 issue of the magazine *Vibe* published an article entitled *Check Das!: Germany’s Hip-hop Scene*. An excerpt from the article reads as follows,

The American perception of Germany in the 20th century is branded with the horrors perpetrated by Adolf Hitler. The major challenge facing successive generations of German youth has been overcoming the Nazi legacy of hatred and repressed cultural expression. (Relic and Pleuger 124)

This branded perception remains well into the twenty-first century and is not only prevalent in the hip-hop industry, but also pervades the global film industry. Coming face to face with the Nazi German past in the music video to “Dis wo ich herkomm,” Samy Deluxe directly confronts this dominant image of the German nation as the train in which he sits rolls to a stop at a station. He looks out the window to see a poster that is an advertisement for the American Hollywood film *Valkyrie* (2008).

Fig. 4.1. Face to face with U.S. media representations of the German past

Although the film *Valkyrie* could potentially be considered a positive representation of the
German nation with regard to the Nazi past, since it details the German resistance plot to assassinate Hitler, it, nevertheless, captures Germany within the limited frame of World War II and the Third Reich. As the poster disappears from view, Samy Deluxe raps, “Schluss mit den alten Zeiten” (“Dis wo ich herkomm” verse 1, line 21). In this cinematic mo(ve)ment, the tension between moving forward and looking back is mediated, both visually and vocally.

More than just a mediation between past and present, this captured moment in the music video presents the hip-hop battle as that which occurs between Samy Deluxe and the hegemonic visual and narrative representations of the collective German National Socialist past that still dominate some seventy years later. This is achieved through the immediate framing of cultural expression and production (here, hip-hop and film) within this historical discourse. As a result of the ubiquitous Nazi past that Germany continues to personify from the outside—in this case, via the United State’s filmic imaginary,\textsuperscript{224} any attempt to try and exhibit a positive representation of the German nation today appears to be a provocation and also seemingly futile. In a controversial fashion, Samy Deluxe addresses the National Socialist past in an attempt to move beyond it. Here he remarks, “Und wir haben kein Nationalstolz und das alles bloß wegen Adolf—ja toll/ schöne Scheiße, der Typ war doch eigentlich ein Österreicher/ ich frag mich was soll das, als wäre ich Herbert Grönemeyer” (“Dis wo ich herkomm” verse 1, lines 15–17). As one can imagine, these lines engendered controversy in multiple German media outlets, which interpreted the song as nationalistic and right wing propaganda.\textsuperscript{225} Heard without the contextualization that the images of the music video provide, the lyrics are certainly much more problematic than if they are interpreted in conjunction with the message the music video sends on a visual level, to

\textsuperscript{224} This is not at all to be read as a denial of the Nazi past or the Holocaust, but rather is meant to be understood as the cultural projections that continue to be made and profited from in the American film industry in relation to Germany’s past. Some of which are indeed fictional representations.

\textsuperscript{225} See, for example, the interview in the online Stern magazine “Fuck it, ich habe keine Angst” and the taz.blogs “Hitler-blog,” with the entries “‘Bloß wegen Adolf’ 1001 Jahr deutscher Rap” and “‘Bloß wegen Adolf’ II.”
which I return later. However, I first unpack the integration of this cultural taboo into the song.

The reference made to Hitler is significant in this excerpt in that Samy Deluxe incorporates the National Socialist past into his lyrical text via name-dropping. By openly and publicly addressing Hitler by his first name rather than his last, he removes any remaining distance between both the past and present and himself as a contemporary hip-hop performer and Hitler as a historical figure, while simultaneously denying Hitler’s belonging to the German nation, in recalling his national identity as Austrian. This move also revokes the power Hitler continues to hold over Germany in the present day and makes him less menacing, perhaps even humanizing him in a way.226 This, in addition to the use of “bloß” in reference to Hitler, undoubtedly makes light of the gravity of Hitler’s (and his subordinates’) historically notorious actions, as well as serves to erase connections to the many German citizens who were equally responsible for the murder and internment of hundreds of thousands of Jews and countless others (communists, Roma and Sinti, gays/lesbians, Black Germans, people with disabilities) during World War II. If Hitler is given all of the blame for Germany’s Nazi past and at the same time disinherited, can German history and the atrocities tied to it still be acknowledged?

Interpeting Samy Deluxe’s music video in a post-war context that views it as a contribution to a “new nationalism” that normalizes “the Germans’ relationship to their own national identity and their past” (147), Maria Stehle articulates that the perspective put forth by Samy Deluxe is categorically different from the nationalism and rhetoric that gangsta rappers, particularly the Agro Berlin rappers,227 perform (148).228 However, inconsistencies in this

226 See Littlejohn and Putnam who refer to Downfall and Mein Führer: die wirklich wahrste Warheit über Adolf Hitler as contemporary cinemantic representations of Hitler that would have previously seemed impossible (130). For more on the humanization aspect of Nazi party members and murderers, see also Hannah Arendt’s philosophical work, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on The Banality of Evil.
227 These rappers include B-Tight, Fler, and Bushido. See, for example, Fler’s Album Neue Deutsche Welle as one example of this explicitly masculine nationalism.
228 Bower also refers to Samy Deluxe’s hip-hop as politically conscious and celebrating unity in diversity (394).
interpretation arise if one considers the taboo topic of Hitler employed in the song in relation to the work of Littlejohn and Putnam who insist that this is one representative element of gangsta rap:

The use of taboos in German gangsta rap has a double impact in that they not only draw upon a cultural taboo, Hitler and the Nazis, that has been present in the German psyche for four generations, but they also reflect Germans’ individual and collective social unrest in coming to terms with their sense of identity, in particular their national identity. (122)

Certainly, Samy Deluxe employs the taboo as a means to confront and battle Hitler and the Nazi past, but he also problematically washes the hands of Germans in this act. This begs the question of how, then, one might tackle the task of distinguishing Samy Deluxe’s performance from other gangsta rappers who employ German nationalism and German cultural taboos that support racism, violence, and misogyny (Bower 382, 387).\textsuperscript{229} Perhaps the question lies in whether or not it is actually a new nationalism that Samy Deluxe is purporting or something altogether different.

I maintain that the music video, read in conjunction with the song’s lyrics, instead offers a new interpretation from a Black German male perspective of German Heimat that is marked by the ambivalence of the post-war German context, something at which Stehle already hints in her explicit mentioning of the juxtaposition of “urban ruins” to “sheep grazing” (150), but falls short of deciphering. These images she cites from the music video undeniably can be read within the context of Heimat’s filmic articulations in the post-war period, particularly within the framework of German post-war film genres, the Trümmerfilm and the Heimatfilm. The music video to “Dis

\textsuperscript{229} The Aggro group often claims these taboos as merely part and parcel for the performance of hip-hop and that they provide the necessary provocation to sell records. They also use the fact that some of the label’s hip-hoppers are of migrant backgrounds to argue that they cannot actually be nationalist or Neo-Nazis, which of course remains very much a possibility regardless of their background.
wo ich herkomm” engages the Trümmerfilm on the visual level (e.g. urban ruins) as well as in its cognizant approach to Vergangenheitsbewältigung that serves as a corrective to the taboo lyrics, upon which I elaborate further below. It evokes the Heimatfilm on the visual level (e.g. sheep grazing) and in its imaginative lens that connects national and regional identity and Heimat, but that also proves capable of integrating the transnational identities of the diasporic people who call Germany and Hamburg home. I maintain that the two film genres merge in the music video to promote a new articulation of German post-war Heimat in the post-Wende period and, that in so doing, the music video supports a call to social justice that takes shape in the politics of recognition as delineated by Nancy Fraser.

Fraser observes that the politics of recognition is more broadly conceived than identity politics. She articulates the goal of this vein of social justice politics as the creation of “a difference-friendly world, where assimilation to majority or dominant cultural norms is no longer the price of equal respect” (3), but she also provides two paths that this type of politics can take. The first reads “group differences” as something that “are pre-existing, benign cultural variations that an unjust interpretive schema has maliciously transformed into a value hierarchy,” whereas the second reads them as not pre-existing “their hierarchical transvaluation,” but instead “created contemporaneously with it through a discursive framework of binary oppositions” (9). Although, Fraser claims the paths of the politics of recognition to be an either or dichotomy, the version taken up by Samy Deluxe in “Dis wo ich herkomm” entails both. It is through the act of exposing these constructed binaries that form a value hierarchy in the discursive framework of German identity and Heimat that the recognition and acceptance of visibly perceivable difference is rendered possible.

Both the promotion of the recognition of Germans of Color on the visual and aesthetic
level of the music video alongside an approach to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in the song’s lyrical and visual content serve to correct the controversial taboo that denied any German responsibility early on in the song. Reflecting his own responsibility in relation to both individual and collective consciousness and in the music video’s configuration of an inclusive German community, Samy Deluxe continues rapping, “ich sage das nicht, weil ich mich so schlau oder so wichtig fühl/ sondern, weil ich mich durch meine Geschichte dazu verpflichtet fühl/ Das Land hat mir etwas gegeben, ich will was zurückgeben/ früher dachte ich “Fick Politik!,” heut’ will ich mitreden” (verse 3, lines 10-13). Additionally, he employs the first person “Ich” to affirm his acknowledgment of the German past, “Und ich sehe ein, dass die Vergangenheit hier nicht einfach ist,” but also expresses the collective sense of engagement, as presented in the following, “was sollen wir tun etwa für immer depressiv sein/ trotz den ganzen Fortschritten der kulturellen Vielfalt/ Nein, ich find’ nicht, ich will lieber etwas tun” (verse 2, lines 8-10). Transforming himself from passive victim to active force of change, Samy Deluxe desires to invest himself in the constitution of a more optimistic outlook with regard to Germany and its future.

Seeing it as his duty to serve his community and nation in a positive way through political action and to call for the collective and individual recognition of the past, but also the collective recognition of the individual diversity of Germany’s populace in the present, Samy Deluxe decides to seek change for the society he lives in via his status as a public figure (*Dis wo ich herkomm* 32). As he sees it, Germany’s youth are in desperate need of “Perspektive, bisschen Aufmerksamkeit und ein bisschen mehr Liebe” (“*Dis wo ich herkomm*” verse 1, line 8). This is one of the reasons, in addition to his acknowledgment that achieving success and having fame also lead to a certain responsibility, that he “red[et] mit den Kids an den Schulen, denn [er]
glaub[t] immer noch an die Jugend und weiß die sind die Zukunft und brauchen bloß ein bisschen Hoffnung” (“Dis wo ich herkomm” verse 2, 11-13, “Mensch und Marke” 389). To this he adds, if one takes a closer look, Germany is doing just fine (“Dis wo ich herkomm” verse 2, line 14). These lyrics coincide in the music video with images of school children in Germany from various cultural backgrounds and Samy Deluxe’s interactions with them. They are representative of school tours he undertook with the Brothers Keepers\textsuperscript{230} and through his own non-profit organization, Crossover e.V.\textsuperscript{231}

Noteworthy in this clip of the video filmed at the school and in multiple other clips that include images that in many ways resemble photographic portraits of Germans in everyday situations is that the camera encounters each of the individuals portrayed in the music video at eye level through the use of neutral angle and medium shots.\textsuperscript{232} These shots situate each person on equal footing in terms of recognition and deconstruct the hierarchy of belonging that is discursively established through the binary construction of Germanness equated to whiteness and foreignness equated to Persons of Color. This is significant in that Hervé Tcheumeleu and Niklas Wünsch, in their contribution to the volume \textit{Black Berlin}, make an appeal for a new perspective of German nationality and belonging—“a new image of the German citizen that is independent of family background or skin color, one that knowingly integrates Afro-Germans, with the knowledge that people can be black and at the same time German” (192). Both the camera angle and the black and white aesthetics of the music video, as well as the portraits of numerous Germans of Color (Turkish Germans, Asian Germans, Black Germans, etc.) promote the

\textsuperscript{230} Some of these school visits are included in the documentary film, \textit{Yes I am!}, analyzed in the final section.
\textsuperscript{231} For more on this see Bower 392 and Samy Deluxe’s autobiography \textit{Dis wo ich herkomm} 32.
\textsuperscript{232} Such images, albeit one of Black German women, are also captured in the photographic included in the Nzitu Mawakha’s photo book \textit{Daima: Images of Women of Colour in Germany}. The book presents the reader/viewer with counter-images that lend themselves to the recognition of Black German subjects. They also resemble the images from the \textit{Homestory Deutschland} exhibition and accompanying book, discussed in section one.
visibility of PoCs in Germany and “confront the majority culture with a new definition of Germanness and belonging” (Bower 393). To be certain, this is not a colorblind representation of Germany, but instead a representation that recognizes the racism inherent in the denial of these multiracial German identities of the individuals depicted and also recognizes Germany as constituted as both black and white (and all of the shades in-between). In actually seeing and encountering a diverse representation of German citizens in relation to an articulation of a new Germany, the viewers are compelled to perceive Germany from a new perspective, as multiracial.

The song and its video, thus, serve as a correctional narrative to the “‘colour blind society’” that Fatima El-Tayeb asserts the Federal Republic had established in post-1945 Germany and that made racism a taboo subject (“Pride” 462). The discourse on race and racism, she explains, had therefore been “declared dead and buried without examination” and “anti-Semitism was separated completely from racism” (463), specifically with regard to its connections to colonial history in Germany that played a role in the ensuing Holocaust. By situating these two pasts in relation to one another in the present through the lyrical text and images from the music video, Samy Deluxe makes a subtle, yet profound commentary on the continuities of German racism that deny belonging to anyone not visibly white and utilizes a taboo (one that displaces Hitler to Austria) to re-open the discourse on race and racism in Germany that, too, was displaced to elsewhere (particularly the U.S.) in the post-war period. The taboo performance should in fact provoke us to question why one taboo might appear to be more controversial than the other, as the two are indubitably interconnected.

As such, the battle with Germany’s collective past is not the only battle presented in the music video. In addition to that battle, Samy Deluxe’s own struggle with his German identity and
the denial thereof by white Germans is integrated into the lyrics and examined further in relation to institutional racism and racial profiling. To this end, his feelings of alienation or of being alien in his own nation are also referenced: “ich glaube ich kann meinen Standpunkt vertreten/ obwohl mich viele hier anschauen wie von ‘nem anderen Planeten” (stanza 2, lines 16-17). Despite this feeling of being “Fremd im eigenen Land,” he still insists on laying claim to or taking back this identity: “Ich bin ein deutscher Mann, so stehts in meinem Pass/ Und ich hab dieses Land hier fast mein ganzes Leben gehasst/doch seh jetzt/Dies hier ist unser Deutschland/ Dies hier ist euer Deutschland/ Dies ist das Land wo wir leben/ Dies ist das neue Pssh” (stanza 2, lines 21-23 and refrain). The visible marking and affirmation of Samy Deluxe’s identity in the music video as an (Afro-)German is mediated through the integration of Samy Deluxe holding up his German passport—a modus operandi employed already in 1992 in the music video to the hit “Fremd im eigenen Land” performed by Advanced Chemistry, one of the first hip-hop bands to achieve major success in Germany. The passport functions as the ultimate symbol for national belonging and also exclusion since it must always be present to affirm the national identity of non-white Germans, particularly since the fall of the Berlin Wall. In this shot, the camera racks its focus as a sharp image of Samy Deluxe goes out of focus and the passport that was blurry comes into focus. This camera technique signals a blurring of the assumed and imagined boundaries of German race and territory. In this performative act, Samy Deluxe is not only re-claiming his Germanness, but also his Europeaness. The red passport (the color is not visible in the video, but the writing on it is, so as to identify it as such) stands in for both a unified German Federal Republic and it is the passport of the Schengen Agreement that produced the dissolution of the borders of the member nations of the European Union, albeit not entirely.

233 This is the title of the hip-hop band Advanced Chemistry’s hit single from 1992 that thematized the group members’ experiences of alienation in German society. All of the band members had migrant backgrounds. See also Stehle who references this citation in Advanced Chemistry’s video and in Samy Deluxe’s video (138-39, 149).
The irony here is, of course, that Samy Deluxe is most likely to still be asked for his passport upon crossing the borders still existing in the EU. The EU passport, therefore, marks the deterritorialization of the German nation in its opening to other countries, while at the same time reinscribes them in a larger European imaginary—one that still imagines itself as both white and Christian.\textsuperscript{234} This contemporary Germany or Europe appears to be more of a fortress today,\textsuperscript{235} given the political, structural, and surveillance measures (walls, biometric passports, as well as immigration laws) and the political rhetoric that develops alongside these measures put into place to keep foreigners, such as asylum seekers, or refugees and anyone else deemed ‘Other’—which includes some Germans, often People of Color and other discriminated groups—out.\textsuperscript{236}

The hegemonic discourse surrounding German national and European cultural identity and the denial of these identities to People of Color is precisely what makes re-claiming them vital. The desire to re-inscribe the self into a nation into which he has been denied entry is made visible,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{234} Imke Brust also argues this in “Transnational and Gendered Dimensions of Heimat in Mo Asumang’s Roots Germania” in relation to the Leitkultur debate and the popularity of Sarrazin’s 2010 publication Deutschland schafft sich ab (171).

\textsuperscript{235} One only needs to consider the rhetoric employed in the media revolving around “Fortress Europe.” For more on this see the Spiegel Online International article “Fortress Europe: How the EU Turn Its Back on Refugees.” The term itself originates from WWII and was employed by Nazi Germany in regards to their occupied European territory. Now the term is being utilized to frame legal and illegal as well as asylum policies within the EU.

\textsuperscript{236} This is most visible in the racial profiling experiences that most Afro-Germans undergo. ManuEla Ritz has written about this in her autobiography \textit{Die Farbe meiner Haut}, Philipp Khabo-Köpsell has written about this is his spoken word poetry, particularly in “Stop Racial Profiling Now,” but also in \textit{Die Akte James Kopf}, and it is the center of discussion in the contemporary documentary film \textit{ID-without Colors}.
\end{footnotesize}
but another imagined community seems even more important than the nation in this music video. The goal of “Dis wo ich herkomm” as interpreted here lies in the recognition of a diverse German society and the ability of that society to change for the better via the production and rebuilding of an up-to-date German Heimat, a Heimat that can be inclusively imagined, unlike the nation, and that is welcoming to all citizens who can contribute to making it an improved place. Afro-Germans and other PoCs in Germany not only demand recognition as part of the national landscape, but as part of the imagined community of Heimat, a space to which one is said to belong.

Given that it is less permanent in its discursive construction than the nation, as a result of its imaginative capacity that does not force it to be tied to exclusivity, Heimat offers the much needed space to recognize a positive image of an inclusively conceived Germany in the temporal present. Such a decolonization of Heimat that recognizes Germany as both multiracial and multicultural is something that Heimat has yet to fully envision. It is also something absent from most German films. Black Germans and other Germans of Color have always been missing from the homogenously conceived white German community’s depictions of Heimat or if presented, othered.

Keeping all of the previous discourses in mind that are addressed in the lyrics, I now turn to post-war film genres, in order to interpret the music video “Dis wo ich herkomm” and the

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237 Stehle questions why people “who simply don’t feel like they belong or even owe anything to Germany” should feel the need to make it a better place (150), but he is referring to the situation of the youth and society much more than the nation and he does not deny belonging to those whose do not feel they owe Germany anything.

238 Alon Confino reads Heimat as “infinitely adaptable,” whereas the nation is perceived as “fixed” (185).

239 Stehle also supports his reading as one that is inclusive, but does not examine this within the context of the imagined community of Heimat (150). In support of my reading, Confino interprets Heimat (in the context of World War I) through its juxtaposition to the nation, in order to assert what he perceives as their most notable differences. He writes, “fatherland and nation […] could go to war, while Heimat could never do that. […] Heimat was something one fought for, never something that participated in battle (185). This allows Heimat to escape any association with war that, according to Confino, is Heimat’s antithesis (185). Nevertheless, even though it could not go to war in the literal sense, it did, in many ways, serve to support the war at home and on-screen, as witnessed in Nazi Heimat films pre-dating the post-World War II period.

240 See, for example, Fassbinder’s films Die Ehe der Maria Braun and Angst essen Seele auf, as well as Robert Stemmele’s Toxi, among others.
images it presents as producing a post-Wende take on a combination of the Trümmerfilm and Heimatfilm.

Post-war Film Genres: The Trümmerfilm

The post-war period was a period of transition in which rubble films were made (Shandley 2). Rubble films, according to Robert Shandley, “are products of German cinema stemming from the early postwar period, roughly 1946-1949, during which Germany lay in physical, political, and moral chaos” (2). They are also “films that take the mise en scène of destroyed Germany as background and metaphor of the destruction of German’s own sense of themselves” (2). One final characteristic of rubble films, which he lists, is that they “are all problem films whose problem is the long shadow cast by the legacy of the Third Reich” (3). However, rubble films not only presented the destruction caused by World War II, as Shandley details, they also set the terms for envisioning a post-war future.

In his analysis of rubble films, Eric Rentschler reads them in a slightly different context than Shandley. Rentschler signals one of the goals of rubble films as “creating the conditions for a future community” (431), and he explains that “these films rarely confront the institutions, traditions, and assumptions that led to the catastrophe that was postwar Europe” (4). Although, like Schandley, also observing that rubble films revolve around problems, Rentschler, nevertheless, offers a different take on them, claiming that they were mostly “about problems that the German public either no longer wished to solve or claimed to have already solved” (8). This is also the approach that Samy Deluxe takes in his video in creating a “future community” that unites all Germans, regardless of their cultural background, religion, race, gender, geographic positioning, or age. Still, he only touches upon one aspect of institutionalized racism.
The problem, as approached in “Dis wo ich herkomm,” is the problem of racial exclusion that was buried and assumed to have been resolved, as previously articulated. In reading Schandley and Rentschler’s descriptions of the rubble film together, the contradictory representations of Germany’s worst nightmare and Germany’s utopian ideal seem to merge in the rubble film and this merging is also evinced in the elements that structure “Dis wo ich herkomm.”

References and parallels to the composition of shots from rubble films such as Italian director Roberto Rossellini’s infamous Germania Anno Zero (1948)241 and the very first rubble film completed in the post-war period in the East under the production of the DEFA studio,242 Wolfgang Staudte’s Die Mörder sind unter uns (1946)243 are evinced in Samy Deluxe’s music video. Additionally, the aesthetics of “Dis wo ich herkomm” resemble the neo-realist and expressionist forms employed in post-war rubble films. The use of black and white film stock further cites the genre.

Pictured standing alone amidst the barren natural landscape along the shore in Hamburg, Samy Deluxe resembles the young child, Edmund Kohler, in Germania Anno Zero as well as the aged, but still youthful, Dr. Mertens in Die Mörder sind unter uns. Both of these protagonists are

241 Produced by one of the most famous neo-realist film directors Roberto Russolini, accompanied by Salvo D’Angelo, Germania Anno Zero details the life and death of a young boy named Edmund Kohler in the post-war period. The film is set in the ruins of Berlin. Edmund and his sister Eva work to obtain food for their family and their ill father. Their brother Karl-Heinz served in the war and refuses to sign up for rations for fear of being incarcerated or killed for his service. When the father becomes so sick that he must enter the hospital, he tells Edmund that as a sick man he is a worthless burden to his family. Misreading advice from a Nazi named Henning, Edmund steals poison from the nurse and kills his father upon his return from his hospital stay. Karl-Heinz turns himself over to the police and, in the end, Edmund climbs to the top of a bombed out building and plunges to his death.

242 DEFA or the Deutsche Filmaktiengesellschaft was the state-owned film studio of East Germany situated in Babelsberg near Potsdam.

243 The film narrates the trauma inflicted upon both female concentration camp survivor, Susanne Wallner, and, even more so, Dr. Mertens, a Berlin military doctor who suffers from alcoholism. It details Mertens attempt to murder a former Nazi captain by the name of Brückner, who had ordered the slaughtering of Polish civilians on Christmas Eve and in the post-war period is now a capitalist profit monger (selling pots made from the metal of German military helmets). Wallner is able to prevent the murder at the last minute and, instead, she and Mertens see Brückner put on trial. Focusing on Vergangenheitsbewältigung from an anti-fascist East German perspective, the film is a defining moment in the constitution of the ideology that would shape East German consciousness.
picted walking through the barren cityscape amidst its ruins. However, the difference in spatial placement in the rubble films and the music video becomes evident in these selected images. Whereas the former images locate the subjects within the city, Samy Deluxe is situated in nature in an intact and “sound” natural landscape. Nevertheless, the footpaths forged through nature presented in “Dis wo ich herkomm” appear to be just as man made/destroyed as the ones in the city that Dr. Mertens and Kohler traverse. This is visible in the parallels drawn between the expressionistic and fractured/angled trees and the jagged and destroyed buildings. But it is not just nature through which Samy Deluxe is framed. The final image in the figures below depicts Samy Deluxe in the city. It is also an image in which he walks forward, facing the viewer. In this shot, his pose (hands in jacket pockets) and even his stride appear almost identical to Dr. Mertens in *Die Mörder sind unter uns*. But in contrast to both Dr. Mertens and Edmund Kohler, Samy Deluxe navigates nature and the city and does so in the temporal present, in a new century untouched by war as well as in a new country (reunified Germany). Beyond this, Samy Deluxe is of a different generation than both Kohler and Mertens, both of whom lived during World War II and were able to survive its horrors. Nevertheless, the war’s immediate aftershocks still seem to play out in young Kohler’s misunderstanding of the words of the schoolteacher Henning, which result in him poisoning his father and ultimately committing suicide and in Mertens post-traumatic stress disorder made visible in the montage of his flashbacks to war in the film. Samy Deluxe, in contrast, lives in a time in which a positive future is perceived as a possibility—even if still ambivalently charged—having himself been untouched by the war and positioned at a seemingly safer distance to the past. As a result, he has the ability to face the present with more optimism than the two protagonists of the rubble films and turn his back to the past in looking to a more idyllic future.
Beyond the visual references that appear to quote the rubble film overtly, there are other visuals that perhaps more latently cite the genre. The vertical skeleton of the radio transmission
tower standing behind Samy Deluxe is the very first image we see in the video, and it is shot from a low-angle perspective. According to Johannes von Moltke, *Trümmerfilme*, favor low-angle shots, as in Staudte’s film, that “privilege the vertical skeletons of Berlin’s buildings” (410). While the setting here is not Berlin after the devastation of WWII, as is the case in most rubble films, it is the second largest city in Germany and one that was often overlooked following the war, due to the focus on the German capital. Like Berlin though, Hamburg was completely destroyed during World War II as a result of its importance as a harbor city. It also boasted the most bunkers of any German city,\(^{244}\) one of which it appears is made visible in Samy Deluxe’s music video. It is, therefore, not shocking, that the scene featuring the bunker is the one in which actual ruins and the grittiness of the urban landscape are also portrayed in the music video. Samy Deluxe is pictured emerging from the ruins that he is shown tagging, rather than re-building, since that effort has already been completed. He is using the artform of graffiti (one element of hip-hop) to transform these modern-day urban ruins into something new. That something new, I argue, is a new and subversive expression of German Heimat/en, imagined as both a collective and individual concept. With this, I turn to the Heimatfilm genre and notable citations of it in “Dis wo ich herkomm.”

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\(^{244}\) Hamburg had over 700 bunkers, many of which are underground. See the bunker tourism page on “Hamburg.de.”

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Post-war Film Genres: The Heimatfilm

According to Alexandra Ludewig, the Heimatfilm is experiencing a “renaissance in the twenty-first century” (9). While Ludewig traces the genre over its one-hundred-year history of existence, most scholars, when referring to the genre, consider it in its traditional form as evolving in post-war West Germany. In this period, the Heimatfilm was primarily filmed as a divergence from the destruction of the past and the shadow of National Socialism, which, as previously stated, the rubble film preferred to make visible. Consequently, the Heimatfilme of the 1950s and 60s were often escapist and nostalgic (Fehrenbach, Democratizing Germany 151-52). They were either set or filmed on location in nature, thus, returning Heimat to an idyllic and pastoral landscape that remained completely untouched by war (Ludewig 11). The Heimatfilm as a genre projects the imaginary on screen (Boa and Palfreyman 47) and it has often been read in regard to this as constructing utopic communities or a desired space of escape. One specific imaginary that has also always been at work in Heimatfilme, is the colonial imaginary or the “imperialist imagination” that apprehends Germany only as white. Heimatfilme as well as Heimat portrayed in film and theories have almost always been framed within a predominantly white normative discourse.

It is for this reason that Samy Deluxe’s employment of this specifically German genre and his integration of PoCs into the frame of Heimat serve to break down its

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245 Ludewig argues that Heimat films existed already in the 1920s and 1930s, but have somewhat different characteristics and still approach the concept (10).

246 See Friedrichsmeyer, et al. The Imperialist Imagination.

247 This normative discourse allows whiteness as a frame for the most part to remain invisible. Heide Fehrenbach, Angelika Fenner, and Werner Sollors have addressed this frame in the post-war film Toxi that presents the Afro-German Heimat as outside of Germany (Fehrenbach, Cinema 120, Fenner 191, Sollors 140). There are a few exceptions to this statement. Fatih Akin refers to his own film Soul Kitchen (2009) as a Heimatfilm from a perspective of Color and one that does not present an intact Heimat. For more on this see the article in Spiegel Online, “Soul Kitchen’-Regisseur Fatih Akin: “Ich hatte Bock zu lachen,” the article “Heimatfilm ‘Soul Kitchen’: Fatih Akins letzte Party vor der Yuppies Invasion” in Die Welt, and the Merkur Online article “Interview mit Fatih Akin: ‘Heimat ist ein Zustand im Kopf.’” See also Eichmanns and Franke’s Heimat Goes Mobile. The works included in the volume thematize Heimat in a similar to my own interpretations, but situate it in a much broader context, beyond just the cultural productions of Black Germans. One contribution, however, focuses specifically on a gendered reading of Mo Asumang’s film, Roots Germania that I examine in section five.
colonial attachment to an “us” vs. “them” dichotomy.

On the visual level of “Dis wo ich herkomm,” the shots of trees, fields, and grazing sheep provide images of the idyllic countryside of Northern Germany.

![House with Flag](image1.png) ![Trees in a Field](image2.png)

**Fig. 4.11** Screenshot: House with Flag  
**Fig. 4.12** Screenshot: Trees in a Field

![Grazing Sheep](image3.png)

**Fig. 4.13** Screenshot: Grazing Sheep

Although a majority of *Heimatfilme* take place in Southern Germany, some *Heimatfilme*, in fact, are set in the geographic region of the Luneburger Heide.²⁴⁸ This region is very similar to the natural landscape surrounding Hamburg and is not far from the city itself. The screen shots pictured below of a house with a German flag flying in front of it that the viewer and Samy Deluxe see through the train window, as well as the image of Samy Deluxe standing in the vast wheatfield all look as if they could be taken straight out of a *Heimatfilm* from the 1950s or early 1960s—with the exception that they are filmed in black and white. *Heimatfilme* normally were

²⁴⁸ *Grün ist die Heide* is one of the most popular post-war *Heimatfilme* set in this region.
filmed in Agfa color. Beyond this, they also closely resemble images from Edgar Reitz’s highly ambivalent filmic adaptation of the genre in his eleven episodes of Heimat produced in 1984 that depict the homeland and German Heimat, set in the fictional town of Schabbach, as something both loved and hated (Anton Kaes 16).

Examining the image of the German flag more closely, one could initially view its integration in the music video as a dangerous threat of the return of German nationalism, but instead the lack of color and the torn edges seem to have a toning down affect on the nationalism associated with it, perhaps even rejecting it. This is most evident when the image is associated with Samy Deluxe meditatively peering out of the train window. Though this particular national symbol has been employed in a nationalistic way in the past and even appropriated by many German rappers (particularly those members of Aggro Berlin) who highlight its bold colors and even include “schwarz, rot, gold” in their lyrics, in Samy Deluxe’s music video, this is merely a fleeting moment captured on the train journey. It likely represents the past version of the German nation standing in as Heimat and in its presentation in an old and tattered form is no longer favorable or suitable and is certainly outdated. Furthermore, Samy Deluxe seems to cancel out the meaning of this symbol that stands in for the nation as a homogenously conceived collective entity, by placing it in the context of a multicultural and multiracial German society that is made visible in the individual portraits of people walking about the city in their everyday life. These individuals embody their own unique forms of Heimat, ones that do not necessarily have to be tied to a collective understanding thereof, but can be, if one so chooses to connect it to a larger community.
Heimat at the Local and National Levels

Another factor that breaks down the homogenous conception of Heimat in the music video is its emphasis on the local or regional Heimat. As Samy Deluxe writes in his autobiography, “Manchmal geht es im Hip Hop auch darum, wo man herkommt” (68), which is obviously the case in the music video and song examined here. As referenced in relation to Heimat in the opening section, often the Heimatstadt or the local hometown is viewed as the primary point of reference for constructing a German identity, rather than the national. This depends upon the context of self-positioning\(^{249}\) and with whom one is speaking in Germany. Especially in the immediate post-war period Heimat returned to more regionalized associations that were considered to be safer constructions of Heimat than its constitution through national attachments. The post-war period, thus, signaled a return to nineteenth century articulations of Heimat in regional identities and belonging. Regarding the word Lokalpatriotismus, Samy Deluxe writes “Schon das Wort klingt seltsam, und wenn ich es laut ausspreche, fühle ich mich noch seltsamer. Trotzdem liebe ich keine Stadt so wie Hamburg” (68). Hamburg, Samy Deluxe’s city, serves as the concrete geographic location from which to orient himself and to which he feels connected, even if he did not always possess a sense of belonging to Germany (Dis wo ich herkomm 60-62, 68-69).

Two of Samy Deluxe’s songs in particular, “Hamburg Anthem” and “Hamburg 2009,” address the role of the hometown in shaping and constructing his identity and his own performance thereof as a local patriot. It is, therefore, not surprising that it is also revealed to be the setting of “Dis wo ich herkomm.” Even though it is not immediately apparent in which city this music video is performed and recorded in Germany, the viewer assumes that the location is

\(^{249}\) Samy Deluxe also uses the term Heimat in reference to the German nation on occasion in his songs and in his autobiography. Oftentimes, the nation as Heimat is discussed in relation to other nations such as the U.S. and it is viewed as such while he is located within the United States in his autobiography.
Hamburg, given both the title and the hometown of Samy Deluxe, as well as Hamburg’s appearance and significance in many of his previous music videos. The viewer discovers the identity of the city, at the very latest, in the image of the St. Michael’s church that is briefly reflected in the glass façade of other buildings as the camera zooms by and again in the sign outside of a mosque that clearly states Altona.\textsuperscript{250} Not only currently the site of a large Turkish German community as a result of Turkish German guest-workers moving to Germany in the 1950s and 1960s, Altona is also the disporic site where Sephardic Jews who were fleeing the inquisition in Spain set up a large community (Goldman 253). Consequently, Altona is the site of an expansive Jewish cemetery that is now a protected monument as “the oldest Portugese-Sefardic Jewish Cemetery in Northern Europe” (“Jüdischer Friedhof Altona”), but it also became a site of deportation, due to the expanse of its Jewish community (Hansen 169). The reference to Altona is undeniably a reference to its welcoming of foreigners (at the time) and its diasporic connections to Hamburg, even if these connections are rendered ambivalent in relation to the Nazi past.

In following Aldo Rossi’s interpretation of “the city as the locus of collective memory” (131), Angelika Bammer signals the significance of the city of Hamburg a site of cultural and historical collective memory of the nation at a local level in the article “Hamburg Memories.” Similarly, Natasha Goldman has also indicated the city of Hamburg as a locus in which memory politics have played out in the post-war period, particularly in memorials representing the Holocaust. Goldman remarks that, “the city’s memorials to the victims of World War II demonstrate ambivalence toward its murdered Jewish citizens” (256). However, she claims that evinced in these memorials is that, “responsibility remains absent” (256). But, if they are

\textsuperscript{250} The church was destroyed in the bombings of ’44 and ’45. It serves as a major symbol of Hamburg and can also be found on the two Euro currency coin.
ambivalent, does this mean that any sense of responsibility is completely absent or does it perhaps rather point to the inability to point to one single cause or perpetrator of the Holocaust and Nazi past?

Related to Goldman’s reference to an absent responsibility, Heide Fehrenbach has suggested in regards to the collective memory of film that, “Heimatfilme never mention politics and are stone silent on national socialism (sic)” (Democratizing Germany 153), with a few exceptions. The “silence” of which Fehrenbach writes, I argue, is no longer the case in Samy Deluxe’s Heimatfilm music video. Herein the past comes to life, voicing itself in the present via a brief, but lingering, shot of the memorial created by the National Socialists for the fallen soldiers of World War I that is located in Hamburg Harburg. The absence of responsibility according to Goldman, who has also analyzed this memorial, is, in my opinion, also not completely accurate. I view the responsibility that this memorial presents as one that is layered and not completely defined or finished. The monument, itself, and the counter-monument built in the post-war period to be read in conjunction with the original as pacifist, actually embody the very fact of this layering of historical remembrance and of multidirectional collective memory (Rothberg).

Fig. 4.14 Screenshot: Kriegerdenkmal in Hamburg Harburg ("Dis wo ich herkomm")
Commissioned by the National Socialists, the 1936 portion of the memorial was created to honor the fallen soldiers of the 76th regiment from World War I. This monument is known as the Kriegerdenkmal and was designed by Richard Kuöhl. Part of the inscription reads as follows, “Deutschland muss leben und wenn wir sterben müssen,” emphasizing the soldier’s noble sacrifice of his life for the German fatherland. The message, although embedded in nationalist and National Socialist rhetoric of the time that is also visible in the architectural aesthetic of the monument, is ironically pulled from the text of Heinrich Lersch who was considered an Arbeiterdichter. While the quote does ring true in the sense that the physical/geographic location of Germany will continue to live on even after the death of those who have inhabited it or fought for it, as the Hamburg Free Press already noted in 1946, the Germany that this monument was meant to represent is, in fact, dead (Goldman 260). Thus, the monument actually bears an explicit irony that seems to represent the hubris of the National Socialist’s imagined community of the German nation and is much more representative of a tombstone, than it is of a call to German nationalism in present-day Germany.

Now, rather than glorifying fallen soldiers and the war effort, this particular monument has been situated in relation to a counter-monument against war, with the addition of Alfred Hrdlicka’s Gegendenkmal. The counter-monument produces yet another layer of the collective memory of Hamburg in relation to the space, the monument, and the past. In contrast to the soldiers depicted marching heroically, the counter-monument consists of representations of a piece of a broken swastika (Goldman 261), a burned firebombed soldier from the attack in 1943, and holocaust victims killed at Cap Arcona by British bombings after a “death march to Lübeck Bucht” (Hansen 171), respectively. Interestingly, the Gegendenkmal remains incomplete—

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251 See Goldman 259 and footnote 35 on 271.
252 See footnote 42 in Goldman, page 271.
only two of its conceptualized four parts have been realized, marking actual active status of memory also as unfinished, as Anders Hog Hansen explains in his evaluation of this memorial. “Memory in the forms dealt with here is never conclusive or final and memorials can be an invitation to interpretation and participation,” he writes (178). This comment resembles Iain Chambers’ understanding of history in its inability to maintain itself as a whole and only being capable of existing in fragments. He asserts that it is “re-membered, re-read, and rewritten” (Chambers 4). The “Dis wo ich herkomm” *Heimat* element, thus, functions on the level of national and local *Heimat* in the music video in relation to collective memory. The counter-monument signals an attempt to represent different sides of the victim viewpoint, without attempting to compare them to one another, but it does not present the Jewish victim as a victim at the hands of Germans. Is this responsibility one that just lies in the hands of Germans, or did other countries and their citizens also have their interests in turning a blind eye to the Holocaust? Could it not, then, be the very absence of this element of the counter-monument that makes German responsibility (and the ethical responsibility of all) the most visible, similar to the effect of the absence of post-war ruins in Germany in *Heimatfilme*?

**Uniting Post-war Film Genres: “Dis wo ich herkomm” as a Post-war Hybrid Remix**

What is the result of integrating and adapting elements both of *Trümmerfilme* and *Heimatfilme* into the music video of “Dis wo ich herkomm” and how are they re-imagined therein? How can one read the music video as a new form of a mixed *Heimat/ Trümmerfilm* and what implications might this have in re-framing the two genres and hip-hop in relation to Samy Deluxe’s identity as an Afro-German in the narrative of his nation and national community as well as his local *Heimat*?
The medium of music video lends itself to a combination of the two post-war film genres in that, as Carol Vernallis claims, the music video “straddles the imaginary and the real,” marking it as a hybrid (94). The two post-war film genres converge at the filmic and discursive level in Samy Deluxe’s music video to generate a new condensed and hybrid form of a post-war/post-Wende Heimatfilm. In drawing on elements of the imaginary from the Heimatfilm genre, such as the production of an idyllic utopia and elements of the real from the rubble film, such as the reality of contemporary society, the two meet in the production of a hybrid Heimat that unites the dominant post-war genres of East and West Germany. Like Heimatfilme of the 1950s overlooked the destruction of the past, Samy Deluxe’s new spin on the Heimat/Trümmer hybrid, what I refer to as his post-war Remixfilm, disregards the recent past of divided Germany and the racial violence following the Wende, while acknowledging to some extent the Nazi past and the desire to rebuild or start anew. Remix seems an appropriate term, since it hails from the music scene and includes a reference to re-building and re-envisioning, as well as reunification, in the ‘re’ portion of the word and, in that, mix stands in for the integration of references to the postwar film genres. Although Samy Deluxe is not manipulating the representative films of the past film genres he cites as a remix would imply, he, nevertheless, mixes and blends similar images from them, turning them into a new final product.

In an assessment of what he views as an overlap in the two filmic genres and as part of a ruin aesthetic, Johannes von Moltke describes the German Heimatfilm as “the ultimate example of the post-war Trümmerfilm,” in that “the long traveling shots clearly suggest that the extent of ruination is bounded only by the outer limits of the city itself, where the rubble of the built environment gives way to nature” (411). Following von Moltke’s understanding of Heimatfilme

253 It is also hybrid in that it encompasses film, music, performance, and narrative.
254 He raps, “mir ist egal ob du Ossi bist, Wessi bist” (verse 3, line 1)
as *Trümmerfilme* that connects the dichotomy between land and city, I contend that precisely in the presentation of images of both land and city the two genres converge in “Dis wo ich herkomm.” As Stehle puts it, “Samy Deluxe contrasts contemplative countryside images with the multiethnic urban centers to illustrate his song about his country that is worth working for in spite of its tensions and contradictions” (150). These tensions and contradictions are not only reflected on the visual level in the juxtaposition of country/city, but also in the visual references to Germany’s historic and destructive past in the city and its idyllic, seemingly intact, and healing natural environment.

In his theoretical monograph *Architecture of the City*, Italian architect Aldo Rossi writes of the “natural and artificial homeland” (27), what he views as the city and space created and imagined by humans that we call home and which consists of the architecture of nature, its trees and agricultural landscape, as well as urban high-rise buildings and houses. The term “artificial homeland” refers back to a term employed by the eighteenth century Italian philosopher Carlo Cattaneo’s non-differentiation of city/country in what he views as spaces equally shaped by and resulting from the labor of individuals (34). As Marco Armiero and Marcus Hall maintain, in pushing the theory of Catteneo further, “The dichotomy of artificial and natural, cultural and material is inadequate […] for understanding either one separately or the relationships between the two” (3). The two are therefore inseperable.

The city has often been disputed by theorists of *Heimat* and in *Heimatfilme* representations as to whether or not it could serve as a space in which one could become rooted. As Anton Kaes explains “Heimat was precisely that which was abandoned on the way into the cities; from then [the period of industrialization] on the word ‘Heimat’ began to connote

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255 See, for example, the juxtaposition of city and country in the film *Die Förster vom Silberwald* in which Liesl Leonhard leaves Vienna for the Alpine countryside.
‘region,’ ‘province,’ and ‘country’” (165). In the *Heimatfilm*, the city was a place from which one fled for the country, escaping the threats of an environment that was constructed as dangerous. Similarly, in rubble films, the city represented the forced uprootedness of those who had been made to flee it. Samy Deluxe’s music video reverses this assumption in the mirroring of city and nature that is depicted in the screen shots shown below (Fig. 3.15 and 3.16). Rather than constructed as opposites in “Dis wo ich herkomm,” the two (city/country) reflect and parallel one another. Beyond this, multiple images of trees placed throughout the music video and juxtaposed to life in the city reinforce the fact that it is possible to develop a sense of rootedness or spatial belonging to a *Heimat* that is located in the/a city.

Fig. 4.15 Screenshot: Samy Deluxe in the wheat field

![Screenshot: Samy Deluxe in the wheat field](image1.jpg)

Such a rootedness in the space of the city also means confronting it as a site of collective memory. Having in some ways come to terms with both his Afro-German and national identity, Samy Deluxe desires to move his *Heimat*/society forward. This is referenced in the music video’s integration of means of transportation made possible by industrialization, thereby further connecting the city and *Heimat* to one another. This message is presented in the continual motion of the music video that follows Samy Deluxe’s journeys on the train, in a car, and on the street. It is the new perspective of which Samy Deluxe also speaks in the opening shot of the music video that sets the context for its message.
The video opens with an image of Samy Deluxe standing on the beach at the water’s edge and is shot from a low angle looking up at the radio tower behind him. After a few shots of him walking along the water, a shot of him sitting in a café drinking coffee through a window onto which the life and movement of the city and its people is reflected, is shown, and to which he then begins the song, “Das ist ne neue Perspektive auf den ganzen Scheiß” (“This is a new perspective on all the shit”). This shot then cuts to a location atop of what appears to be the balcony of a high-rise building, depicting Samy Deluxe and the traffic and movement of the city below him. The switch from a low-angle shot to a mid-level shot and then a bird’s-eye view could be interpreted as a slow progression of Heimat images that represent an increasingly positive individual and collective ego as Samy Deluxe refers to it. The reflective thought that goes into this progression is witnessed in the image of Samy Deluxe visible through the café window. This window is not broken and shattered as the one through which Dr. Mertens and Susanne Wallner are framed in the cover image (and one of the final shots of the film) for Die Mörder sind unter uns, in which they are pictured standing in the destroyed house where they live. Rather, the window in the music video featuring Samy Deluxe and the citizens of Hamburg that are reflected in it is whole and repaired. This layered perspective is one that depicts the German Heimat as not simply capable of being viewed from a single frame, but instead many different angles.

In conclusion, Samy Deluxe’s music video re-appropriates, translates, and adapts the genres of Heimatfilme and Trümmerfilme in a modernization effort of the German concept of Heimat. The Heimat in “Dis wo ich herkomm” does not harken back to tradition or exclusively white German origins, or perhaps it does to some extent in its citation of the conventional

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256 One could read this critically from a Marxist perspective in that Samy Deluxe’s video can be interpreted as supporting capitalism (the café and the continuation of the cycle that sustains the market economy).
Heimatfilm, but in doing so ascribes it a new meaning, signaling the transformation of contemporary German society. Heimat/en are represented here in their individual forms through embodiment in diverse identities, by way of a montage of close-up shots of faces, but also read as pieces of a collective German identity tied to a real and specific geographic location (Europe, Germany, and Hamburg) and both cultural and historical memory. This representation shifts the imagined community of German Heimat from a hegemonically white and exclusive discourse to one that resembles other Afro-German productions thereof in its inclusivity and in its performance of diasporic peoples, specifically Germans of Color, as an integral part of the continually changing German landscape or artificial homeland.

Samy Deluxe’s hip-hop song “Dis wo ich herkomm” and video are therefore specifically coded as German cultural productions through both language and thematic content. The background music to which the rap is set is orchestrated in a sense like an anthem of sorts. A violin sets the musical tone, sometimes hitting a sharp note, but toward the end of the song, there is an upbeat segment that focuses in on the violin’s chords. Bringing this instrument to the fore, Samy Deluxe pretends to play the sweet sounding symphony of a new multicultural Germany that is in the air\textsuperscript{257} and at the same time not yet fully visible to all eyes. The invisible violin signals the non-space of Heimat and its imaginary capacity. Culminating on a slightly different note than that of Milagro, a tinge of sharpness remains in both the music and the comment that Samy Deluxe barely makes audible at the end of the music video and song, when he says, “Nur leider sind wir noch nicht soweit.” Is Germany once again met with a turning point where it will fail to (take a positive) turn?\textsuperscript{258}

\textsuperscript{257} Here, I employ this phrasing to evoke its double-meaning. Samy Deluxe plays an air violin, much like one would play an air guitar. Beyond this, multicultural Germany is indeed in the air, in the sense of being present.

\textsuperscript{258} The line, “German history reached its turning point and failed to turn” (Taylor 71), is a famous quote from A.J.P. Taylor, regarding German history and the 1848 revolution that would change the way in which the German nation
The need to continue writing the discourse on positive representations of Germany and to continue writing the nation in Black and white is clear. As long as Germans of Color remain othered and denied their Germanness and as long as Germans are complacent in their victim narration of having to bear the burden of the National Socialist past, rather than actively seeking to change the image and representation of their society in the present, a turn for the positive is likely out of sight. A post-war Heimat in the post-Wende period has yet to become what it has the potential to be. Perhaps the roots of German cultural tradition beyond the post-war period must first be probed and deconstructed in order to envision this change.

The album SchwarzWeiss\textsuperscript{259} is a continuation of this discourse on the intersecting factors of race, Germanness, and belonging to the German Heimat that Samy Deluxe approaches in “Dis wo ich herkomm.” In the song and music video “Poesie Album” from the album SchwarzWeiss, the performative aspects of Germanness and the German literary and cultural Heimat are revealed as elements that produce the German nation as both masculine and white. The final analysis of this section, thus, examines the song and music video “Poesie Album” from the 2011 album SchwarzWeiss within this context.

Transgressing Dichotomies by Performing a Multiracial German Cultural Heimat: A BlackWhite Aesthetic or the Aesthetic of Contradictions in Samy Deluxe’s “Poesie Album”

\begin{quote}
Denn weiß und schwarz sind Kontraste, fast wie Gegenpole
Ein innerer Konflikt, ich fragte mich oft, was wär’ das Leben ohne?
Doch heut’ genieß’ ich meine Farbe wie ein’ Regenbogen
Und ich weiß, nur wenige Menschen hier versteh’n die Strophe

Wie sollt’ ich eins mit mir sein? Ich bin aus zwei gemacht
Den größten Gegensätzen, die es gibt, weiß und schwarz
Und wenn nicht ich weiß wer ich bin, wer weiß es dann?
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{259} This album’s cover was analyzed earlier at the beginning of this section.
Das ist kein Spaziergang im Park, glaub' mir, der Scheiß ist hart
Aber auch wunderschön, denn ich versteh jetzt beide Parts

-Samy Deluxe “SchwarzWeiss”

_BlackWhite_ is a dichotomous pairing that unites the two. As Erika Fischer-Lichte contends in _The Transformative Power of Performance_, “dichotomous pairs such as subject/object and signifier/signified lose their polarity and clear definition in performance; once set in motion they begin to oscillate” (25). It is this transformative power that Samy Deluxe employs on the album _SchwarzWeiss_. By setting the dichotomous pairs into rhythmic and visual motion, he marks their fluidity on multiple discursive levels. The _BlackWhite_ aesthetic or aesthetic of contradictions\(^260\) Samy Deluxe employs is a both/and, not an either/or that utilizes his dual positioning and worldview to unify perceived dichotomies via the act of hip-hop and to advance the inclusion of cultural producers of Color in the German national literary and cultural canon. Not only is this aesthetic visualized in Samy Deluxe’s body as the cover image for this album as explained earlier in the section, but this aesthetic is also referenced in the lyrical content to the song that lends the album its name—“SchwarzWeiss”—as identifiable in the epigraph cited above. As evinced in the above excerpt, a supposed disunity and dissonance exists between black and white that have been constructed as opposites. As an Afro-German, Samy Deluxe physically and mentally embodies what he coins a BlackWhite identity,\(^261\) both an aesthetic and racial marker that does not exist in either of the constructed (aesthetic and racial) discourses that contributed to the binary of black/white that persists today and seems incompatible with the German national imaginary.

In their hegemonically performed versions, national identity and _Heimat_ are similar to

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\(^{261}\) “Ich bin nicht Afro-Deutsch, farbig, ich bin SchwarzWeiss.” (“SchwarzWeiss” verse 3, line 16)
one another in their ability to cover and hide any ambivalence or contradictions in their construction. This ambivalence already demonstrated in previous sections of this dissertation, can be made visible via an examination of the discourses that shape both the German nation and Heimat. While the title song and the album title (SchwarzWeiss) introduce this aesthetic of unified contradictions from Samy Deluxe’s perspective, the song and accompanying music video to “Poesie Album” on this album advance this harmonious pairing further. In the song and video, hip-hop confronts the hegemonic discourse and tradition of German aesthetics via language, lyrical content, and visual imagery, deconstructing and exposing the exclusionary aspects of the German national and cultural literary canon. The video not only references, cites, and even disavows the claims that German culture makes to a “homogenous” nation with bounded origins, but also those that the global hip-hop nation assert and perform. In particular, this is evinced in its engagement with the aesthetic tradition of eighteenth century enlightenment and nineteenth century humanism—a humanism known for its exclusion of the black body from this category and, as a result, for the racialization of the black body—and the engagement with visual representations and essentialized authenticity in African diasporic hip-hop culture.

“Poesie Album” simultaneously addresses the nation, aesthetics, high culture, and the everyday in an analysis of what Michael Skey in his examination of the nation and everyday life articulates as the “certain features [that] become concretised in ‘intertextual chains’ in the process being transformed into common-sense knowledge. This ‘circulation of ideas and images […] objects, people and practices’ […] forms a relatively stable backdrop to everyday life” (42). The stable backdrop in Samy Deluxe’s video “Poesie album” is a backdrop of whiteness that has been shaped by and informed via the cultural and literary canon of works that frame the discourse of the German nation and the philosophical tradition from which they stem. Serving as
the subject that disrupts and interrupts the stability of these ‘intertextual chains’ of whiteness (and Germanness), Samy Deluxe marks the performed stability of these overlapping signifiers and questions the construction of blackness (and Africanity) as binary opposite to its supposedly white European counterpart. The images that Samy Deluxe’s music video employs to reference this constructed distinction is part of the “common-sense knowledge of the German nation” (its culture and aesthetics) that reveal its normative positioning. The construct of the nation and literary Heimat that performs itself as exclusively white (and male) as well as exclusively elite/high culture (and in many cases Classical culture) is transformed into one to which the “low” cultural producer and Afro-German hip-hopper—subversively labeled as poet—both belongs and contributes. In doing so, Samy Deluxe disrupts, among others, the long-standing dichotomies of high/low, black/white, national/transnational, and good/evil in a performance that mocks the very hegemonic structures that have produced and continue to reinforce these classifications. First, a brief excursion into the philosophical discourses that produced a white aesthetic as well as this aesthetic’s relationship to the German national context must be undertaken in order to understand Samy Deluxe’s critique offered in “Poesie Album.”

The Evolution of the German Nation, Race, and Classical Aesthetics

Good art in the sense of the eighteenth and nineteenth century was seen as promoting moral values that would improve a person’s character and thereby society, as articulated, for example, in Schiller’s Über die Aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen (3) and was also viewed as having an aesthetic value, which entailed different meanings for various philosophers.  

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262 Baumgarten was the first German philosopher to develop and articulate a new meaning for the word aesthetics (Buchenau 4). His interpretation of aesthetic judgement was based on senses (affective responses). Even during the Enlightenment period, however, contradictions arose in the theories and philosophies that came into existence, both disputing and supporting Baumgarten’s assessment of aesthetic taste.
good aesthetic taste was a word that many philosophers and authors of the time employed, particularly in relation to poetry or what at the time was referred to as *poesie* (Bodmer, Breitinger, Baumgarten, Gottsched, Winckelmann, etc.). Mostly good art referred to high cultural forms thereof in German culture and also to the works of men. Few women were classified using such descriptors at the time or granted access to this elite sphere, although this is not at all to claim that female authors did not exist. They certainly did, but were excluded from belonging.

Additionally, the ascription of art or an art form to an aesthetic and elite high cultural realm often assumed that the person or persons ascribing the aesthetic qualities to the artwork was not doing so from a subjective positioning. That taste in art is shaped by society through its constructed cultural and aesthetic lens was an aspect Kant failed to consider in conveying an objectively judged aesthetic quality that an artwork could possess in *Kritik der Urteilskraft.* As musicology scholar Michael Fuhr explains, “Geschmack ist demnach sozial produziert und klassenspezifisch differenziert und nicht ahistorisch und universell, wie es die Kantische Ästhetik suggeriert” (Fuhr 103). In their re-examininations of the competing philosophies and aesthetics generated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, contemporary scholars have made the contradictions of such general assertions visible and it is precisely these contradictions that are addressed in Samy Deluxe’s “Poesie Album.”

**Hip-hop Aesthetics and Pop Culture**

Since the aesthetic realm continues to be perceived as an elite sphere to which few artworks and

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263 These two critics are known for their focus on poetics (Buchenau 86). See, for example, *Anklagung des veerhten Geschmackes und Briefwechsel von der Natur des poetischen Geschmacks.*

264 In the second moment of the critique of aesthetic judgement, Kant refers to the beautiful, as “das, was ohne Begriffe, als Objekt eines allgemeinen Wohlgefallens vorgestellt wird” (124) and explains that it is absurd to think that the beautiful object with aesthetic appeal is as such “für mich” (125-136).
artists can gain access, Fuhr explains that cultural studies takes a different approach to the classification of art and to its aesthetic value. The content of an artwork bears more importance than the way in which it is presented (e.g. its form) in cultural studies. Thus, under such circumstances, aesthetic value is transferred to the political realm of an artwork. Fuhr further explains that the fact, “Dass ‘Ideologie’ ein zentrales Konzept der Cultural Studies darstellt, trägt ihrer politischen Dimension Rechnung, haben doch die Bedingungen der Möglichkeiten von Werturteilen sich von einer ästhetischen auf eine politische Ebene verlagert” (Fuhr 99). This means that our assessments of cultural productions become more intertwined with the way in which power shapes our socio-economic and political positionings, as well as our everyday realities.

Hip-hop as a music genre has almost always been relegated to the political sphere and has not been associated with aesthetics or good art due to its popular appeal. Yet, hip-hop, just like literature, can serve as an aesthetic form of societal and political critique. Hip-hop aesthetics encompass a wide range of forms that include the spoken and written word, images, movement and flow, and sound (Smith referenced in Schur 46), and hip-hop can even be perceived as a sort of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in its own right, when it is practiced in all of its forms. In relation to pop culture that is classified under the rubric of cultural studies and thereby excluded from the category of high culture, Gabriele Klein has referred to the elements of differentiation, but also to the points of convergence between this cultural sphere and that of more elitist cultural classifications. She explains that despite the emphasis placed on political value in cultural studies, indeed:

*Popkulturen sind ästhetische Kulturen. Sie sind aber mit einem Denken in binären Begriffspaaren wie Hoch und Massenkultur nicht angemessen zu beschreiben, denn*
Popkulturen beruhen auf ein Verständnis von Kultur, das diese nicht als das ständische oder Bildungs-Privileg weniger begreift, sondern als Bestandteil der alltäglichen Lebenspraxis. Insofern macht es wenig Sinn für eine Analyse von Popkulturen, nach ‘hohen’ oder ‘niedrigen’ Geschmackskulturen zu fragen. (270)

Already in the classification of hip-hop as a part of popular culture, then, the form itself is one that is labeled as calling binary thinking into question.

**Race and Aesthetics**

Similar to the construct of cultural hierarchies and hegemonies that define what is—aesthetically speaking—good art and who makes it are also those hierarchies that contributed to the establishment of racial categories and notions of inferiority and superiority during the Enlightenment and Classical periods. The aesthetics of Lessing,\(^\text{265}\) Hegel, and Kant\(^\text{266}\) and their idealisation of the classical aesthetics of the white body as a form of perfection, as well as their artistic return to traditional Greek art forms influenced and informed one another. This ultimately impacted upon (racial) aesthetics and contributed to the construction of racial difference that was simultaneously occurring in the so-called sciences of the time. Even Kant, who maintained that all humans are indeed human in *Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen*, nevertheless, contributed to the division of people into different racial categories.\(^\text{267}\)

\(^\text{265}\) In his philosophical essay *Laocoön oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, Lessing writes of what he perceives as the disgusting physiognomy and dirty bodies of the Hottentots. He compares them to the harmonious whole of white bodies, particularly as evinced in the statue of Laocoön. “Man weiß, wie schmutzig die Hottentotten sind; und wie vieles sie für schön und zierlich und heilig halten, was uns Ekel und Abscheu erwecket” (Lessing 95). See also Chaouli’s analysis of Lessing in “Laocoön and the Hottentots” in *The German Invention of Race* (24-25).

\(^\text{266}\) See Piesche’s article “Der ‘Fortschritt’ der Aufklärung- Kants ‘Race’ und die Zentrierung des weißen Subjekts” on Kant and race in *Mythen Masken und Subjekte*.

\(^\text{267}\) He writes that whites and blacks, “zwar nicht verschiedene Arten von Menschen (den sie gehören vermuthlich zu einem Stamme), aber doch zwei verschiedene Racen; weil jede derselben sich in allen Landstrichen perpetuirt (sic) und beide mit einander nothwendig halbschlächtige Kinder, oder Blendlinge (Mulatten), erzeugen” (Kant 316).
Such taxonomy was established through a hierarchy that Kant perceived as the different levels of civilization and Enlightenment of Africans in relation to Europeans (36-37). Race itself in Kant’s work, while referring to both whites and blacks, is still produced in a way that others, whereas whiteness is able to maintain itself as an unmarked position of the “white speaking subject” (Piesche 33). According to Peggy Piesche “Völker, die mit dem Begriff der Zivilisation verbunden werden, haben bzw. sind keine Rassen oder haben vielmehr dieses Studium überwunden, sind dieser Stufe quasi entwachsen” (33). White Europeans, thus, had created their own way out of racial categorization. Advancing this reading of the division of the human race, Hegel justified slavery as a means of potentially enlightening Africans who were viewed as not yet at the stage to do so themselves (Piesche 33). Characteristics such as these that were attached to black bodies and specifically to Africans in the theoretical texts of Hegel and Kant constructed racial difference. They also became associated with national character (Piesche 37). Over time blackness was produced as a construct in opposition to whiteness and the two were marked as incompatible as were Germanness and blackness. The philosophical works written by white European philosophers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would come to form the core of the canonical (white) body of German national literary culture and the representative body of the German nation. This meant that the nation and its cultural inheritance would be conceived and perceived of as white in its enlightened context and during the time of transition to a German cultural nation.

**The Rise of the German Kulturnation**

German historian Friedrich Meinecke has differentiated between the construction of the *Staatsnation* and the *Kulturnation*. According to his interpretation thereof, a *Staatsnation* is
understood as a collective entity that has established itself through political history and is based on a common constitution (3-4). The *Kulturnation*, in contrast, refers to a common and inherited cultural tradition that is familiar to the majority of a specific culture’s citizens. In the German context, the *Kulturnation* was constructed not only in relation to the famous *Dichter und Denker*,\(^{268}\) but also to the traditional *Volkskultur* such as the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and *Volkslieder* of the Romantic period in German literature. While the most famous poets and thinkers of German culture are still Goethe and Schiller—representatives of German (Weimar) Classicism—, many famous authors and writers (women and men) have preceded and followed them, all of whom shape the German nation as well as its cultural body of literature.

The works of Herder (especially his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*) were particularly integral to the configuration of a united Germany in the nineteenth century that founded itself on a common culture and language (Traub).\(^{269}\) Herder’s take on German culture and the German literary tradition was one that diverged somewhat from the Classicist tradition of imitation that Winckelmann previously had promoted (*Nachahmung*) in that Herder focused on historicism grounded in specifically German cultural tradition and emphasized the importance of socio-historical context in which Germany found itself. German national character was something that Herder perceived of as tied to the *Volk* (and *Volkslied* as one specifically German art form) and Herder also looked to Shakespeare (referenced in the

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\(^{268}\) This is the term used to refer specifically to philosophers, authors, and poets of the Enlightenment and Classical period in Germany, but also applies to the rich literary, philosophical, and cultural tradition that stems from German culture.

\(^{269}\) In his article “Begeisterung für das Vaterland” published in the Spiegel special edition, Traub explains, “Vor allem Johann Gottfried Herder (1744 bis 1803), Oberhofprediger in Weimar, setzte sich nachdrücklich dafür ein, in den Zeugnissen deutscher Sprache und Kultur eine gemeinsame Nation zu entdecken. Diese Kulturnation war für ihn, anders als der Flickenteppich politisch impotenter Kleinstaaten, das echte und ursprüngliche Deutschland. ‘Von deutscher Art und Kunst’ lautete etwas der programmatische Titel einer Textsammlung, die Herder 1773 publizierte.”
lyrics to “Poesie Album” as an excellent example of how German culture could develop its own sense of self, rather than just referencing and adopting/imitating other cultures and cultural periods. In this way, Herder’s ideas of how German literary culture should position itself helped to shape the nation and inevitably also German conceptions of Heimat.

Embedding, Adapting, and Parodying the Discourses of Aesthetics, Race, Nation, and Gender

The German Kulturnation produced in relation to the aesthetic and philosophical discourses of the Enlightenment and Romantic periods, in addition to the cultural and literary inheritance left behind by Germany’s Dichter und Denker are at the center of Samy Deluxe’s “Poesie Album.” Numerous elements in the song and music video point to Samy Deluxe’s play on the competing discourses that erupted during this time. In reference to other hip-hop performers whose songs he claims would not be downloaded from the internet today even if they were available for free online—marking the songs as not good in aesthetic quality, Samy Deluxe raps “Keiner mit Geschmack hätte sie runtergeladen” (my emphasis). This comment not only critiques the work of other rappers in Germany, but also situates hip-hop within aesthetic discourse in his use of the word Geschmack that is most often employed in relation to High German culture. In adopting the aesthetic judgement of the Enlightenment period, Samy Deluxe regards his hip-hop contemporaries as ruining the “Kunstform” that he helped to build (verse 2 line 28): “Denn ich hab’ dieses Haus hier mit aufgebaut/ ihr habt’s demoliert, ich hab’ s renoviert” (“Poesie Album” verse 1 lines 29-30). Rather than creating, they are destructive for the art of hip-hop.

Beyond this, Samy Deluxe raps, “Wenn ihr noch mehr wollt/ füttere ich euch deutschen

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Dichtern Reime bis ihr alle brecht wie Bertolt/ das ist für mich ein echter Erfolg/ wenn der Text noch mehr rollt” (“Poesie Album” verse 2, lines 4-6). The lines here have a double meaning in that Samy Deluxe could be feeding the German poets rhymes from high culture (poetry and literature) or low culture (hip-hop). The formulation is meant to blur the boundary between the two and function ambiguously in the feeding of rhymes (whichever classification might be meant) to the German poets until they purge. In German, brechen means to vomit and it appears here in the conjugated form as brecht. This pun is not only a reference to Bertolt Brecht, as made evident in the explicit statement of his name, but also refers to carthartic release in the Classical period, something that Brecht viewed as a dangerous form of self-identification with characters in his drama theory and his concept of the Verfremdungseffekt.

Other elements that point to the aesthetic and philosophical discourse of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are when Samy Deluxe boasts, that he is just as good of a poet as Goethe and Schiller, but rather than good, he marks himself as “bitter und böse” (“Poesie Album” verse 2 line 1). In the opening lines of the song’s lyrics “Hallo Deutschland, kennt ihr mich noch?/ Kennt ihr das noch? Echten HipHop!/ In ’nem Land, wo man sogar mit ’nem Hit floppt” (“Poesie Album” verse 1, lines 1-3), he even adapts lines from Goethe’s poem “Mignon,” which offer a new spin on the classical poem’s famous phrase “Kennt ihr das Land wo die Zitronen blühen?” (verse 1 line 1). These examples of Samy Deluxe’s integration of high culture into what has often been perceived as low culture, enable him to write himself into the context of high culture and that of the German national culture/ Kulturnation through a parodic performance.

Later on in the song, Deluxe even engages famous German male authors of the twentieth century, claiming that if he were not a hip-hop star he would probably be the new Erich Kästner.
Not just a name known to every household in Germany, Erich Kästner was also a satirical and critical socio-political author, who is considered by many to have entered into an inner exile as a result of the censorship he faced under the National Socialist regime due to his oppositional stance (Drouve 155). Nevertheless, he wrote the script for the Nazi film *Münchhausen* under a pseudonym, marking his political positioning as somewhat ambivalent and difficult to pinpoint. This reference to Erich Kästner could be interpreted in relation to Samy Deluxe’s past works, in particular, “Dis wo ich herkomm” and his ambivalent commentary in relation to the German past. Additionally, Kästner’s most famous works appealed to and were written for German youth, similar to the context of Samy Deluxe’s hip-hop that appeals to a younger generation. In traversing all of these high and low cultural boundaries in this song, Samy Deluxe performs an act that Richard Schur argues in his analysis of hip-hop aesthetics and parody “mocks dominant culture” (32). Via parody, the German nation’s hegemonic aesthetic that continues to be performed by white male (literary) culture is deconstructed.

Furthermore, in the music video, blackness as binary opposite to whiteness is presented in the essentialized image of the black male (“primitive”) body made visible. This image is displayed when Samy Deluxe raps “Singer und Rapper klingen als hätten sie nie Hunger gehabt” (“Poesie Album” verse 1 line 14-15). The caricature, with its exaggerated facial features is of a supposedly starving and begging African man holding a sign that says “hunger” and who is donning a basketball jersey. Combined in the drawing are both Germany’s negative and “positive”\(^{271}\) racist projections inscribed onto the black body, in addition to transnational projections, including racial stereotypes of the African diaspora in the U.S. as well as global hip-hop’s “authentic” representations presented in the reference to basketball and blackness.

\(^{271}\) Positive racism refers to skills that are “desirable” and associated with blackness, such as dancing, singing, and playing sports. Though no form of racism can actually be positive, it is viewed as such by those who ascribe these traits to black bodies.
The visual reference to starving Africans mocks or parodies the German national aesthetic and media representation of blackness or what Kimberly Singeltary refers to as a *Nothilfe Aesthetic*. Referring to the imprisoned state of the black body in Germany (and the U.S.), she defines the *Nothilfe* Aesthetic as “a blending of both German and English to mark the similarities of attitudes toward Othered bodies in media representation. It is related to politics of race, racial exclusion, and racial visibility” (Singletary 2). Suggesting that the concept of white charity and the images it produces shape the *Nothilfe* Aesthetic (posters of starving African children, etc.), she elaborates on this theoretical concept as “an emergency aid aesthetic—that centers blacks in a perpetual state of emergency and implores people to recognize injustice through a narrow understanding of the black experience” (2). The performative German national, cultural, and racial aesthetic that articulates blackness in a stereotyped fashion is exposed here as farcical. It converges with the global hip-hop nation’s stereotypical self-performance of authenticity to equally expose the performative nature of hip-hop’s origin narrative. Aside from Samy Deluxe and the drawings that his pen creates of himself as hip-hopper in the poesie album (which could be read as his Doppelgänger within the context of the video), it is the only image of a black body/person that is represented in the video.
While the black body is featured multiple times in the poesie album, it is the male body that is portrayed. There are only two moments in which women are visualized and mentioned in the video and its lyrics. At one point in the song Samy Deluxe refers to the need for better hip-hoppers in Germany and explains that these singers must not just be men “sag mir den Namen und ich nehm ihn unter Vertrag, oder die oder sie ganz egal wer es ist” (verse 1 line 10). In this line, Samy Deluxe exposes the performance of hip-hop as a strictly masculine space and even suggests a queering of gender in the employment of the “es” form within the lexical construct, a bold move for a hip-hop performer. Another moment in which the performance of hip-hop as gendered is revealed on the pages of the poesie album in the video is when the page displays an image of a topless woman jumping out of the water on a beach. In the documentary to the making of the video, Samy Deluxe explains that this was intended to point out the fact that hip-hop music videos gain their authenticity by employing female bodies as a sexual element to spice up the song’s music video. In these performative acts, gender is revealed as a structure in the making of the ‘authentic’ hip-hop narrative and performances of masculinity.

**Time for a Remake: “Poesie Album” as an Aesthetic Operation**

The concept of projections in the music video to the song is exposed in the very opening shot. Samy Deluxe sits at a desk before a solid white background in what appears to be an
industrial space. This space can be read as one that Carol Vernallis’ discusses in her analysis of music videos in which she claims that “[v]ideos that place the star against a white background or in a desert also seem to return us to a performance setting” (83). Performance coincides in the music video in this particular space with aesthetics. The performance setting is tied to the performance of race and the white German nation, since the wall behind him takes the shape of a projection screen before which he is seated. The white projection screen not only signals the construct of whiteness as that which is invisible or unmarked, but also references the “unbeschriebenes Blatt” or empty page/s of the poesie album that lie before him on the desk. The pages of the poesie album expose the seam of whiteness that is to be kept hidden, since “nascent aesthetics required the beautiful human body be covered by a skin which bespoke a seamless and colorless—that is, a white—surface” (Eigen, Larrimore 3). This surface is made visible by blackness.

With fountain pen in hand, the viewer watches Samy Deluxe while taking in the objects surrounding him and the props of the mis-en-scene contribute meaning to the song and video’s narration. While the space in which he sits is perhaps not one we would immediately associate with the Dichter und Denker of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the closer the viewer gets, the better the space can be understood in precisely this context. In this space, the eighteenth and nineteenth century and the present collide. The initial movement of the camera is a tracking shot that zooms in as the viewer slowly discovers a bust of Schiller perched atop the desk. Other props on the desk include an inkbottle for the pen, a stamp on the table, and a lamp with the base made out of what appears to be a revolver. As the video continues, Samy dips the pen

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272 This is the title of another single on the album Schwarz Weiss.
273 This recalls the unification of these supposedly contrasting aesthetic forms in the mise-en-scene of the opening scene of Armin Völcker’s film Leroy, in the reference made to the Classical tradition as well as Black aesthetics in this film in the very opening scene when the viewer first sees Leroy’s Afro and the camera pans the room revealing the bust of Goethe.
and starts to compile his poesie album, filling it with words, lyrics, and images (drawings and cut-outs or Scherenschnitte).

**Scherenschnitt/Hautschnitt**

In the music video, the line between Scherenschnitt\(^{274}\) and graffiti paste-ups is blurred (similar to the bluring of poetry and hip-hop discussed earlier), signaling the similarities in the two art forms that only differ in the socio-historical contexts in which they were created and their ascribed political significance versus aesthetic value. The former being tied to graffiti and low culture and the latter being tied to Scherenschnitte and high culture and Heimatkunst. As the Scherenschnitte roll onto the poesie album’s pages, they bring to mind the paste-ups of graffiti artists in the hip-hop scene. The employment of the Scherenschnitt, which was a proper art form in the eighteenth century, in the music video “Poesie Album” is representative of the actual content of such poesie albums in their historical character, but is also a symbolic representation of cosmetic or aesthetic surgery that Samy Deluxe performs in the video on the pages of the album.

Donning what appears to be a white lab coat, Samy Deluxe can be interpreted as a doctor, perhaps a psychologist who dissects the construct of the white German nation, white aesthetics, and white German (masculine) culture and who in the song’s lyrics pathologizes the white German psyche.\(^{275}\) In addition to this pathologization of the performance of whiteness, Samy Deluxe performs aesthetic or cosmetic surgery (Schönheitsoperation) on the German nation by inserting himself into its literary tradition. One could argue that the fountain pen’s point and its penetration (via black ink) of the white skin of the album’s pages resembles a scalpel. Thus, it can be read as cutting open the white pages (and the white German nation as cultural projection) and

\(^{274}\) It is also something that one might find in a German Heimatmuseum.

\(^{275}\) Among all of the other images that the music video presents to the viewer, a Rorschach image of Samy Deluxe appears in the poesie album on the desk at one point in the song’s performance.
the ink as the blood flowing from the wounds it imparts through a (surgical) cut in the skin (Hautschnitt). This visual connection is made at the end of the music video when amidst the blood-stained (or ink-covered) pages on the desk the surgical scissors become visible. They are not only capable of making the Scherenschnitte, but also Hautschnitte. Read within this context, the pathology of the nation is diagnosed and an attempt to heal it is made through an aesthetic or cosmetic surgery that Samy Deluxe performs. The music video implants the Black German subject and blackness into the cultural construct of the homogenously conceived German nation, cultural/literary canon, and in conjunction with this, the performance of Heimat.

**Conclusion: Samy Deluxe’s Heimat Performances at the Intersection of Nation, Race, and Gender**

Placing himself on equal footing with famous German authors in the song and music video “Poesie Album” is a performative move or hip-hop battle to re-write the culture of the German nation and to bring that which is considered unheimlich (blackness) home to the white aesthetic tradition in Germany. The BlackWhite aesthetics or aesthetics of contradiction that Samy Deluxe employs reveals the copy or performativity of race and the German Kulturnation. Samy Deluxe is the uncanny element that haunts the pages as his doppelgänger self is presented within the poesie album. He embodies the Fremde [“Ich bin nur ein Fremder und habe mich aus Versehen hier verirrt” (verse 1, line 36)] who has accidentally gotten lost in the maze (represented in the video’s images) or haze of the hegemonic white German cultural tradition. Aside from this, he also embodies the uncanny fear of miscegenation that haunts the German cultural nation and its aesthetic construction of the canonical literary Heimat as both white and male. The parody of

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276 He raps about his hip-hop flow and text being, “so flüssig und heilend nenn’ ihn Elixer, das ist Zaubertrank, bitte merk’s dir” (verse 2, lines 29-30).
German literary culture and its representative white male German authors are employed as linguistic puns to integrate those who shape the German canon into the text and mark himself as one of them: “Lass sie alle reden, lass die Halle beben/ was für’n geiles Leben, ich mache Scheine scheine/ indem ich Reime reime so wie Heinrich Heine/ Album kommt im Frühjahr/ und meine Konkurrenz wird spätestens/ im August ein’ Fall erleben/ der Richter und Henker für Dichter und Denker” (bridge, lines 1-7). His hip-hop battle with them in this song passes aesthetic judgement on them,\(^{277}\) enabling Samy Deluxe to become the judge and hangman for the poets and hip-hop singers of Germany\(^ {278}\) (bridge, line 7) as “der beste Poet, der hier [in Deutschland] lebt” (verse 2, line 2). This critique of other hip-hop artists and the literal death or hanging of the author/s of the German literary elite as well as hip-hop battle culture marks Samy Deluxe as their *Richter und Henker*.

In addition to a space of re-writing and re-defining the German *Heimat* as individualized and as accessible to Afro-Germans, hip-hop becomes a way in which the artist—here, Samy Deluxe, can insert himself—through an incision—into the nation and its homogenous conception of a white aesthetics via a different form of storytelling. By utilizing existing discourses and citing previous cultural points of reference, Samy Deluxe employs the African diasporic tradition of hip-hop to recreate hybrid *BlackWhite Heimat* spaces. Much like autobiography and other forms of self-narration, hip-hop possesses unique elements that allow the performer of the text to write “oneself into the nation” (Wright 192). Samy Deluxe’s hip-hop serves as a space for the production of counter-discourses that reveal the phony performance of an imagined origin and homogenously constructed national identity as well as a purportedly authentic hip-hop identity.

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\(^{277}\) This is referenced in the DVD *Up2Date* produced as a behind the scenes look at the making of the music video.

\(^{278}\) This is a reference to lines in Karl Kraus’ *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* that was mocking the “Volk der Dichter und Denker” with the phrase “Volk der Richter und Henker.” *Der Richter und sein Henker* is also the title of a Dürrenmatt novella (144).
that also has always been adaptive and transnational. Although his critique of racial discourses and exclusion is one to be celebrated, his critique of gender exclusion still leaves much to be considered.
Unmapping, Re-Framing, and Documenting *Heimat/en* on Film

**Afro-German *Heimat/en* in Sven Halafar’s *Yes I am!* (2006) and Mo Asumang’s *Roots***

**Germania (2007)**

In the poem “enfernte verbindungen” from which the epigraph for this section is taken, May Ayim writes of the space of her home as that which is between continents and connected through distance. The English version of this poem translates the last line of the poem, “daheim unterwegs” as “on the road at home” (*Blues in Black and White* 23). Yet the failure of translation and its inability to often express the double meanings of words in other languages is evinced here. While the translation offers one viable option for the phrase, another would be “at home on the road.” This means that not only is Ayim traveling at home (in the geographic location or specific place/space she refers to as *daheim*) in a nomadic sense, as I have explained in section two in relation to Afro-Germans, but also that she feels at home when doing so—travel or being in transit is the site where she locates her home and home is considered the site/s of this transit. It is the spaces and paths in-between, the interstitial points of connection or “verbindungen” that produce her sense of home in the poem. Significant is that rather than reading this separation through distance as that which marks spaces/cultures/continents as other or different, Ayim reads this distance as capable of producing relational points.

While the poem thematizes and performs the embodiment of home on the road, it is not the only genre that is able to do so. Documentary/travel films and road movies are other media
through which home can be depicted as “on the road” and they differ from spoken word poetry in that they can take the viewer along to experience the journey, albeit from a distance, as well. They are in this way potentially more akin to representing the spaces of multiple Heimat/en that are in motion or transportable and that are constructed via paths and journeys captured in the camera’s lens. Through visual and narrative elements, the frames or shots of documentaries are strung together to connect great spatial and/or geographic distances. Two contemporary Black German documentary films focus on precisely those “distant connections/connected distances” to which Ayim refers in her poem. They are Sven Halafar’s Yes I am! (2006) and Mo Asumang’s Roots Germania (2007). Although Sven Halafar is not a Black German, but rather a white German filmmaker, his documentary film Yes I am! can be considered a Black German cultural production in a broader sense, given that: Black Germans are the protagonists; they had input in the filmmaking process (even if not the final say in the actual content selected); and their stories serve as the basis of the film. Mo Asumang, on the other hand, is, however, a Black German. She was the first Black German moderator to appear on German television and is an actress as well as documentary filmmaker who directed and produced Roots Germania. Since filming Roots Germania, she has directed the film Road to Rainbow (2010), which focuses on the aftermath of apartheid in contemporary South Africa and Die Arier (2014), which aired on German public television (ARD) in April of 2014, in which she confronts both neo-Nazis and KKK members face-to-face.

279 The film depicts excerpts from the lives of two Black German members of the Brothers Keepers, which is a collective of fourteen musicians who came together in 2001 to form an anti-racism projet. A member of Sisters Keepers, part of a subgroup of Brothers Keepers, is also one of the protagonists. Brothers Keepers gained particular attention following the brutal murdering of the Angolan Adriano Alberto in Dessau in 2000 and their release of “Adriano, letzte Warnung.” For more information see Ade Odukoya’s “Die Brothers Keepers Story” in The Black Book, 345-356 and El-Tayeb’s article “If You Can’t Pronounce My Name You Can Just Call Me Pride.” The group’s release of the hit single “Adriano, Letzte Warnung” on the album Leitkultur, which topped the singles charts and was awarded a 1 Live Krone for best single. The song hit the top five and maintained a position in the top ten for approximately six weeks after its release. The song is also featured in the film, which I will return to later in my analysis.
Both of the documentary films, *Yes I am!* and *Roots Germania*, are post-Wende films that are autobiographical. They narrate experiences and excerpts from the lives of the protagonists and can be read within the context of what Robin Curtis and Angelica Fenner deem representative German documentary films in the postunification period in which “a turn toward the first-person stance” could once again be seen (5). Emphasizing the cultural locatedness of autobiography and autobiographical films of the documentary genre, Curtis and Fenner view cultural positioning as a factor that determines how the self is narrated (2). Yet, in their reference to “the culture in question” (2, my emphasis), Curtis and Fenner seem to allow room for only a singular positioning. This implies from the outset an I-narrator who is at home in just one (i.e. homogenous German) culture. What, then, are we to make of those I-narrators who are positioned within German culture, but engaging in and even existing in multiple cultural contexts or the spaces in-between, as is the case in the films addressed here and how can these narrators also be read in the context of travel writing?

Both contemporary autobiographical documentary and travel narratives are first-person accounts. As Tim Youngs expresses, “travel writing consists of predominantly factual, first-person prose accounts of travels that have been undertaken by the author-narrator.” (3). There are of course exceptions to this. The narrative instance becomes much more complicated when the filmmaker is not the same as the narrator (as is the case in *Yes I am!*), meaning that the story being told may not be exactly how the narrator initially imagined it. The visuals selected may also narrate a different story or counter that which was intended by the author/narrator or his or her narration of self. Nevertheless, the narratives told in autobiographical documentaries offer

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280 In the first film analyzed here, *Yes I am!*, the ‘I’ is already extant in the title.

281 In *Yes I am!*, there are a few instances where Odukoya’s words and claims contrast the images presented. The most obvious occurs at the very beginning of the film when Odukoya tells his son that most rappers use their hands and his son asks if he does it too, or not. Odukoya answers that he does not (though it is not certain whether he is
an opportunity to engage in the constructed stories that are produced and can be interpreted in the context of travel writing and travel film.

The literature originally ascribed to travel literature is often perceived as colonized in its failure to look beyond whiteness to postcolonial (con)texts and in its failure to point out similarities or the ability of multiple cultures to co-exist harmoniously, nevertheless, this is changing in contemporary times. Postcolonial subjects are themselves writing, traveling, and narrating and, in this particular case, hail from and are at home in Europe, even if denied a sense of belonging or home by others. The documentary films and the two protagonists’ narrations of Heimat that form the center of this analysis—Adé (Bantu) Odukoya (Yes I am!) and Mo Asumang (Roots Germania), respectively—offer new perspectives on autobiographical documentaries as travel writing from Black German positioning/s that seek to define Heimat as located in more than one cultural location. The distant connections shaped by both geographical and filial bonds via visual representation and the narrative spaces of Black German Heimat/en are explored.

First, this final section provides an overview of the selected documentaries and the multiple cultural contexts to which they speak. Following the overview, a framework of travel writing and travelogues is established, within which it is possible to read both films as an undoing of the traditional dichotomies found in travel literature from the nineteenth century that sought to distinguish between an us/them, self/other, and Fremde/Heimat and that is also perpetuated by the protagonists’ white German mothers. Rather than dramatize “a separation serious) as the shot cuts to a clip of him rapping and throwing his arms around to the music as he sings. Thus, editing is a form of narration on the part of the director, producer, and/or editor that can transform the intended narration, or at the very least call it into question.

282 While travel literature existed before the nineteenth century, it was beginning in the eighteenth century that constructions of the self and Other began to form and travel literature of the nineteenth century (particularly during the period of colonization and imperialism) produced an even distinct division between these two. For more on the construction of the self and Other in eighteenth century Germany, see Piesche’s “Geschichtsphilosophisches Erbe der Aufklärung- Die Konstruktion des Selbst im 18. Jahrhundert.”
between races, cultures, histories, within histories—a separation between before and after that repeats obsessively the mythical moment or disjunction” (Bhabha, *The Location* 82), these documentaries instead serve to connect seemingly dichotomous pairs through their hybridity, exposing the constructedness and performativity of racial and cultural binarisms and/or oppositions.

**What’s in a Name: National and Transnational/Transcultural References**

Already in the titles of the chosen documentary films that are transnational—positioning themselves in and across more than one nation, rather than being merely nation-specific—a dual locality is discernible. The title, *Yes I am!*, borrows its name from the well-known response in contemporary cultural productions to a question that is a Biblical citation: “Am I my Brother’s Keeper?”283 This question is also a reference that resonates in the African diasporic community and is found in multiple cultural productions, particularly music produced by People of Color.284 The question is in some sense problematic in that it focuses exclusively on the protection of the male (brother), but it can also be read inclusively in that it asks one to consider one’s self as ethically bound to the protection of others and not simply just the self.285 In the context of the African diasporic tradition, the question has been posed with regard to the defense of one’s male brothers of Color who, particularly in Germany (and in the U.S.), have become the most visible victims at the hands of institutional racial violence, racial hatred, and racial profiling.286

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283 This references the Biblical narrative of Cain and Able in Genesis 4:9.
284 A number of songs exist by Black musicians entitled *Brother’s Keeper* or *Yes I am* or some other slight variation thereof.
285 While I will not go into detail here in regard to theories related to the ethics and politics of life and death, for more information, see Mbembe’s “Necropolitics” Foucault *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Judith Butler’s *Precarious Life*, and Lévinas’ *Humanism of the Other*.
286 Most of these deaths brought about by right-wing extremist violence have occurred in the former East of Germany. Adriano Alberto (2000, Dessau), Antonio Amadeu Kiowa (1990, Eberswalde), Oury Jalloh (2005 in Dessau), etc. This is not to discount the experiences had by Black German women which are countless and although
Furthermore, the title of the film also references the music collective Brothers Keepers, given that the title is the response to the question “Am I my Brother’s Keeper?” Some of the protagonists featured in the film belong to this group, to which I return to a bit later in my analyses.

In addition to the question of “Am I my brother’s keeper?,” another question is approached in the documentary film and posed on the cover image for the DVD: “Bist du stolz, deutsch zu sein?” This is then followed by the title of the film, *Yes I am!* This particular question refers not only to statements made by Odukoya in regards to his German identity on the accompanying DVD with extras, when he explains, “Ich bin stolz ein Deutscher zu sein. Identität muss nicht immer nationalsozialistisch sein. Und das ist wichtig” (*Yes I am! Extras*), but also to his questioning of school children in East Germany during a visit by some members of the Brothers/Sisters Keepers as to whether or not they consider it is possible for Black Germans to be proud of their German heritage and identity. While visiting the school, Odukoya pointedly asks, “Kann man sich das wirklich vorstellen, dass schwarze Menschen sich als Deutsche fühlen oder sich (sic) deutsch bezeichnen?” To which one white student in the classroom responded: “Sie haben eigentlich eine andere Heimat. Deutschland ist eigentlich nicht ihr Vaterland. Also, wenn sie andersfarbig sind, dann heißt es eigentlich automatisch, dass sie aus einem anderen Land stammen” (*Yes I am!*). This quote from a student reveals the conflation of German *Heimat* with the German nation (fatherland) and race/assumed culture that excludes the Afro-German subject from belonging, but the self positioning of the Afro-German protagonists throughout the film and in response to this student’s reaction negate this essentialized German national *Heimat* less often ending in death are not less worthy of attention. Wappler’s narratives in *Yes I am!* bring these experiences to light.
narrative of belonging. The protagonists are positioned at the intersection of two or more cultures, even if in some cases they are only actually fully identifying with the German one.\(^{287}\)

In claiming pride in their German identity, Adé Odukoya, Mamadee Wappler, D-Flame, Afrob, and Samy Deluxe (all present on the school tour) force a reconsideration of what it means to be German. They verbally and physically remove this sense of German pride from its associations with the National Socialist past as well as its persistence in the (exclusive national and nationalist) present as Black Germans who identify with the German nation and are Germans. In his constative utterances Afrob states in reference to himself and to Wappler, “Ich mein, ich hab’ ‘n deutschen Pass, ja, sie hat ‘n deutschen Pass.” Whereas in the (National Socialist) past this political document—the passport—would have been denied them as a result of their racial (and cultural identity), they now utilize it to reference their Germanness and the state’s recognition thereof as already demonstrated in previous sections of this dissertation in other Black German cultural productions. Wappler’s response asserts, “Ich bin auch Deutsche. Ich fühle mich hier auch wohl. Ich kenne es ja gar nicht anders. Ich bin seit meiner Geburt irgendwie hier in Deutschland aufgewachsen. Wenn jemand sagt zu mir ‘Ausländer raus,’ dann denke ich mir, wo soll ich denn hingehen bitte?”\(^{288}\)

Placing emphasis on the word “bin” or am in the affirmation of her personal and national identity, Wappler like many of her Afro-German predecessors ignores the denial of her identity by others and re-asserts and re-claims her space of home in Germany.\(^{289}\)

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\(^{287}\) Mamadee Wappler refers to this openly explaining that she is unfamiliar with her father’s country or culture, when she discusses making friends with Africans from Sierra Leone, where her father is from. She openly explains her lack of knowledge regarding this side of her cultural heritage. This is another way she establishes her distant connections, without even having to journey to the geographic location of Sierre Leone.

\(^{288}\) This student’s response and Wappler’s reaction to it can be read in conjunction with El-Tayeb’s comments that still, “Today, […] whoever does not conform to a certain physical image of ‘Germanness’ is considered a ‘foreigner’. […] Until proven otherwise, they are ‘outsiders’ who are expected to be very literally on their (natural) way out of a nation they cannot belong to” (463). See also Campt, “Politics of Positionality” 11.

\(^{289}\) See Piesche’s contribution “Identität und Wahrnehmung in literarischen Texten Schwarzer deutscher Autorinnen
Germans to be a foreigner, Wappler reverses the question often posed to her, asking to where she, as a German should return, given her status of already being at home.

Both Afrob and Wappler demonstrate their agency in expressing who and what they consider themselves to be in terms of their cultural and national identity, beyond ideologically ascribed categories of race that supposedly determine either their national belonging or exclusion. Afrob draws on nationality provided and signified through the possession of a German passport that symbolizes his citizenship and belonging to the collective German nation, whereas Wappler draws on her own personal connections to her individualized German sense and feeling of Heimat. Not only National Socialist and neo-Nazi ideology, but also the national construct itself that excludes those who are perceived of as other are, resultantly, turned on their heads because it becomes undeniable that Germanness can not be equated to whiteness or white (Aryan) supremacist ideology (and actually never could be, since Germaness interpreted as white is exposed as a mere construct). Despite attempts by others to fix Black German identity as located outside of the German national body, the self-definitions and self-narrations that comprise Yes I am! counter those efforts by (re-)claiming a space for Black Germans both positioned in Germany and any other additional cultural location/s.

The title of Asumang’s film similarly refers to her multiple points of cultural location. Roots Germania quite obviously refers to roots, something, which are often seen as being firmly in place, but which are also capable of being transplanted by an outside agent or the self, i.e. uprooted and placed elsewhere. This is representative of Asumang’s experiences in Germany, of her constant dis/placement and uprooting by others and of also being told to return home (similarly to the protagonists in Yes I am!), wherever this might be perceived by others to be
located. According to numerous white Germans presented in her interviews, Germany supposedly cannot be her place of origin. Nevertheless, Germany is indeed a site of her origins, roots, and home, as the film demonstrates in her search for roots within the German nation. Not only looking for her roots in Germany, but also in the diasporic home space of Ghana, the word roots in the title signifies her African diasporic ties and serves as a reference to the American television miniseries Roots that attained international acclaim in the late 1970s. It focused on the real life of the historical figure Kunta Kinte and his entry into slavery via the Middle Passage. Although Asumang’s routes to Germany (the ones that led to her presence there) are not tied to the Middle Passage, her Ghanaian and diasporic roots inevitably connect her to the 300-year history of slavery and one of the major ports for the departure of slave ships in Accra.²⁹⁰

The second word in the title, Germania (the irony of this juxtaposed to roots is that the actual origins of the word itself remain unknown), certainly references the historical treatise of the same name composed by Tacitus, which focuses on the “tribes” of the Germanen. It is not coincidental that Asumang chooses this as the second signifier in the title of her Heimat documentary, not only because she later incorporates the text and its historical narrative into her film in an effort to challenge its assertions, but also because as Christopher Krebs demonstrates, Hitler’s employment of “[Tacitus’s Germania played a major role] in the formation of the core concepts of the National Socialist ideology—racism, the ideology of the Volk and its spirit, and the selfsame Germanic myth […]” (22). As the film approaches both past and present (German myth, National Socialism, and the neo-Nazi present), Asumang’s goal to actively unravel and debunk the myth of the Germanen and their supposed roots is, therefore, already contained

²⁹⁰ Ghana was the site of a German fort in the seventeenth century called Groß Friedrichsburg that was then transferred over and sold to the Dutch. It became the central site of deportation for Africans into slavery in the Western world. For more on this see Zantop’s Colonial Fantasies, 28, Hugh Thomas’s The Slave Trade 223-225, and Christian Kopp’s “‘Mission Moriaen’—Otto Friedrich von der Groeben und Brandenburg Preußens Handel mit Versklaven.”
within the juxtaposition of the film title’s culturally laden words that are inevitably connected through transnational history.

Nowhere is this act of debunking myth more present than in the performative image for which Asumang posed for the film cover that also references a still contained in the film. In the image, she stands amidst a field of wheat similar to the image of Samy Deluxe—her presence serving as a sort of diasporic haunting that disrupts the attempt at completely erasing Black Germans from the landscape and *Heimat* of Germany.\(^{291}\) In this cover image, Asumang dons a Brunhilde costume.\(^{292}\) As such, she enacts a performative move that Katrin Sieg has termed ethnic (here, also racial) drag. Drawing on the work of Judith Butler, Sieg conveys ethnic drag in her study of West German cultural productions as “not only cross-racial casting on stage, but, more generally, the performance of ‘race’ as masquerade” (2). Ethnic drag probes the ways in which Germanness is contested, maintaining that, “as a crossing of racial lines in performance, ethnic drag simultaneously erases and redraws boundaries posturing as ancient and immutable” (2). Furthermore, Sieg continues her theorization that ethnic drag is a form of estrangement that “denounces that which dominant ideology presents as natural, normal, and inescapable, without always offering another truth” and that “as a symbolic contact zone between German bodies and other cultures” the performance of ethnic drag impacts upon the dynamics of power at play (2). Ultimately, as an act, it calls on the viewer to “challenge essentialist notions of identity” (3). This is exactly what the viewer is confronted with in Asumang’s performative ethnic drag. The essentialized notions of German identity marked most often along the intersecting and exclusionary categories of race, ethnicity, gender, and nation are exposed via Asumang’s ethnic

\(^{291}\) For more on the concept of diasporic haunting of the white German imaginary, see Kim Singletary’s “Haunting and the Black Diasporic Experience.” The images of Asumang in the field were part of an initial reaction to the death threat she received that resulted in her desire to do a photo shoot as a first response in 2002 (Kulick).

\(^{292}\) Imke Brust reads this image as a performance of “Brunhild from the Nibelungen myth” (183), in relation to Asumang’s interview with Holger Kulick, wherein she openly states this.
drag as the performative constructs that they actually are. Additionally, while Brunhild is considered a historical figure from Spain, the literary figures’ origins are transnational and not restricted to one geographic location, as she has traveled through many narratives (Edwards 216-217).

By “visually and narratively inserting herself into German history” as Brust reads this image (182), Asumang’s performative (ad)dress destabilizes the myth and historical imaginary of whiteness as Nordic, while simultaneously re-claiming this element of European culture as just as much a part of her history as a Black German woman. More than “normali[zing] her identity as a Black German” (Brust 183), however, Asumang actually calls the underlying narrative norms of mythology (and connected to this a stable notion of an essentialized German identity), and mythology’s appropriation as authentic history, into question.²⁹³

In an interview regarding the production of the film, she describes her quest (what she labels a “Spurensuche”) to learn more about her German roots: “unter anderem wollte ich wissen: wo im Germanentum liegen eigentlich die Wurzeln für so ein übersteigertes Deutschnationalsein” (Kulick). The origins of early Nordic culture remain unclear today and the influence of all cultures on Germany undocumented, but as Asumang stresses “unsere gemeinsame Wiege liegt unumstritten im heutigen Afrika” (Kulick). This is made visible in some of the final images of the film with Asumang standing in Schloss Gettorf in Schleswig between sculptures that appear to bear a significant resemblance to African aesthetics, something that she herself points out.²⁹⁴ It is both of these roots that she explores and in both the title and the cover image German (trans)national myth encounters the Black (German) diaspora, which

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²⁹³ Brust writes “Asumang, thus, exposes neo-Nazi notions of German Heimat as infantile and narrowly constructed” (183), but all notions of Heimat that are narrowly constructed and performed as strictly a white German inheritance.
²⁹⁴ See also Brust 185.
becomes central to Asumang’s performance and constitution of *Heimat/en* throughout her journeys.

**Filmic and Narrative Parallels**

Since both films are autobiographical documentaries, they offer the opportunity to follow the personal lives of those portrayed on film and present parallels both in relation to the content of the films, as well as the life experiences of the Black German protagonists. The experiences of which they and their parents speak in the films are often tied to everyday forms of racism as well as racism and violence resulting from Neo-Nazi ideology. The film, *Yes I am!*, is based on non-traditional interviews with the three protagonists of the film and their mothers/families. The protagonists featured in length in this documentary include Daniel Kretschmer, better known as D-Flame, and Adé Odukoya, as the members of the music group Brothers Keepers and the female protagonist Mamadee Wappler, who belongs to the music group Sisters Keepers. Brothers and Sisters Keepers formed as part of a transnational anti-racism hip-hop project in 2001. Although belonging to these particular groups, each of the protagonists is also an individual performing artist, something that is already presented in the opening credits of the film. Further representing the pairing of individual and collective (*Heimat/en*) on the visual level are the integrated film clips and music videos/live performances, of each of the performers singing individually produced and written songs. Additionally, clips from the music video and song “Adriano, letzte Warnung” (a music video for which Wappler and the other Sisters Keepers were not invited to participate) sung by the Brothers Keepers are integrated into the credits, in

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295 The individual segments of the film consist less of the director’s questions (if questions were asked, they remain unheard) and more of the protagonists’ responses to these specific questions, their commentary/stream of conscious narrations, and their interactions with others.
addition to a clip of the Sisters Keepers performing on stage that appears in the film. Each of the music clips offers the viewer a political message throughout the film in relation to the song’s lyrical commentary, but also a slice of musical Heimat.

In Yes I am!, the agency of each of the individual protagonists is demonstrated in their ability to navigate and overcome experiences of racism through their musical production and to find, create, and maintain (non-)spaces in which they feel at home (physically, mentally, psychologically), despite their exclusion from the essentialized hegemonic construct of the German nation and the German Heimat (even within their families). The longing and desire for an intact family and the lack of the (African) father figure that is expressed in each of the individual protagonists’ narrations come to the fore in Yes I am! Thus, a new constellation of home, although in some ways tied to spatial notions and geographically located places, forces an unmapping of belonging that constitutes identification as capable of being located beyond politically defined and easily delineated national borders, incorporating individual positioning, distant diasporic sites, and filial and cultural bonds into their current cultural and geographical location (Germany). Heimat, therefore, become multimodal and polycentric and their seemingly stationary points are capable of constantly shifting. These Heimat spaces can be understood as akin to a train track with stops or resting points along the way, as is the case for many other Germans of both migrant or non-migrant backgrounds with the advent of modernity, industrialization, and globalization. The difference in the case of Black Germans is that like most

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296 The performances of the Brothers Keepers and Sisters Keepers are also clearly gendered. El-Tayeb has analyzed this aspect of the groups’ formation in her research (“If you can’t pronounce my name” 481, “Medien, Machos und Mädchenrap” 309).

297 In the film, Wappler says “ich hätte schon gern ’ne komplette Familie gehabt” and her mother explains that when Wappler was little that she would ask for her to set the table in case her father showed up. D-Flame discusses how he missed “das Familiäre von zu Hause” and “sehr oft habe ich mir gewünscht, ich hätte einen Vater.” Some days when in the juvenile home he would imagine how it would be if his father would arrive to visit him. Odukoya, whose father was murdered in Nigeria talks about the pain of this loss as a young boy. See also section two of this dissertation and the theorization of exilic Heimat and the death or lack of the father figure in the context of many Afro-Germans lives.
other Black diasporic peoples, they are forced to be on the move, rather than voluntarily choosing, as a result of racism and exclusion.

Filmed much like a travelogue, the protagonists travel to and fro as well as in between Heimat spaces (although they all remain in Germany, with the exception of Odukoya who travels to Nigeria), raising questions of identity that are associated with home, Heimat, zu Hause sein (being at home), and belonging, as the following quotes demonstrate: “man kann überall zu Hause sein” and “Irgendwie ist es da, wo […] ich denke, ja, Heimat, angekommen” (Bantu, Yes I am!), “Ja, das ist zu Hause” (Wappler, Yes I am!), or “Ich habe das zwei Jahre lang nicht als mein zu Hause angesehen” (D-Flame, Yes I am!) (my emphases). But rather than assess each of the protagonists’ narrations of their own Heimat/en in Yes I am!, this analysis focuses on the central figure, Adé Odukoya, since he is the only protagonist who actually journeys to his diasporic home space of Nigeria in the film.298 With his travel to Lagos, Odukoya not only desires to expose his five-year-old son son to his second cultural location, but also visits the grave of his dead father. Odukoya’s journey to Nigeria offers interesting parallels as well as points of contrast to Asumang’s journey to Ghana in Roots Germania.

Asumang’s self-directed and produced film Roots Germania299 details her voyage to learn more about her roots in both Germany and in Ghana and her desire to highlight the two countries’ cultural intersections. The film serves as an attempt to locate her space or spaces of

298 Although I am not analyzing the parallels in the narrations of all of the protagonists, there are many that develop over the course of the film. For example, the lack of the father figure is present in all of the narratives of family life and growing up without a point of identification, with Odukoya being an exception and having had his father in his life until the age of fifteen.

299 The title also brings to mind the recent documentary film With Wings and Roots being directed by Christina Antonakos-Wallace and set in New York and Berlin, drawing on the parallels of exclusion faced by People of Color in these cities and also highlighting the notion of the ability to be rooted, but also able to uproot oneself and be mobile or take one’s roots with them. The title of the documentary is a reference to a quote from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. See the documentary’s homepage “With Wings and Roots” for more information.
Heimat and belonging as well as to position herself in relation to her Afro-German identity. Similarly constructed like a travelogue and also bearing representative elements of a road movie, Asumang’s documentary follows her journeys across her ‘motherland’ to uncover ancient traditions and influences that shaped early German culture. In addition to this, she seeks out her patrilineal roots on the African continent in an Ashante village in Ghana. The performative elements of the mythological and cultural narrative/s of the German nation and its cultural construction that is imagined in a certain way (as hegemonically white and as uninfluenced by other cultures beyond Europe) is interrogated in the film. Asumang points to the influence that African cultures likely had on Germany, demonstrating the overlap in the two cultures and beyond this, her ability to physically embody their points of intersection in both spaces. This not only serves to confuse and disrupt the narrative of a homogenous white German nation as proven in Asumang’s interactions with a neo-Nazi in a German prison, but also complicates and reverses the image of Ghana and African countries as spaces of one shade of Blackness or as a cultural oasis unaffected or uninhabited by other cultures (thereby enforcing the recognition of diasporic Africans).

As a result of these encounters, the documentary thematizes the search for and at times perceived lack of a Heimat or home, phrasing this in several ways in both the English and German language: “I’ve never felt truly at home,” “wo ist eigentlich mein zu Hause?,” “the disappointment that I am not really at home anywhere, makes me think I should seek my roots on a spiritual level,” “after so many intense days in Ghana, now I am back in my beloved homeland;

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300 Asumang was one among others who also were verbally targeted by the group in this song. In it, the band members sing, “Die Kugel ist für dich, Mo Asumang.” As Asumang states in an interview with Caille Millner, this moment served as the impetus for the beginning of her career as a documentary filmmaker, “I decided to be a filmmaker after I received a murder threat from Neo-Nazis” (98). Her motivation is further explained, when she remarks, “I thought this was a very good opportunity to find my identity as an Afro-German, and to get closer to all the questions I had all of my life. Am I German? Am I Ghanaian? This wasn’t so clear for me” (98).

301 Asumang speaks German in Germany for the most part in the film, although sometimes English, and she speaks English in Ghana.
Germany,” and finally, “deep in my heart, I suddenly feel desperately homesick,” (Roots Germania, my emphases). Thus, the focus on multiple Heimat spaces and the attachments/detachments as well as emotions/memories/sensations tied to these spaces serve as the red thread throughout both of the documentaries explored here.

**The Documentary as a Form of Travel Writing**

Filmed on location and considered a form of observation that implies a certain power in its production, the documentary as a genre was first classified as such by John Grierson (145). Explaining that documentary was a French term derived from what were travelogues (145), Grierson refers to them as representations of the “real world” as it is presented on screen (146), and he claims that the genre places a belief in the “original (or native) actor or the original (or native) scene” (147). As such, the person narrating is the first medium through which the information in the films is presented. This performed original, however, can and should be questioned since it incorporates imaginative and aesthetic elements that selectively string together images in order to construct a narrative whole. In providing this definition of documentary films, Grierson already points out the level of trust viewers place in documentary representations, and he hints at the blurred generic boundaries between documentary and travelogue present in the naming of the genre. Beyond these aspects of documentaries, many of the subcategories of the genre, such as the travel film, ethnographic film, and the road movie are just as difficult to differentiate from one another in aesthetics, content, and form. For example, de Jong, et al refer to the existing generic similarities explaining that “in many cases, the

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302 In this way, they are also similar to autobiographies in that they are taken to be true and accurate representations. 303 Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell define the road movie as a “subgenre of the travel film, with a fictional narrative governed by movement, usually via car/road” (351). They argue that contemporary variants have offered the “opportunity for self-discovery and reinvention of women,” among other minority groups (351).
travelogue is considered to be a new form of ethnographic film, with the audience learning about different cultural values and traditions through the encounters of the presenter” (de Jong, et al 113). Not strictly tied to travels and journeys of the narrator, these various travel films are also sites of cultural transmission.

Bearing much in common with documentaries and the many subgenres of travel films, travel literature, too, does not fully fit any one specific generic category. Along these lines, Anne Fuchs, in her articulation of travel literature and travel narrative, elaborates on its connotation in the German literary context, stating:

Der Begriff hat sich im deutschsprachigen Raum als gattungsübergreifende Bezeichnung für eine Vielfalt von Textsorten etabliert, die Fremdbegegnung im Medium der praktischen Anleitung, der wissenschaftlichen Erfassung und der ästhetischen Erfahrung zu bewältigen suchen. (593)

Central to Fuchs’ definition is a mediated encounter with that which is foreign. Aside from this, the overlapping generic categories that are lumped under travel narrative and travel writing appear to be anything but clearly demarcated, as she later explains that in the English-speaking context that travel narrative and travel writing are interchangeably employed.

Fuchs does, however, differentiate between what she views as the three phases of travel literature, according to a chronological and socio-historical structure. She identifies the first phase as the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries that were shaped by expansionism. The second phase, she situates within the nineteenth century in connection to such factors as colonialism, racism, and ethnography that impacted upon travel narratives and the third phase refers to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, marking them in relation to hybridization, transculturalism, and ironization (596). In spite of the partitioning of travel literature into these
three categories, racism and the colonial attitudes of the nineteenth century still persist in the postcolonial era of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This means that the two most recent waves of travel literature are actually dialectical (as one could argue the first and second also are, with expansionism leading to colonialism), rather than two entirely different historical frameworks. The films examined in this section can be considered part of the third phase of the evolving discourse of travel literature/film given that the narrators are postcolonial subjects of the twentieth/twenty-first centuries. Nevertheless, the films make visible the colonial remnants of the past that still exist in the present, despite the advent of the era of transculturalism and transnationalism (that has always already existed since the earliest exchanges and movement of ideas, goods, and peoples). How, then, might the genre of travel writing expressed through the medium of film be narrated and performed differently by Black Germans and specifically in relation to *Heimat* that so often serves as the counterpart to the foreign or *Fremde* in these particular genres?

The travel from Germany to the African continent represented in both documentary films is of particular interest insofar as many travelogues that have their roots in German travel literature were noted as being imperialist in nature, even if this itself can and has accurately been identified as an over-essentialization. As Youngs states in relation to the genre, “travel writing is fittingly—a dynamic genre, often employed for radical aims. It is associated with colonialism and capitalist expansion and with patriarchy, but it can also be oppositional, interrogative and subversive” (14). In these particular cases of documentation through film, travel writing serves as the latter. Both the film lens and the narrative-I are removed from the colonial conquest in that the protagonists are part of both the filmic, narrative, and cultural frame, and they are integrated into the second culture and to some extent personify the Nigerian/Ghanaian cultures depicted.
Some of the more stereotypical criteria for defining travel writing, thus, do not persist in the context of these narratives and yet these texts are undeniably a form of travel writing that approach the home/away coupling in trying to make sense of where the protagonists actually belong (to a here vs. there or to a here and there).

More than just tourists, the protagonists expose their points of (filial and cultural) connection to the African homeland, while at the same time exposing the differences of the other locations to which they travel, but not in a way that exoticizes. Rather, they do so in a way that acknowledges and recognizes these cultural differences as well as any existing cultural similarities. Both films are less a representation of Africa and more an attempt to let the Nigerians/Ghanaians who are introduced in the film represent themselves. This pictures what Fuchs asserts as an element of travel literature as “ein bedeutender Reflektor kulturspezifischer Vorstellungen des Eigenen und des Fremden, die sich dann im Zuge der Fremdbegegnung verschrieben können” (594). In their own stepping into the filmic, narrative, and cultural frames, beyond their narrations, Odukoya and Asumang shift their own notions of self and other, experiencing Heimat and belonging in more than one space.

There are, however, some significant differences that must be kept in mind between travel film and travel narrative and that should be noted here. According to Fowler, et. al, “travel writing […] communicates more about the traveler than the country being visited.” (3). The difference between travel writing and travel film, then, is that travel film conveys just as much if not more about the countries visited. In addition, since the narratives are not written, but rather orally narrated, the beginnings and the ends must serve as the departure and return. These documentaries are presented as a combination of both elements of travel writing and travel film. They are not only about the traveler but also the countries visited.
Having, thus, established the framework from which the films will be read, I now turn to the thematization of Heimat/en in relation to the travel narratives featured in the two documentaries.

**Nigerian and German?: Yes I am!**

*Yes I am!* opens with Adé Odukoya singing and claiming that music is the weapon of choice for the future, after which the opening credits roll. The credits are set to the music of the popular East German song *Unsere Heimat* (1951), as sung by the Ernst Thälmann Pioneer Organization. In addition to the music, childhood photographs of the Afro-German singers who are portrayed in the film scroll across the screen in a moving slideshow. The photomontage and collage documents the “Germanness” of the protagonists as the images are placed within the context of German Heimat and culture from the scenic Alpine mountain backgrounds and pictures of class trips to the Reichstag, to obligatory first-day-of-school photos with the German Schultüte or candy bag in hand. These photographic documentations of the protagonists’ lives in both institutional settings and personal “Heimat spaces” move across the screen as the protagonists appear to age over the course of the images shown. Other images of family and friends or simply pictures of nature serve as the backdrop for the people pictured in the foreground.

The lyrics of the song to which the images are set detail the meaning of Heimat as East Germans ideologically conceptualized it in the post-war period. Heimat in the song is the space of both cities and villages, rather than just the countryside and it is also defined as encompassing animals and plants that are listed before the final lines resound, articulating the Heimat as a protected space that belongs to the people/Volk: “Und wir lieben die Heimat, die schöne /und wir schützen sie, /weil sie dem Volke gehört, /weil sie unserem Volke gehört.” Volk is understood

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304 This is interesting if it is read in relation to Mo Asumang and the death threat that she received via the White Aryan Rebel’s song. Music is, thus, a weapon of choice for both sides of the political spectrum.
here within the context of Socialism as the everyday people of the nation, rather than as the racialized connotation that *Volk* acquired throughout the course of German history. Yet the images that this seemingly innocent song produce through its lyrics and the photographic images presented in conjunction with the song are not the only images presented here.

The climax or ending of the song *Unsere Heimat* corresponds to images that disorient the viewer and question the cultural *Heimat*'s (here, the German national as well as the East German *Heimat*'s) innocence. The shots of innocent childhood become interspersed with clips of the protagonists individually singing and then with clips taken from the music video to the Brothers Keepers’ song “Adriano, letzte Warnung” of the staged pursuit and ultimate death of Adriano. The song was written and the music video performed and filmed as an official public statement in response to the brutal murder of Mozambican Adriano Alberto, who was beaten to death in Dessau in East Germany. The coincision of the images of a bloody and beaten Adriano—the last image in the slideshow video and the actual image of his dead body lying on the ground—with the closing words of “weil sie unserem Volke gehört” puts an ironic spin on the seemingly innocent and idyllic nature of the constructs of German *Heimat* and *Volk* as the song introduces them. The images previously viewed of Germans of multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds in front of the Reichstag—undeniably connected to the nation and “dem deutschen Volke”—are juxtaposed in the moment that the image of Adriano is presented in order to demonstrate the exclusion of People of Color from the völkisch construction of Germany. Exposed in the final image of the slideshow is the fact that the word *Volk*, in spite of a new ideology in a new German state, continued to be interpreted as a racial concept in the GDR, leading to an eruption of violence in the post-GDR period. The GDR had undeniably excluded others from belonging—those socialist brothers and sisters who although considered part of the ideological family were
not considered part of the national or racial body, i.e. People of Color and Africans, and even Afro-Germans.\textsuperscript{305}

The conflicting images (safe/dangerous) that introduce the film’s protagonists as well as the film’s content, resonate with Homi Bhabha’s description of the nation as ambivalent, in which he refers to (among other contradictions and ambivalences\textsuperscript{306}) both “the heimlich pleasures of the hearth” and “the unheimlich terror of the space or race of the Other” (\textit{Nation and Narration}, 2), but are placed here in combination with the space of the Heimat (equally ambivalent in its construction). The unheimlich terror is that which is produced as a result of Neo-Nazi violence, since Neo-Nazis feel threatened by the presence of the Black Germans in Germany. The message seems clear in the context of the murder of Adriano in 2000 that the nationalist chants of “Wir sind das Volk” that resounded during the \textit{Wende} period following the fall of the Berlin wall—also audible in clips in Asumang’s film—were not meant to include people of Color, who at the time were and continue to be viewed as foreigners and outsiders,\textsuperscript{307} taking up space in the hegemonically imagined nation of Germany for the Germans (read white Germans).

The opening song to the film, thus, quite literally sets the tone for the documentary and its content, thematizing Heimat as ambivalent, but also as necessarily sought elsewhere. The violence threatening the lives of Black Germans, as well as their need to protect themselves more

\textsuperscript{305} See for example Lucia Engombe’s autobiography \textit{Kind Nr. 95}. Engombe was one of the so-called “GDR children” from Namibia who grew up in a home in Stettin after being transported to East Germany from the Kasinga refugee camp in Angola. She writes of the exclusion from German society and the East German government’s efforts to keep the children kept secret. For more on this, see also Constance Kenna’s \textit{Heimkehr in ein fremdes Land}. See also Ilona Schleicher’s “FDGB-Offensive im Westen Afrikas” and Ulrich van der Heyden’s “Zu den Hintergründen und dem Verlauf des Einsatzes mosambikanischer Vertragsarbeiter in der DDR-Wirtschaft,” among others.

\textsuperscript{306} Bhabha’s interpretation draws on Freud’s articulation of the ambivalence of das Heimliche that produces das Unheimliche.

\textsuperscript{307} “Deutschland den Deutschen, Ausländer raus. Bin ich damit gemeint?” Mit Tötungsdelikten ist zu rechnen. ManuElä Ritz assesses such slogans and rallying cries at the \textit{Wende} as implicating her and other Germans of Color. In this production, she stages and performs her narrative of the \textit{Wende} period through multiple moves from one home space to another through the East of Germany, to eventually find a space of “home” in Pankow.
than their need to protect the (German) national, ideological, or geographic space of *Heimat* is made clear in this opening segment, and it is one, among other reasons that Black German *Heimat/en* are often situated in more than one location. Violence in and of itself, however, is found in more than one *Heimat* location (also outside of Germany) in *Yes I am!*, as Odukoya’s narrations later reveal in conjunction with Nigeria.

Fig. 5.1. Screenshot: Wappler and the Alps

Fig. 5.2. Screenshot: Students Before the Reichstag

Fig. 5.3. Screenshot: Music Video “Adriano, letzte Warnung” in the Film

Following this introductory segment, the next cut of the film returns the viewer to a romanticized *Heimat* space in Germany with a shot of Cologne’s dome, where the viewer learns

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308 D-Flame explains that he at first did not view the juvenile center where he grew up as his home: “ich habe zwei Jahre lang, das nicht als mein zu Hause betrachtet.” Irgendwann vermisst du schon “Ich habe sehr oft zu Hause vermisst. […] Einfach eine Mutter zu haben, eine normale Familie. […] Das Familiäre hast du vermisst” later to speak of his friends who were in the center as his family. Mamadee discusses her sense of feeling at home and longing for city life and falling in love with the diversity of people in Cologne as a result of the open culture there, but also the feeling of coming home “ja, das ist zu Hause,” when on the train to Zwickau where her mother still lives and she grew up.
that Adé Odukoya (and later also Mamadee Wappler) currently reside. The film then cuts to an image of the streetcar and Odukoya and his son boarding it. Thereafter to a shot of Odukoya singing with his band cuts to him commenting on Nigeria, his memories there, and his personal connection to this specific geographic location, its people, and culture. His comments about Nigeria are revealing insofar as he articulates the space and culture as a site in which he feels at home, having grown up and having gained his first life experiences there. Speaking to his time spent in Nigeria, Odukoya states:

Ich bin ja in Nigeria groß geworden und habe bis zu meinem sechzehnten Lebensjahr dort verbracht und gelebt und geatmet, gegessen. Irgendwie alles, meine allerersten Erfahrungen habe ich dort gesammelt und das prägt ein Leben lang und für mich ist das halt meine, das ist die Quelle meiner Kraft, so. Irgendwie also das ist da wo, wenn ich den Boden einfach berühre, wo ich denke, ja, Heimat, angekommen.

In this quote, Odukoya highlights childhood memories connected to Nigeria. The experiences that shaped him as a person resulting from having growing up in Nigeria contribute to his feeling of being at home there or what he refers to as “Heimat,” the place where he can and does arrive. The connection to Nigeria is physical and emotional in the sense that it serves as a site of rejuvenation and a space of familiarity. This comment and the images shown beforehand, however, lead the viewer to believe that Germany is not initially considered a space of Odukoya’s Heimat, since although the viewer is aware that this is where he is currently located, it goes unmentioned at the time.

The exilic nature of Heimat is brought forth in the documentary as Odukoya and his family chose to flee Nigeria, as a result of the terrifying tragedy that his family encountered with the violent murder of his father during a house robbery. They sought refuge in Germany, where
his mother is from and although she gave the children a choice, Odukoya refused to decide against his mother and leave his family. Both he and his mother mention that in many ways he struggled to settle or root himself in Germany, a side-effect of his lack of recognition as a German in Germany. In the lyrics to his song “Afro-German” that assert “you’ll never belong to anyone, Afro-German” and which are cut into the film from the music video to the song,\(^{309}\) this lyrical reference to his and other Afro-German’s exclusion from German society is thematized. Odukoya is therefore exiled from his home in Nigeria, but also finds himself in internal exile in Germany given his experiences of exclusion. In many ways, Odukoya’s positioning returns us to the words of Hamid Naficy who states that:

> Exile is inexorably tied to homeland and to the possibility of return. […] Today it is possible to be exiled in place, that is, to be at home and to long for other places and other times […]. It is possible to be in internal exile and yet be at home. It is possible to be forced into external exile and be unable to, or wish not to, return home. It is possible to go into exile voluntarily and then return, yet still not fully arrive. […] It is also possible to transit back and forth, be in and out, go here and there—to be a nomad and yet be in exile everywhere. (3-4)

Odukoya reinforces the need for a peaceful rather than tumultuous internal exile in the film, when he says to his mother, “ich muss die Ruhe finden in mir.” This calm is what he finds in Nigeria, as the previous quote made quite clear, and it is there that he journeys in order to achieve it again.

Though national belonging is one form of *Heimat* or belonging as Odukoya performs and articulates it, another is filial connection. Regarding his family-life, Odukoya’s situation differs from many other Afro-Germans in that he was first raised in Africa having lived in an intact

\(^{309}\) The song was performed by the group Weep Not Child with Odukoya as the lead singer.
family. Whereas all of the protagonists in *Yes I am!* return to their (family) home/s in Germany and to their mothers with the exception of D-Flame who is only shown at the juvenile center where he lived, Odukoya’s travel to Nigeria is the only African diasporic journey to the other geographic homeland/Heimat in the film. Odukoya’s Heimat-spaces, depicted in both countries (Germany and Nigeria) are both a place where family is located, where emotions run high, and where he has experienced or witnessed violence. In Germany there is a constant looming threat of racism and even neo-Nazi violence, in addition to the exclusion he faces as a Black German, but it is also the space that offers the safety of his mother’s arms.\(^{310}\) In Nigeria there is the threat of the militarized police haunting him from the past, but the familiar culture with which he grew up and to which he is accepted. Accompanied on his journey to Nigeria by his son, Odukoya visits friends and family, as well as the site of his father’s grave and is positively surprised to note that his son gives him the impression that they could live in Nigeria. Beyond this, in the uniting of his son with his father(land), the generational and familial transference of cultural Heimat is achieved.

While Odukoya is in search of his place of Heimat, his white German mother voices her opinion on the matter, displacing him from Germany and claiming that his home, in fact, cannot be located there. Odukoya’s mother believes that it is impossible for him to find a sense of home in Germany and also states that she is of the opinion that Black German children must choose a place of home that is either here or there, rather than being able to have their Heimat in both spaces or locations. She provides her estimation, expressing,

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\text{ich bin traurig, weil ich merke, er ist noch nicht angekommen. Ich wünsche mir für Adé, dass er seinen Frieden findet und, dass er endlich weiß, wohin er gehört, und ich wünsche es ihm, dass das auch Nigeria ist. In Deutschland ist es nicht. Er wird, er kann nicht hier}
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\(^{310}\) In the film, she is shown hugging him.
bleiben. Und das ist sowieso das Schicksal von färbigen (sic!) Kindern, dass die oft sehr zerissen sind und, dass sie einfach, weil die, sie sie stecken dazwischen und die müssen sich für eine Seite entscheiden. Irgendwann mal. […] Abiodun und Adé, die sind noch nicht hier angekommen und wissen noch nicht wo sie hingehen.311

Following Odukoya’s mother’s assertion that Germany cannot be her son’s home, she then maintains that she is “fest davon überzeugt, dass das […] für die beiden nur noch Afrika sein kann. So mindestens für Adé.” Odukoya’s mother firmly believes that her children have to choose one “side” to which they belong, despite the fact that they are actually both German and Nigerian, black and white, European and African. Such comments re-establish the binary constellation of Heimat/Fremde, black/white and German/African that were produced in eighteenth and nineteenth century discourse and that were also employed by white Germans in German travel literature. The failure of many white Germans (here also Odukoya’s mother) to view multiple options and positions for a plural notion of identity, Heimat, and self-positioning/belonging that is actually not strictly an either/or option, but the potential for a both/and, makes it incredibly difficult for Black Germans to find their Heimat/en and forces them to continue their search of that which they can call home. Ultimately, however, it is they who determine where they belong and where they feel at home. In claiming both identities and multiple geographic spaces as their own, the postcolonial positioning of the Afro-German invalidates these performative constructs.312

311 Abiodun is Ade’s brother.
312 Odukoya makes this very clear when he is quoted stating, "to pin my home to one place is difficult for me, because there are just too many places where I feel at home – Cologne, Berlin, London, Lagos, Accra…" See El Moussaoui’s article on Odukoya entitled “I am Yoruba Prussian.”
According to comments made by Odukoya, home is a place that is exchangeable for him. Having two locations in which he is culturally situated and at home, he views the fluidity of his identity and *Heimat* as the option to choose which one fits him better at a certain time. He expresses his feelings in relation to this, stating,

> immer dann, wenn Deutschland mich abgestossen hat, oder mir nicht das Gefühl gab ich gehöre dazu, und das hat mir Deutschland nicht nur einmal gegeben, sondern es gibt mir immer noch dieses Gefühl bis heute, habe ich gesagt, pssh, weisst du was, es ist wie eine Frau, die du liebst, aber die schenkt dir nicht die Aufmerksamkeit, dann sagst du, ich sehe nicht hässlich aus, ich bin nicht dumm und ich habe ein gutes Herz, hey, dann wird es irgendjemand anders da draussen geben, der mich liebt und in dem Fall habe ich ja jemand anders, der mich liebt, Nigeria.

Although Odukoya still seems to situate his feeling of *Heimat* in relation to an emotional connection to a country in this quote, the film interprets his *Heimat/en* as cultural and filial bonds demonstrated in connection to Germany through his mother, the journey to Nigeria and his father’s grave, the interactions he has with Nigerian friends and others on the street and in homes, and perhaps more importantly, the fact that his son is accepted as “einer von unseren” by the Nigerian people and community in Lagos, given that he has already been exposed to the traditions of Nigeria in Germany via his father.

Whereas at the beginning of the film, Odukoya’s sense of home in Germany is questioned by himself (and his mother), Odukoya’s tone seems to change at the end of the film, following his journey back to Nigeria and following the production of the song “Adriano, letzte Warnung.” He explains that after the production of the song, he had “das Gefühl ja, endlich angekommen irgendwie” since he had actively and openly confronted violence against Black
Germans in Germany and because this action was met with overwhelmingly positive responses from the larger German community and specifically from Adriano Alberto’s family. In this culminating act, Odukoya proves in the film that an either/or identity is not necessary and that home can be located in multiple places/spaces, reversing the dichotomies established in travel literature, by employing an oppositional framework. The African diasporic home space is just as much Heimat as the German nation and other home spaces could also exist in addition to this. Rather than serve to distinguish Heimat from Fremde in the journey that Odukoya makes back to Nigeria (which was already his Heimat previously), the journey is one that helps him to arrive in his other Heimat as well. While the film clips in which Odukoya appears, do establish cultural differences between Nigeria and Germany in the images presented, actions performed, and statements made, the film’s narration of Odukoya’s travel and Heimat journeys establishes connections, rather than seeks to separate and distinguish the two spaces. He highlights the aspects that make both places Heimat, while still remaining critical of both spaces in his music presented in the film and in his words.

Searching for Roots in Germania

As Steven Clark states “the travel narrative is addressed to the home culture” and a “home audience” (1, 8). Of course it could also be directed to more than one audience as well, if there is more than one home. In highlighting the influence that African cultures have had on the transformed myths constructed in Germany as German, Mo Asumang brings her second home space of Ghana back home (in this case to Germany) in her documentary film Roots Germania. From the outset of the film Roots Germania, Germany is already connected to distant spaces via the film’s soundtrack. The German national anthem is a recurring extradiegetic song in the film,
but this anthem is not the traditional version thereof. Rather, it is played on what sounds like a Ghanaian xylophone or balafon. It is an “Africanized” version of the German anthem as Brust has asserted (185), or perhaps better stated, a hybrid that sounds and performs the simultaneous tune of both of Mo Asumang’s roots. The musical chords of the German national anthem, not the lyrics are what can be heard. This exclusion of the lyrics can be interpreted as a silent commentary related to the film’s content in that it addresses the failure of Germany to include Germans with migrant backgrounds in the unity (Einigkeit) of the German nation and in (post-Wende) Heimat constructs and the inability of the Federal Republic to secure the right (Recht) to freedom (Freiheit) or to living freely for all of its citizens.

In keeping with the theme of freedom, the opening scene from Roots Germania is a scene that appears as if it could have been taken straight out of Dennis Hopper’s early road movie Easy Rider (1969). Mo Asumang is pictured mounting a motorcycle and the viewer sees her begin to cruise the streets in what is often viewed as a masculine performance of identity (the rough rider, so to speak). This opening scene undeniably places the film in reference to the road movie genre. It seems as if a destination might be in sight (that of finding oneself and one’s place), but also that Asumang is venturing off to liberate herself from the fear that has been instilled in her as a result of the death threat she received from the band White Aryan Rebels. In this performative act, she seeks her freedom on the open road. The Harley Davidson she rides, while

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313 Steven Cohan and Ina Rae have clearly marked the road movie as a gendered genre: “the inherent masculinity of the road movie is demonstrated by recent ‘feminine’ road films. While male protagonists use the road to flee femininity, women cannot similarly flee the masculine because of the gendered assumptions of the genre” (62). One could also read this scene as the performance of another version of Brünhild, this time Brynhild from the Volsunga Saga and Poetica Edda, who metaphorically speaking mounts her “horse” to venture off (Weiss 58). It is also worthy of noting that she is also called Hildr und Hjalmi, meaning Hild under the helmet (Weiss 58), something which Asumang also dons.

314 As Cohan and Rae in The Road Movie Book explain, “the main characters [of road movies] search for a new spiritual place for themselves” (51). Asumang seeks her Heimat on a spiritual level. Cohan and Rae further explain, the road movie allows the protagonists to „break through old boundaries and create a revitalized set of values.“ (51).
undeniably connected to the mythology of American freedom in its masculine form, is also connected to the group of white Germans who want to harm her, insofar as one of the men who threatened her life is seemingly a member of a motorcycle club and she goes in search of him. Harleys and motorcycles in general in Germany are often associated with certain right wing motorcycle clubs that have been considered racist, in particular Hells Angels. Thus, the ambivalence of her journey to a self-defined Heimat is captured already in this opening scene that juxtaposes danger and freedom. Additionally, her performative acts, question from the outset certain hegemonic and one-track-minded constructions of identity. Just as she remains mobile (not letting the death threat hinder her right to move freely), the viewer will learn over the course of the film that Asumang’s Heimat too is mobile, similar to Ayim’s conception of a corporeal Heimat.

What is of further interest in this opening scene is that Asumang is depicted riding her motorcycle over a bridge. The bridge motif returns again at the end of the film, when she is pictured once more on the motorcycle riding through Berlin and across the Oberbaumbrücke, a bridge which connected East and West Berlin and was a point of border-crossing. In this re-inscription of meaning, the bridge serves not only to connect East and West through the unification of past separation, but also North and South (bridging Europe with Africa). She is the “borderless and brazen”[317] border-crosser, symbolically representing the connected distances of Heimat/en through an act that performs their possibility of unity and freedom.

In between these two motorcycle rides, travel to Asumang’s African diasporic homeland of Ghana transpires. This journey is in reaction to the statement of the Neo-Nazi Marcel Gasche

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315 See Roland Barthes’ introduction to Mythologies.
316 See section two and see also Brust’s“Transnational and Gendered Dimensions of Heimat in Mo Asumang’s Roots Germania.”
317 See Ayim’s poem “grenzenlos und unverschämt” in Blues in SchwarzWeiss (82-83).
with whom Asumang meets and speaks in Wriezen prison and who tells her she should not stay in Germany. In response to this, she articulates the question that Mamadee Wappler also posed at the school visit in *Yes I am!*: “Wohin sollte ich gehen?” He responds to this, “Da wo ihr Papa herkommt oder weiß der Geier.” Turning the question around to Gasche makes for an uncomfortable confrontation for which he seems unable to find an appropriate answer, witnessed in his faltering speech and the words “oder weiß der Geier,” which means that he has no idea and is unsure of how to answer the question. In the end, Asumang takes Gasche’s advice to return to the land of her father. Gasche’s recommendation, although provided in a completely different context of racism and exclusion, connects on one level to Molefi Kete Asante’s proposed option for Afro-Germans to look elsewhere—to their African diasporic ties for home or *Heimat*—in order to develop a sense of belonging. He writes “to escape the terror of the situation the Afro-German can become connected, attached, and situated in the historical place of the African people by a conscious commitment to the discovery of self in every dimension” (“Cultural Location”). It is this discovery of the whole self, performed and enacted already by Afro-German women and men who have come before her and have taken steps to “force one to rethink and redefine the dominant conception of German cultural identity” that Asumang also employs (Campt, “Politics of Positionality” 110). Her return of the questioning to Gasche confuses the white German male subject and leaves him tongue-tied, perhaps forcing him to reconceptualize his understanding of German cultural identity and at the very least forcing him to see the construct’s inconsistencies.

Campt argues that “Afro-German women’s conceptions of their cultural identity reveal the inadequacies of traditional models of cultural and racial identity which posit an either/or choice between opposing categories of cultural or racial identity (i.e., foreign/German,
black/white, Black/German)” (111). The positionality of Afro-Germans who, metaphorically speaking, have one foot in Europe and another in Africa (or in some cases America), also contests origin-based and blood based völkisch notions of a homogenously constituted white German Heimat. El-Tayeb views this as “Black Germans’ attempt to make their country their home by creating a space for themselves on its imaginary map—a step which, if successful, would mean a dramatic reconfiguration of ‘Germanness’” (“Pride” 479). This step is one, at least with regard to Afro-Germans’ understanding of Germanness, that can and does occur, as Piesche has argued in her reading of Afro-German women writers’ of the 1990s who refuse the hegemonic exclusion and singular identity that others tried to force upon them.

Thus, Asumang’s response, beyond questioning outdated concepts of Heimat, is to embark on “a journey to find [her] roots” and to be more precise, her Heimat/en. Over the course of the film, the viewer follows Asumang as she uncovers her family’s past, traveling first to her mother and later to visit her father in Ghana. In the portion of the film in which she converses with her mother, the viewer is presented with a series of photographic images of Asumang as a baby in the orphanage in which she partially grew up and with her grandmother and mother to whom she was “shuffled around.” She explains that perhaps she had too many home spaces as a child and as a result, a lack of stability while growing up in Germany that contributed to her feeling of lacking a true home. The explicit desire for a place of home as visualized and vocalized in this portion of the film has less to do with belonging to a nation or national identity—toward a place or country per se—and more to do with the desire for a complete family and fixed home space, to which she conveys, “meine große Sehnsucht war ja immer Familie. Das hat sich eigentlich bis heute gehalten, also wenn ich Leute treffen und sie erzählen, dass sie eine

318 See Piesche “Identität und Wahrnehmung in literarischen Texten Schwarzer deutscher Autorinnen der 90er Jahren,” especially, pages 198-203.
intakte Familie haben und ein Haus vielleicht noch mit ‘nem Garten und so, dann kriege ich solche Augen. Das ist ganz komisch.’ Asumang refers to “this lack of a place to call home“ also as partially resulting from increasing right wing violence and extremism that was spreading in Germany as she was growing up.

In addition to the role that family bonds play in her perceived lack of home/Heimat in the film, national (and racial) elements of (non-)belonging to a Heimat are also thematized and not just in relation to Neo-Nazi ideology, although this certainly is featured in the film. While talking about the past, Asumang’s mother exoticizes her father in a similar fashion to the way in which Odukoya’s mother exoticized his father in Yes I am!. Asumang’s mother refers back to her initial thoughts upon her first encounter with Asumang’s father, which were “warum nicht, mal was Neues.” She refers to Asumang’s father as a “Farbige” and uses the term to refer to her daughter as well. This narration is an interesting representation of the colonial gaze that enters into the film. In this instance, the travel narrative’s paradigm is transported to Germany and reversed. The travel that took place was Asumang’s father venturing to Germany and encountering a new culture, rather than Asumang’s mother traveling to Ghana and employing the colonial gaze there. This inversion of the travel narrative is representative of many white German women’s colonial encounters with Africans on German soil.319 The exoticization and othering takes place without needing to travel, as the Other subject journeys to Germany. Asumang, however, does not critically engage her mother’s comments, but rather turns her critique to the fact that her father left Germany and never returned, as a result of the black political agenda that both her father and uncle were promoting and which she and her mother explain left no room for a white German wife. In incorporating this narration, the film pinpoints the pain and exclusion on both familial

319 Again, one only has to consider the comments of all of the white German mothers in relation to their African male partners in the film Yes I am!, in conjunction with Asumang’s mother’s comments.
sides that lead to the search for herself and her *Heimat*. Having encountered her mother, Asumang turns to her father in her fatherland of Ghana.

In keeping with her interpretation of *Heimat* as produced through filial bonds, Asumang thematizes the inheritance of more than one cultural (and not completely separable from this, national) identity. Upon asking her father, whether he thinks she is a child of Germany or Ghana, her father answers, “you have your roots here.” She responds by posing another question “are they in Germany, in Ghana or in both?,” to which her father responds, “that is your decision, but you have your roots here. You can have both, if you want…if you so wish. If not, then you are welcome in Ghana. If you are not accepted in Germany we will accept you. You are my daughter.” In contrast to Germany and her mother who turned her away, it appears that Ghana and Ghanaians will accept her despite her difference, made further visible when she asks children of the village in which her father’s family lives if she is white or black. They respond “white” and thus mark her as a foreigner (racially and culturally speaking), but this does not appear to exclude her on other levels as she participates in ceremonies, plays with children, and is welcomed by friends of her family. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that in the context of race, Asumang fails to offer up a third option to the children of being both black and white (since she asks her father if she is Ghanaian, German, or both). In this moment, Asumang surprisingly seems to slip into the constructed colonial binary categories of race, but the film constructs a different narration in her demonstration of the cultural similarities of Germany and Ghana, in particular in relation to mysticism. Taken as a whole, the film attempts to break down and question dichotomous structures, even if at times they return to claim their power. In re- or unmapping her own space of *Heimat*, Asumang comes to the realization that she can be both

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320 In contrast to Odukoya who grew up in Nigeria, Asumang is unable to speak to the Ashantees in their native language.
African and German and it is her journey that made this imperceptible connection possible and plausible.\(^\text{321}\)

Lisle writes in relation to travel writing that “a journey can include a mixture of leaving home, finding oneself, going through a rite of passage, seeking one’s fortune, experiencing a dangerous adventure, or simply getting away from it all” (35). The journey to Asumang’s *Heimat/en* in *Roots Germania* encompasses almost all of the above. While in Ghana, Asumang expresses her joy at the sight of a sign with her surname on it, found in a public space. This sign gives her a feeling of finding herself, belonging, and being at home that she never experienced in Germany, since her name is in many ways distant/“foreign.” Nevertheless, Germany is the familiar space to which she returns after getting away from it all, including the dangerous adventures to meet Neo-Nazis, as she indicates, “after so many intense days in Ghana, now I am back in my beloved homeland, Germany.” One of the last segments of the film sends the message that one is the master of one’s own life, in Asumang’s own words (“some people can never be changed, but you can change yourself”), and it appears that Asumang has taken the wheel in steering hers, as she rides into the dark night of Berlin. With the dawning of the morning, a modern version of the German national anthem can again be heard and this time the words “Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit” resound in a triumphant chorus.

**Conclusion**

In turning the gaze back onto German society and its racially embedded structures that initially inhibit the protagonists from developing a sense of belonging to a hegemonically

\(^{321}\) In the interview with Kulick, Asumang tells of the affective release of traveling to Ghana, “da ist mir das Herz aufgegangen und ich hab begriffen, was mir in Deutschland fehlt. Sicher, ich fühle mich in Deutschland superwohl. Aber es gibt da eine kleine Wunde, um die muss man sich kümmern, um sich wohl zu fühlen. Deshalb kümm’ ich mich um das kleine Pünktchen - das leider so klein gar nicht ist.”
constructed German *Heimat*, Odukoya and Asumang unmap *Heimat* in enabling it to be multiply located and constantly changing. Although power discursively structures and shapes many white Germans’ perception of Black Germans’ non-belonging to the German *Heimat/nation* imagined as white, this authority is shaken when Black German’s are given the power to narrate their own stories and experiences from a position that re-constitutes and critiques the construction of home as culturally and geographically located in only one place.

*Heimat* is set free from the burden of geographical locations and places and newly imagined as distant connections and connected distances that are made visible in the journeys to and fro. The films, thus, emphasize how constellations of *Heimat* can be mobile, but rather than read this in the context of contemporary forms of globalization as the authors of *Heimat Goes Mobile* do, the narrations of *Heimat/en* by Black Germans mark them as already always mobile by necessity due to the racial and cultural positioning of Black Germans by white Germans.  

Black Germans particular scenario is, however, to restate my initial argument in regards to exile, a forced mobility, rather than a voluntary one.  

While the dichotomy between home and abroad is prevalent in travel literature (Clark 9), it is disrupted in these documentary travelogues as home is (potentially) existing in both spaces. Thus, the protagonists do not take the position of watcher or observer in an essentialized sense, but rather become active participants in the culture, members thereof that are not fully “set apart from and unequal with [their] surroundings” (Said, *Orientalism* 157), but are still not completely in harmony with their surroundings either. This positioning reflects what bell hooks refers to as a mode of “seeing reality […] from the outside in and from the inside out” (Feminist Theory) and

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322 This is already the case in Theodore Michael Wonja’s life experience and he came of age during the Third Reich in a time when globalization was not the cause of necessarily mobile *Heimat/en*, but rather forced exile, as a result of the Second World War and a biopolitical regime that excluded him from the German *Heimat* as a result of his skin color.
something that Caren Kaplen describes as a location “fraught with tensions,” having both “the potential to lock the subject away in isolation and despair as well as the potential for critical innovation and particular strengths” (“Deterritorializations” 187). The potential that the films offer is a new perspective from which to view Heimat as situated in more than one cultural location and as capable of adopting and integrating difference.

Both Yes I Am! and Roots Germania fit the conditions for being labeled as post-Wende autobiographical documentaries that also engage the genre of postcolonial travel writing. For, according to Justin Edwards and Rune Graulund, “postcolonial travel writing is not just oppositional or ‘writing back’; it offers frames of reference that exist outside the boundaries of European knowledge production” (3). The frame, which these documentaries’ narrations offer, is one that questions the establishment of dichotomies as a necessity in the constitution of a self. In opposition to this, these documentaries employ difference as nodes that connect people, communities, and Heimat space/s across distance and time.
EPILOGUE

“Wir sind ein buntes Volk, wir Deutschen.”
-Mo Asumang

During many of my stays in Berlin in the summers for my research on this project, I often talked with white Germans about my dissertation and the topic of Afro-German cultural productions. Many were still unfamiliar with the word Afro-German and none were able to name a Black German cultural producer. If Black Germans are not yet recognized as Germans and as cultural producers, then it comes as no surprise that they must also fight for their place and space within the German (literary and cultural) Heimat.

The words bunt and Volk juxtaposed to one another in the quote above appear to be an oxymoron in the eyes of those white Germans who continue to view the German nation, its people (and its cultural producers and performers) as well as the spaces of Heimat/en ascribed thereto as hegemonically white. Nevertheless, in this quote Asumang undoes the hegemonic meaning of the word Volk, thereby constituting it anew in the same way that post-Wende Afro-German cultural productions re-configure and re-imagine, as well as perform and produce Heimat as decolonized and plural notions of Heimat/en. Afro-German cultural productions since the fall of the Berlin Wall have lent Heimat in Germany a new heterogeneous face and meaning over the course of the past quarter of a century. These works offer an inclusive rendering of the German nation’s citizens through the lens of the imagined communities and spaces of Heimat.

The close analyses offered in this project zoomed in particularly on contemporary pieces from the twenty-first century, while highlighting continuities since the Wende period, specifically in relation to white Germans’ racial exclusion of Black Germans from the collective national body that force the Black German into exile in their own country/home/land and beyond. The ambivalent interpretations and renderings of Black German Heimat/en as both safe and
dangerous spaces, as collectively as well as individually constructed communities, as capable of representing spaces/non-spaces (in the corporeal sense and in the internal or emotional/psychological sense), and as incorporating African diasporic and German national/cultural elements into their performances of *Heimat/en* emphasizes the plurality as well as highlights the non-static nature of the construct in its ability to constantly shift in time and space in Black German productions.

While this project does not claim completeness, the selected aesthetic and political texts presented here are read as representative of a trend that has been witnessed in contemporary Black German cultural production, one that functions as a prolonged response (in the form of a counter-discourse) to the strengthened (ethno-)nationalism that was resurrected with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the *Wende* period of German history as well as to the continuities of racism that were readily present in Germany prior to this time and were merely reinforced in a highly visible and violent manner both during and after this historical turn. They are an active re-claiming of a space that is rightly theirs, as they too are German.

Today, Black German recognition and the recognition of racism in German society are still only slowing becoming reality, but performance spaces like the post-migrant *Ballhaus Naunynstrasse* and the *Gorki Theater* offer hope for the future in the space of German theater, since their ensembles are incredibly diverse and their theater productions, which often include the projection of English subtitles for a multilingual audience, have become some of the most sought after seats in Berlin. These venues are often sold out. The times are thus changing. Hegemonic structures are being called into question, and, with them, a singular interpretation of the heterotopic site of German *Heimat* that has always been plural and heterogeneous. The Black German productions that engage in the discourse of constructions and performances of
*Heimat/en* are not limited to my analysis and a wealth of other autobiographical works, films, music, poetry, and more recent stagings of *Heimat* spaces remain to be considered. This work, nevertheless, serves as a starting point from which further readings can and hopefully will ensue.

As German *Heimat* as a cultural concept maintains its significance in the transnational world and has preserved its validity over the course of many centuries, it will surely continue to leave a mark on German cultural productions of the future. This list will undoubtedly continue to increase in the coming years and, with time, the imagined *Heimat/en* as viewed through the multiple perspectives of Afro-Germans will continue to transform, taking on innovative elements and new meanings as another generation of Afro-Germans take to the stage or pick up cameras and pens to continue to (re)-write and produce counternarratives to a singularly conceived German *Heimat*. It will be exciting to see how the construct continues to modify itself over the course of the twenty-first century in the works of Black Germans to come.
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