

Schwarzsein, Weißsein, Deutschsein:
Racial Narratives and Counter-discourses in German Film After 1950

by

Michelle René Eley

Carolina-Duke Program – German Studies

Date: _____

Approved:

William C. Donahue, Supervisor

Ann Marie Rasmussen

Kimberly K. Lamm

Corinna Kahnke

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in the Carolina-Duke Program –
German Studies in the Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation uses film to explore shifts in conceptions of race, cultural identity and national belonging in Germany from the 1950s West Germany to contemporary reunified Germany. Through the analysis of several German productions featuring Black characters in major narrative or symbolic roles, it identifies narrative and cinematic techniques used to thematize and problematize popular German conceptions of race and racism and to utilize race as a dynamic and flexible symbolic resource in defining specific identity borders. The dominant discourse around the concept of race and its far-reaching implications has long been impeded by the lack of a critical German vocabulary. This gap in mainstream German language is in large part a consequence of the immutable association between "race" (in German, *Rasse*) as a term, and the pro-Aryan, anti-Semitic dogma of National Socialist ideology. As Germany struggles to address racism as a specific problem in the process of its ongoing project to rehabilitate national identity in a post-colonial era indelibly marked by the Second World War, the films discussed in this work – *Toxi* (R.A. Stemmler, 1952), *Gottes zweite Garnitur* (P. Verhoeven, 1967), *Angst essen Seele auf* (R.W. Fassbinder, 1974), *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (R.W. Fassbinder, 1979), *Alles wird gut* (Maccarone, 1998) and *Tal der Ahnungslosen* (Okpako, 2003) – provide evidence of attempts to create counter-discourses within the space of this language gap.

Using approaches based primarily in critical race and film studies, the following work argues that these films' depictions of racism and racial conflict are often both

confined by and add new dimension to definitions of Blackness and of conceptions of race and racism in a German context. These attempts at redefinition reveal the ongoing difficulties Germany has faced when confronting the social and ideological structures that are the legacy of its colonialist and National Socialist history. More importantly, however, the films help us to retrace and recover Germany's history of resistance to that legacy and expand the imaginative possibilities for using poetic politics and communities of coalition to affect social change.

Contents

Abstract.....	iv
List of Figures.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
1. Dark Legacies: Colonial Remnants & U.S. Imports in Discourse on Black Germans .	15
Resistance in Early German Cinema	16
Robert Stemmler's <i>Toxi</i> : Race, Culture and the Location of "Home"	26
Ethnographic Evidence	37
Ethnographic Geography	45
A Multicultural Messiah?	52
<i>Toxi's</i> Legacy	61
2. Re-framing Racism in Black and White	64
<i>Gottes zweite Garnitur</i> (1967) – An Overview.....	66
<i>Fernsehfilm</i> as Educational Form	69
The Frame of "Race": Imagined Blackness, Real Racisms	75
Re-Framing Racism	81
Black GIs, White Germans and Gender Constructs.....	97
Follow the Money.....	108
Sex and Freedom.....	120
Progressive Pessimism.....	126
3. Shaded Desires: The Shadow of Race in the Double Binds of Fassbinder's Melancholic Romances.....	133

Cinematic Psychoanalysis as Political Activism	135
Troubling the West German Matriarch in <i>Angst essen Seele auf</i> (1974).....	139
The Illusion of Privacy.....	144
Caught Between Love and Motherhood	150
The Conundrum of Conformity	155
Fatal Romanticism in <i>Die Ehe der Maria Braun</i> (1979).....	163
Love is Blinding.....	167
Love is Binding.....	174
Judging Maria	186
The Demands of Ideals and the Dangers of Mythology	191
4. Transforming Silence into Language: Self-Narration, Self-Determination and "Community"	194
The Failure of German Multiculturalism and the Challenges of Diaspora.....	196
Refashioning Black German and Diasporic Identities: Community, Self-determination and Self-narration.....	206
<i>Farbe bekennen</i> and Black German Consciousness	210
W.E.B. Du Bois in the Afro-German Context	218
The Influences of Audre Lorde in Afro-German Feminism.....	225
A New Black German Cinema	230
<i>Alles wird gut</i> (1998) and the New Pleasures of Performance	231
Depicting Heterogeneous Community.....	235
Who is Kim Berger?	238
Recovering History and Mending the Splintered Self in <i>Tal der Ahnungslosen</i> (2003).....	249
Concluding Remarks.....	261

Appendix A.....	264
"ich möcht' so gern nach Hause gehen" (Das Toxi-Lied).....	264
Appendix B.....	265
Excerpts from Poems by May Ayim (as recited in Okpako's <i>Tal der Ahnungslosen</i>)	265
Works Cited	267
Biography.....	274

List of Figures

Figure 1: "Jumbo." This postcard from ca. 1918 depicts the occupation of the Rhineland by Black French soldiers after World War I. (Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz 48).....	21
Figure 2: Proof of Whiteness. Ilse and Susi inspect the white soles of Toxi's feet.	41
Figure 3: Ethnographic Geography. Grandfather Rose explains racial origins.	47
Figure 4: Becoming African American. Toxi wipes the white makeup from her face when she meets her biological father for the first time.	60
Figure 5: The "Race Problem." Sgt. Baako and Herr Fehringer talk about race while Claire uncomfortably looks on.....	84
Figure 6: Fear of the Black GI. Frau Fehringer reacts to Sgt. Baako's arrival.....	100
Figure 7: Masculinity reclaimed. Fred forces himself on Claire in their hotel room during Christmas vacation.....	109
Figure 8: Measuring Masculinity. Fred Fehringer compares himself to an American soldier.....	111
Figure 9: An even exchange. Claire and Sgt. Baako swap bills at the army cantina.....	116
Figure 10: The gentleman. Baako falls asleep in bed with Claire on their vacation in France.....	123
Figure 11: A brutal interruption. Claire tries to stop military police officers as they knock him to the floor and beat him.....	125
Figure 12: The Voyeur's View. Emmi makes coffee for her guest as the camera peeks through the doorway.	146
Figure 13: Alone Together. Bathed in red light, Emmi and Ali have their first dance at the bar, which is decorated in red tones.....	156
Figure 14: Alone together. The couple sits in quiet a Biergarten surrounded by lush greens and vibrant yellow.	157
Figure 15: The opening credits for <i>Die Ehe der Maria Braun</i> . The names of the actors appear in a layered pattern as bombs explode in the background.....	166
Figure 16: Dance with me? The crowd has made a path for Maria, who bows to Mr. Bill	

and asks him for a dance.....	178
Figure 17: My man is dead. Mr. Bill embraces Maria and sways her to comfort her as she mourns the death of her husband.	180
Figure 18: A Daming Decision. Maria kills Bill with a blow to the head to save her husband's pride.....	185
Figure 19: Evidence of a crime. Mr. Bill's clothes are displayed as evidence during Maria's trial for his murder.	187
Figure 20: For the love of Maria. Hermann reacts as Maria distinguishes her respective "loves" for her husband and Bill before the court.....	190
Figure 21: Nabou's faux suicide.....	236
Figure 22: Nicht rennen! Eva hears a voice from her traumatic childhood and stands paralyzed for a brief moment on the stairs of her former home.	253
Figure 23: That's my hair, not a cap. Young Eva marvels at her new blonde pigtails in the attic mirror.	257

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Introduction

Conceptual or theoretical whiteness in German studies is not about the whiteness of the skin of most of its practitioners. Rather, it is the result of the exclusion of the Black experience from the history of Germany. For decades, German studies has been marked by a particular color-blind universalism. With the relatively recent rise in Black consciousness and visibility in Germany, however, the country is now confronted with the reality of the "Other" to a greater degree than at any previous moment in its history. In the last two decades, the Black experience has increasingly become an object of scholarly and popular interest. More specifically, the history of Black participation in German cinema and in other branches of cultural production is also rapidly growing as a field of scholarly interest. The work in which concerned citizens, activists and scholars engage necessitate confronting the complex and intensely emotional subject of race and racism in German history. For too long, race has been all too absent from both public and scholarly discourses about the racist discrimination and violence against people on color in Germany. The nation has had an intense and very public struggle with its notoriously sordid history of fascism and a national identity structured in part by racist ideologies and ethnic preoccupations.

The sudden surge in discussions about German identity after the Cold War was in large part an effect of the "crisis of ideological beliefs" brought on by the unexpected political reunification of East and West Germany (Jarausch 2). The contemporary engagement with the "German Question," both scholarly and popular, is but the latest in a history of ebbs and flows of a political, philosophical, cultural and social preoccupation

more than two centuries old. Historical points of concurrence, controversy and contestation within these discourses provide the foundation for conceptions of German identity today, as well as for the debate about *Leitkultur*. Over this long history, the dominant approaches to the project of German national identity can be understood within three categories: the aesthetic, the liberal and the ethnic, which stress the centrality of creating solidarity through literary and linguistic commonality, political action, and ethnicity respectively. Many treatments of the "new German identity crisis" in contemporary German studies focus on the instability in traditional notions of gender, familial, social and political roles in a "post-modern" era. Other sociological approaches focus on self-perceptions of tolerance and "Germanness" expressed by citizens. More recently, however, the role of race and of ethnicity in conceptualizing the German nation has gained considerable attention, propelled in part by an increase in the visibility and vocalicity of minority guest workers, immigrants and citizens.

The discourse around the concept of race and its effects has long been impeded by the absence of a critical German vocabulary. This gap in mainstream German language is in large part a consequence of the immutable association between "race" (in German, *Rasse*) as a term and the pro-Aryan, anti-Semitic dogma of National Socialist ideology. As Germany struggles to address racism as a specific problem in its ongoing project to rehabilitate a marred national identity in a postcolonial era, I contend that within German cinema lies tangible evidence of attempts to create social discourse within these language gaps.

It is my opinion that film, while also subject to similar limitations of vocabulary,

possesses the potential to work more freely within such language gaps. Like the creative freedom that can be found in poetic aesthetics, the "pluricodic" (Metz) character of film narrative offers filmmakers and viewers an opportunity to reimagine and fashion new ideas, societies, language and identities. By considering the codes in these films within their particular socio-historical contexts, my analysis investigates both the potential and the limitations presented in their attempts to create discourse space to address race, racism and the dynamic role of these concepts in German identity construction. My focus on Black figures takes advantage of their potential to highlight differentiation and valuation assigned by skin color, a signifier that is only tenuously connected to extant cultural difference. The use of racial signifiers in both visual and verbal German language after the Second World War were often influenced by Black America, not only through the presence of Black American soldiers, but also in the increasing presence of Blacks in American and German media beginning in the late 1960s. Black American politics, changing population dynamics and the rise of political and social anti-racism movements in Germany, have had considerable effects on the presentation and conception of Blackness in Germany, among both the white and Black German population. The ever-shifting borders and gaps in the language of race discourse can be observed in the developing discourses of race and racism that these films present.

Of vital importance to the development of meaningful and sustainable dialog about German racisms is the framing of German racial discourse. Germany's history of racial ideology has made for a particularly complicated environment in which to promote such a discourse; racial terminology immediately evokes images of National Socialism,

racial propaganda, systematic categorization of people and the Holocaust. The connotations that attend "race" carry a formidable taboo that discourages discourse by threatening to label individuals as intolerant, racist and even sympathetic to neo-Nazi extremism. This has motivated individuals and organizations seeking to engage the public to forge new associations that expose both the universality and the particularity of issues of race in Germany. These attempts are the focus of this dissertation, which has a two-fold purpose: interpretive and critical.

On the one hand, my research seeks to explore the dynamic representations of race and racism, and their relationship to representations of national identity and belonging in German film productions from 1950s West Germany to contemporary, reunified Germany. My focus is on the development of conceptions of Blackness as a reflection of German white consciousness. On the other hand, my aim is to critically examine the development of the various attempts by both white and Black filmmakers in post-World War II German cinema to challenge anti-Black ideologies that have roots in pre-colonial times. I attempt to demonstrate that the changing representations of Black experiences and identities in Germany as reflected in cinema is part of a larger project of Black self-narration and self-determination as well as a more broadly conceived German antiracism movement. It is an attempt to rewrite the experiences of Blacks in Germany as an integral component of Germany's body politic and culture.

The films discussed in the following pages present stories of Blacks living in Germany and their relationship as cultural insiders and outsiders to white Germans and the structures of German society. Through an analysis of representations of racial

difference, racism and race discourse, I consider how these films reflect, conform to and challenge conceptions of race in Germany in the decades after World War II. Through the use of varied narrative and cinematic practices, these cultural productions' portrayals of Black figures in relation to mainstream white Germany work to re-frame racial discourse and the “race problem” by contextualizing them historically and culturally, problematizing their narrow association with National Socialist anti-Semitism and revealing the intricacies of racist and discriminatory thinking and practice in Germany. As the portrayal and participation of Blacks in film progresses, the portrayal of racial discourse, and arguably the discourse itself, also develop.

Despite attempts to marginalize its history and influence, the image of Blackness and anti-Black sentiments in German consciousness have played a significant role in the shaping of Germany's racial discourses. Imagined Blackness has a deep history in Germany that is intimately linked with national and cultural identity, and biological and cultural race ideology. Central to Germany's attempts to unpack the atrocities of the World War II and the Holocaust has been the debunking of the scientific myth of human race as a true and meaningful biological category. The attachment of phenotype to race and essential difference of character, value and ability can be observed at least as long ago as antiquity, and such categorizing persists in philosophical musings of (white) canonical writers and thinkers throughout the ages. David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Darwin, Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel – these are just a few names of the numerous key figures who helped shape social and political history in the white, and subsequently the broader world. According to Hegel’s philosophy of history,

for example, Africans existed outside of world history. Whereas other continents had shaped world history and determined their own course of historical development, Hegel perceives African as existing in a passive and inertial state. Hegel claims that Africa was only propelled into history by European contact. African history by implication becomes an extension of European history.¹ In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel argues:

...[Africa] is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it...belong to the Asiatic or European World...Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit. What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History. (99)

Africa does not belong to the “real theatre of History” according to Hegel (99).

In his book *On Blackness without Blacks*, Sander L. Gilman thoughtfully traces the genealogy of imaginings, interpretations and symbolisms ascribed to Black peoples and cultures by white German philosophers and writers. Beginning with a discussion of Herder's relative aesthetics in his historical work *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Gilman demonstrates the development of Black as a philosophically analyzed and validated inferior human category by clearly mapping out the ways in which prominent philosophers picked up, and in many cases modified the racial categories of their predecessors, relying almost exclusively on what was at best second-hand "evidence" from other whites who had purportedly encountered the Black Other.

¹ See, for example: Mussett, Shannon M. “On the Threshold of History: The Role of Nature and Africa in Hegel’s Philosophy.” *The American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience*. 3.1 (2003): 39-46. Reprinted in *Tensional Landscapes: The Dynamics of Boundaries and Placements*. Ed. Gary Backhaus and John Murungi. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003. 1-18.

While some philosophers held less hopeless and inhumane judgment on residents of the "dark continent," – Schopenhauer readily conceded that Blacks were of inferior intellect, but he argued for their innate humanity and against slavery in contemporary Western society – even the more humanist and progressive contributors to the canon found the most admirable qualities of Blacks to be closeness to original (uncivilized, unfettered, barbaric) humanity and great physical strength.

Pictorial and literary histories in which the image of "the African" in German cultural productions is thematized have made the historical depth of this continuity very clear. This body of scholarship traces contemporary Black stereotypes and ideological race hierarchies to colonial pursuits and even to pre-colonial philosophical discourse.² This inferior positioning of Blacks in the hierarchy was a reflection of their purportedly essential connection to nature and consequent distance from higher civilization. As is the dualistic character of German fascination with Blackness, this hierarchization reflects a simultaneous appreciation for and denigration of a particular Black essence that is wild, free from the binds of civilization, but which is also limited as a result of its primitive nearness to nature. Blackness is designated as an *Urform* of humanity characterized by a unique, primitive, child-like sensibility; superior physicality; and inferior intellect.

During Germany's colonial empire, these ideas helped to justify unequal treatment

² In his 1982 work *On Blackness Without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany*, Sander Gilman explores the development of concepts of essential Blackness in contrast to whiteness in this discourse. Gilman shows how the early, relativistic, objective aesthetics of Herder that considered white Europeans aesthetic models as destructive and exploitative, lost out to subjective, communal aesthetic concepts. Observing how these aesthetic models were applied to racial differentiation in the writings of Hegel and Schopenhauer, one sees the dominance of a social and aesthetic hierarchy that positions Blacks closer to nature than whites. There has also been considerable attention paid to Kant's writings on race.

of Blacks, and along with accounts from previous European-African encounters, they tainted the German Black imaginary, one that was now being confronted with a homeland reality. Neo-Hegelian concepts in which Black cultures were seen as *Kindernationen* in need of freeing via *Kultur* provided justification for the official German mission to civilize Black Africa. What soon became clear, however, was that the imposition of a foreign system of values and aesthetics on colonized people would meet with great resistance, but the empire then used this logic to justify its brutal response.

When "good will" imperialism met native resistance, Germany resorted to broad, indiscriminate violence. Now faced with actual Blacks, and not those of its imaginary, Germany's race ideology needed only take a small step to reach the race doctrine that drove Nazism, and this was achieved through a doctrine of hierarchical immobility. That Blacks could not be brought up into a proper, cultural society was proof that their essence was not susceptible to improvement through the educational efforts of Germans. Unable to improve the natural disposition of the inferior races, the German government implemented policies of segregation and elimination. The thorough and systematic implementation of these policies under the Nazi government exemplifies the continuity of pre-colonial and colonial racial ideology beyond the context of Jewish ethnic heritage. Blacks were among the many ethnic, social and political groups targeted and victimized by Nazi policies (Campt; Lusane). Black Germans and Blacks living in Germany were the target of sterilization programs and were among those targeted for internment in concentration camps.

However, the victimization of Blacks under Nazi rule was not addressed in the

postwar era and was largely overshadowed by the focus on atrocities against German and East European Jews. The very specific focus of postwar discourse made it easy for Germany to overlook other aspects of the ideology that had been central to its ethnic and national identity, and which continued to influence its conception of Blacks.

Consequently, it was possible for the country to view issues of race framed in a Black / white binary as having first been introduced by the presence of foreign Black soldiers, who were imports from Germany's war-time enemy and eventual postwar ally. The recognition of this displacement is important for more accurate understanding of the discourse of race as it developed from the 1950s onward, as it offers us a starting point for unraveling some of the complex practices of othering that are in play. I do not wish here to linger on the long history of German images of Blacks that is now being recovered,³ but to use knowledge of that history as a starting point to work beyond identification and criticism of the stereotype phenomenon. As such, I am interested in how these images have been utilized in practices of identity construction that have relied heavily on ethnic and racial signifiers.

The fantasies of Blackness that have been reimagined, analyzed and perpetuated in philosophy have been repeatedly reproduced at all levels of cultural production, from the opera stage to the pages of popular literature, and inevitably, on the cinema and

³ For more thorough treatments from variegated perspectives on images of Blacks in German thought see: Gilman; Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermann, *Blacks and German Culture: Essays*, U of Wisconsin Press, 1986; Peter Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren: Afrikaner in Geschichte und Bewusstsein der Deutschen*, Hamburger Edition, 2001; Patricia Mazón and Reinhild Steingröver (ed.), *Not So Plain as Black and White: Afro-German Culture and History, 1890-2000*, U of Rochester Press, 2005; Rosemarie K. Lester, *Trivialneger: das Bild des Schwarzen im westdeutschen Illustriertenroman*. Akademischer Verlag H.D. Heinz, 1982; Regina and Gerd Riepe, *Du schwarz – ich weiß. Bilder und Texte gegen den alltäglichen Rassismus*, Hammer, 1995.

television screens. There is an established tradition of critical German film studies that focuses on anti-Semitism, and with the increased migration of Turks to Germany, contemporary film studies has shifted focus to Turkish-German representation and participation in cinema. Only recently has German Studies begun to investigate representations of Blacks and anti-Black racism in film and to question the relationship between those representations and the formation of German and Black identities. Heide Fehrenbach, Angelica Fenner, Maria Höhn, Annette Brauerhoch and Tobias Nagl have been at the forefront in unearthing the tangled history of Black and German culture and politics in cinema. Using approaches based primarily in critical race theory, feminist theory and film studies, the following pages examine the manner in which German film tackles race and racism as an internationally connected domestic phenomenon and offers increasingly nuanced conceptions of Blackness that are diverse and dialectical in character.

Each chapter of this dissertation aims to explore the interplay between conceptions of race, racism, gender, sexuality, national belonging and identity as depicted in German film productions from particular historical eras. The first chapter, "Dark Legacies: Colonial Remnants & U.S. Imports in Discourse on Black Germans," begins with a brief introduction to the history of racist ideologies, the exhibition of Black bodies and their relationship to Weimar cinema. The conditions of production and the reception of films in which foreigners are depicted were grounded in the ethnological voyeurism of "foreign" bodies in the *Völkerschauen* ("peoples shows" or "human zoos") that had become popular during German colonialism. This sets the context for the relationship

between the spectator and the racialized Black Other on screen. I then examine *Toxi* (R.A. Stemmler, 1952), the first feature-length film to explore the subject of “Black occupation children” in postwar Germany. The movie premiered in the same year that the first generation of these children began entering German schools, and it was part of a larger awareness campaign. My reading of the film demonstrates that the themes raised in Stemmler's production reveal continuities in racial thinking from German colonialism through National Socialism, and that the cinema's reliance on many of those tropes indicates reluctance toward creating real counter-discourse to anti-Black racist ideologies. As such, I argue that the production and publicizing for the film, and the actor Elfie Fiegert's role within them indicate that significant changes for Blacks in the film industry as well as a more progressive counter-discourse in film was hindered by the lack of Black participation in the production side of the film industry – writing, producing, directing, acting with voice, agency, meaningful input. However, I recognize *Toxi* as a noble attempt to reimagine West Germany as a state in need of and, quite vitally, capable of being rehabilitated from its racisms. The "Utopian strand" in *Toxi* marks the earliest stage in the development of self-critical articulations of "Utopian longing" that this study attempts to trace (Jameson).

In the second chapter, “Re-framing Racism in Black and White,” I offer an analysis of several scenes in the television movie production *Gottes zweite Garnitur* in which referential techniques are employed to articulate the role of race in the construction of West German identity under the conditions of American occupation. It is my assessment that *Gottes zweite Garnitur* (P. Verhoeven, 1967) utilizes the format of the

television movie to: 1) offer direct criticism of anti-Black racism and its underlying origins as being also "German problems," 2) question commonly accepted identity definitions and signifiers by evoking and complicating stereotypes identities, and 3) challenge traditional identity construction practices in both a national and global context. In the end, the film's critique has its successes, including progress toward the widening of the definition of Rassismus beyond the dominant ethnic Jewish-Aryan understanding; however, it continues to represent the stark segregationist mentality of previous eras, and reinforces a hopeless trajectory for those cast as outside the borders of mainstream West German society – not only Blacks, but also those who show sympathy for Black experiences and interact with Blacks not as representatives of stereotypical tropes, but as individuals.

The third chapter, "Shaded Desires: The Shadow of Race in the Double Binds of Fassbinder's Melancholic Romances," applies the notion of the double bind to a reading of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Angst essen Seele auf* (1974) and *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1979). I use the term "double bind" to refer broadly to an "unresolvable sequences of experiences" that leads to pathological communication (Ransom and Sluzki 6). Most often, the confusion or conundrum of a double bind is related to a misuse or misinterpretation of metaphoric communication or communication that can be interpreted at both the literal and figurative levels – in other words, it is a logical knot. Fassbinder places his characters within double bind situations that reflect the constrictions of conservative social structures. One chief consequence of Fassbinders's double binds, in my estimation, is the depiction of class, race and gender as inextricably intertwined. This

presents a challenge to the marginalization of race as insular and irrelevant social category in a reconstructed German national identity.

The first three chapters demonstrate that despite the progressive critiques of anti-Black racism in German film from up to reunification, the counter-discourse they offer remain restricted by white hegemonic structures. In the fourth chapter, "Transforming Silence into Language: Self-Narration, Self-Determination and 'Community'," I examine the impact of the rise of Black consciousness in Germany on the construction of anti-racism discourse in film. In reunified Germany, Blacks gain a new degree of agency that they had been previously denied in cultural production and in the film industry more specifically. Working as directors, screenwriters, actors and crew members, Blacks bring new subjectivity to the representation of Blacks on screen. My point of departure in this chapter is the debate surrounding multiculturalism in reunified Germany. The multiculturalist framing of German civil society in the 1980s and 90s attempted to combat the increase in racist discrimination and violence against visible minorities such as Blacks, Turkish-Germans and other people of color. Against this backdrop, the New Black German Cinema, influenced by Audre Lorde's poetic politics of self-narration and self-determination, tackles the problematic of invisibility and oversimplified homogenization of the identities and experiences of non-white Germans. Through a reading of *Alles wird gut* (A. Maccarone, 1998) and *Tal der Ahnungslosen* (B. Okpako, 2003), I conclude that the counter-discourse to myth of the (white) German nation is more strongly challenged than ever before. *Alles wird gut* offers a narrative that depicts Black Germans as members of diverse communities formed by political and social

affiliations. These communities are reflective of the diverse and dynamic nature of German culture in particular and of cultures more broadly. *Tal der Ahnungslosen* echoes strategies of overcoming the conundrum of double consciousness that characterize and ignite the literature of the New Black German Movement. These strategies utilize the excavation of lost histories and the forging of diasporic connections to mend the fissures of fractured multiple identities.

1. Dark Legacies: Colonial Remnants & U.S. Imports in Discourse on Black Germans

The Weimar Republic was marked by contradictions political, social and cultural in nature. Germany had lost its colonies as a result of the Versailles Treaty, and a surge in colonial fantasies in cultural productions sought to recapture the nation's imagined colonial glory. These productions often depicted German colonial undertakings and the relationship between German colonizers and colonial subjects as productive and reinforced hierarchal structures. After the establishment of colonies the presence of people of color became more visible in Germany, which created a problem for the national narrative and the dominant conception of Germanness. German national identity has traditionally been framed against the perceived cultural identities of non-German and non-Aryan peoples. After the First World War, the purported homogeneity of Germany was confronted with the reality of "Others" within its borders to a greater degree than at any previous moment in German history. In most scholarship on the representation of Others during this period, the resistance from Others within Germany's borders to those representations and their active participation in that discourse is often ignored. While narratives about the "Others" were clearly rearticulations of an imperialistically structured world system, the increased number of migrants and non-white residents in Germany meant that these narratives could not go unchallenged, most importantly, from the very people being represented.

This chapter offers a reading of Robert A. Stemmler's 1952 feature film *Toxi* that seeks to situate it at the beginning of the process of restructuring of the focus of

discourses of racism and anti-racism in West Germany after the Second World War. The film's story of a charming and abandoned five-year-old Black German girl demonstrates a paradigmatic shift in the framing of race discourse primarily to a Black / white binary that locates Blackness in Africa and whiteness world-wide. It is both a reflection of contemporaneous public discourse and an attempt to impact that discourse. The film appeals to educational and child-rearing sentiments and ethnic curiosity, and it reflects the persistence of a particular national mythology; however, it very clearly represents a desire to overcome German racism and establish a different social ideal regarding race.

Resistance in Early German Cinema

A brief discussion of the history of anti-racist film criticism and Blacks in film prior to World War II will help explicate *Toxi's* historical significance. The growth of the film industry in the 1920s brought a heightened focus on visualism, and in regards in particular to the Black Other, that visualism maintained continuity of the ethnographic visualization seen, for example, in the *Völkerschauen* that continued to be popular into the National Socialist era.¹ Filmmakers and critics placed high value on the "authenticity" of depictions of Africans in particular and accordingly made efforts to employ actors of African descent, believing that these actors embodied a true essence of Africanness that would appear inauthentic when depicted by a white German actor (Nagl). This belief was based on the presumption that cultural behavior was determined by a biological essence, and the visual representation of Black bodies in film tended to reflect this biologically

¹ The widely popular *Deutsche Afrika-Schau*, for example, traveled through Germany from 1935-1940.

determined essence. These representations served to project Africans as little more than animals with nature driven by their base instincts.² Because this essence was visually connected to dark skin, some filmmakers were dissatisfied with lighter skinned Black Germans and recruited darker skinned migrants from former colonies whom they felt better captured the authentic African, and they occasionally used blackface on lighter skinned actors. This newly situated visual presence of Blacks in Weimar film pre-occupied the film press, whose stories reveled in the tropes and controversies of the visual exhibition of Black bodies from earlier eras (Nagl 547).

Though the cinema of the Weimar Republic inherited traditions of racist visual and narrative structures, there is evidence that argues for the existence of a transgressive, antiracist film practice even in very early German cinema productions. Tobias Nagl locates the start of anti-racist film critique from minorities with a Chinese student organization in Berlin. The *Verein chinesischer Studenten* (Association of Chinese Students) in Berlin actively protested against the depictions of Chinese characters in the epic film series *Die Herrin der Welt*.³ Their financial freedom, their status as welcomed students and the presence of Chinese diplomatic representation in Berlin together enabled their voices of opposition to be recognized, and their oppositions were taken into account to some degree in script rewrites. Perhaps the greatest factor was the damage that the film

² This representation is interestingly reflected in Senghor and Negritude; see Kebede, Messay. "Negritude and Bergsonism." *Journal of African Philosophy*. 3 (2003).

³ Part one of the eight-part series, *Die Freundin des gelben Mannes* was released in 1919. It featured Henry Sze in the role of Dr. Kien-Lung, a recently returned Chinese native who helps the protagonist Maud Gregaards escape from the brothel where she is being held. He is tortured for his traitorous act and later rejected by Gregaards when he asks for her hand in marriage. The famous Black German actor Louis Brody also appears in the film as a Chinese servant.

in its original conception could potentially have had on Weimar Germany's amicable relationship with China, one of the few international friends that the defeated, colony-stripped nation had after the war (Nagl 129–134).

As Nagl shows in his analysis, the presence of racist stereotypes in film were acceptable, as long as they did not pose a serious threat to Germany's foreign political interests (152). The relatively successful campaign from Chinese students provides an insightful contrast to the lack of regard for the concerns of Black Germans and African colonial migrants. The increased contact between white Germans and Blacks after World War I was mediated largely through the entertainment industry. Colonial migrants and Black Germans were re-presented to the public in settings that varied only little from their previous exhibition in *Völkerschauen*; they were now exhibited as artists, dancers, musicians, actors, film extras, etc. During the height of colonialism and the First World War, Black prisoners were often used as film extras (538). After the war, however, the film industry became an important source of income for the growing population of free colonial migrants and Black Germans. But a profession in film was double-edged for Blacks living in Germany, and it posed a difficult quandary to the struggle against the negatively constructed Black imaginary and for positive recognition and self-determination by Blacks living within German borders. Tobia Nagl explains:

Frei gewählt als autonome kulturelle Repräsentationsstrategien waren diese Tätigkeiten angesichts der nicht zuletzt finanziell prekären Lebensverhältnisse von afrikanischen Kolonialmigranten nicht immer. Deren Sichtbarkeit in der Öffentlichkeit bildete nicht ihre meist metropolitanen Lebensverhältnisse und die Diasporaerfahrung ab, sondern bestätigte ein imaginäres Bildarchiv, dessen rassistische, nationale, sexuelle und ikonographische Rahmung bereits feststand, bevor es überhaupt zum Kontakt zwischen Öffentlichkeit und Migranten kam.

(540)

By necessity, Black actors populated roles constructed to reflect an authentic Black identity that was absurdly distanced from their lived reality and that reproduced the negative stereotypes that determined the perception and treatment of Black people.

Nagl goes on to point out that work in film was not only financially profitable; the source of income was marked with prestige and connected to "dem Gefühl subjektiver Aufwertung und Möglichkeiten der Selbsterfindung" (541), an opportunity rarely available to Blacks Germans and colonial migrants. Nagl uses his reading of Žižek to tie the relative notoriety that some Black actors enjoyed to Du Bois' and Fanon's discussions of the power of the white look and the notion of "stolen pleasure" (541–2). This stolen pleasure is connected to the perceived primitivism that Blacks enjoyed, a primitivism that European cultures had given up in favor of more "civilized" contractual political and social structures.

Two films in Nagl's extensive study clearly indicate that German cinema productions made rather bold attempts to destabilize the classist and racist hierarchy of white supremacy. *Sein eigener Diener* (1919) and *Niemandland* (1931) are important pre-cursors to Robert Stemmle's *Toxi* (1952), the first particularly for its progressively positive depiction of a mixed-raced protagonist, and the second for its controversial location of transnational Black diaspora as a site for countering conflict-breeding national socialisms and its foregrounding of the Black protagonist as a healing figure. Unsurprisingly, both films met great resistance from the conservative right.

The now lost film *Sein eigener Diener* is the fictional story of the son of a white

German baron and a Black woman. After his father's death, the bi-racial protagonist seeks out his uncle, taking his white friend along with him. Subsequently, the uncle mistakenly welcomes the white friend as his nephew, and the true nephew is assigned to a servant position until he is able to clear up the confusion. The nephew wins the affection of the baron's daughter and is eventually granted permission to marry her. Nagl's analysis of the film's reception shows how vehemently opposed the conservative right was to the narrative of race mixing, and moreover, how inflected that opposition was by gendered concepts. A great fear prevailed that women would be falsely swayed by the positive depiction of romance between a white woman and "colored" man, a fear that is observable in the response to many presentations of Black bodies in Germany, including the *Völkerschauen*. It was believed that women, driven by irrationality and libidinal compulsivity, lacked the ability to differentiate between filmic images and their true referents (Nagl 547). This logic meant that exposing women to such fantastic and desirable images of Black bodies and inter-racial romance would make them susceptible to similar behavior, the moral depravity of which endangered the supposed purity of the national body.

The fear of uncontrollable, white female desire directed at Black men was spurred by the presence of Black soldiers in occupied Germany. Black troops were members of the Belgian, American, English and French armies, though the majority of them were Senegalese French. When France stationed colonial soldiers in the German Rhineland as a part of Germany's treaty agreement to foreign occupation, it created uproar among white Germans, who felt doubly defeated. Not only had Germany lost the war and all of

its overseas colonies; German soil was now being occupied by non-white victors, supposed intellectual and cultural inferiors who had military authority over white German natives. This elicited a propaganda campaign with posters and news stories that utilized visual imagery of Black soldiers as violent and powerful bodies consuming and controlling the bodies of white German women. Such powerful visual images were intended to register strong emotional responses which played on fears of cultural and geographic invasion, moral degradation and physical violence. One of the most powerful images is that of the Black man sexually dominating the vulnerable German white woman, and it most poignantly captures the intersection of race, sexuality and nationhood in the German imagination.



Figure 1: "Jumbo." This postcard from ca. 1918 depicts the occupation of the Rhineland by Black French soldiers after World War I. (Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz 48)

All of Germany's political parties, the Socialist party excepted, insisted on the removal of Black troops from the occupation forces in Germany (Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz 49). The fear was in part based on the common military practice of raping the women of the defeated, a practice that the Germans themselves had perpetrated in their wars in the colonies. The tables, however, were now turned, and German society was wrought with fear that their women would be subject to rape not only from European victors, who were considered to be more civilized than non-Europeans, but also from uncivilized and uncontrolled Black Africans. Their call to action sought international support from other white supremacist nations to unite against the dangerous threat of the Black male body to the purity of the white race (Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz; Nagl). Some German politicians even held up American lynching as an exemplary system for protecting white feminine virtue. These pornographic campaigns helped reconfigure Germany as a white nation and connected *Volkskörper* and *Ehre* (Nagl 156). As we see repeated in the climate after World War II, the post-World War I discourse projected the crisis of white male identity onto the white female body (156).

Die schwarze Schmach (1921), the distribution of which was eventually prohibited by the German government, dealt explicitly with this "threat" of Black French colonial occupation in the Rhineland. It is within the context of films like *Die schwarze Schmach* and a similar film *Die schwarze Pest* (1921) and the racialized national discourse of which they were part that the figure of the *Rheinlandbastarde*, a generational precursor to the *Besatzungskinder*, appears in national discourse. Similar to the United States, the mixed race child in Germany embodied a prime threat to the nation, and more

broadly, to the white race and its dominance. Perhaps more than the powerful symbol of the de-individualized and dehumanized Black body, the bi-racial child represented the rising threat against white European purity, and thus against white European power. The body of the mixed child symbolized more than defilement of whiteness; it captured the increasing fear of the cultural and intellectual development of Black people.

External political pressures, especially from France, led to the banning of *Die schwarze Schmach* in the Rhineland in July 1921 and a national ban in August of the same year. Though the trauma of defeat and the "loser complex" reached well into the film industry, the overt racism in *Die schwarze Schmach* and *Die schwarze Pest* was exceptional in the culture of Weimar film. Instead Weimar film was characterized by a less direct and less propagandistic narrative and by visual racism that relied on the use of dominant stereotypes.

The second film of interest, *Niemandland* (1931) is a German production directed by the Russian filmmaker Viktor Trivas and starring Louis Douglas as the Black protagonist. Socialist-pacifist Leonhard Frank, a member of the *Volksverband für Filmkunst*, also contributed to the making of the pacifist, anti-war feature (Nagl 735). *Niemandland* takes place in the no-man's land between World War I fronts and portrays the interaction of five soldiers – a German, a Frenchman, an Englishman, a Jew and a nationally ambiguous Black man – as they become dedicated to peace and together forge anti-war solidarity. Through the character of the Black Vaudevillian, played by long-time Berlin resident and popular Black American performer Louis Douglas, the film presents a positive idealization of the Black man. He is marked by thoughtfulness, and his positive

attitude and performance talents help pull the other men out of their heated, nationalist-inflected conflicts. He is the staunchest pacifist, and he repeatedly provides help to the white characters, at one point by saving the life of another soldier. All of his difference posits him as an ideological antithesis to the other protagonists, and "[d]iesen ideologischen Gegenpol verortet NIEMANDSLAND in der kosmopolitischen Transnationalität der schwarzen Diaspora-Erfahrung. Als 'internationaler Artist' ist Douglas der einzige, der alle in diesen Niemandsland gesprochenen Sprachen spricht und eine Verbindung zwischen ihnen herstellt" (Nagl 737).

Tobias Nagl reads this cosmopolitanism in the setting of Douglas' character's diegetic stage performance. The Vaudevillian is on a boat before a backdrop of ocean, the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, the Victory column and the Brandenburg Gate. In the seafaring world on stage, Nagl reads an expression of Black mobility, which, by way of the symbol of the ship, he connects to Paul Gilroy's concept of the black Atlantic, for which the image of the ship embodied the central chronotope (739). Nagl's analytic linking of the cosmopolitanism of the Vaudevillian to his Black diasporic experience specifically, as opposed to a more general internationality, reminds us of the segregated conditions that shaped the experiences of Blacks across much of the globe. Contact between Blacks and whites, while not necessarily uncommon, was often greatly restricted both by social convention and by law. The no-man's land in particular stands in as an opportunity to work around those restrictions as well as others, not unlike Gilroy's black Atlantic. Though the space itself is stable, in the film it is a space where the soldiers can find freedom from the restraints of their national or ethnic particularities, attachments and

prejudices, and it provides them a "means to conduct political dissent" in much the same way that Gilroy contends the ships of the black Atlantic can (Gilroy 17).

The film's no-man's land allows the transnational contact that facilitates the exchange of radical ideas and the construction of a solidarity that is based in political dissent against the dominant discourse of nationalist conflict. Importantly, that space is only productive because of the presence of the Black, non-national Vaudevillian, who is the main facilitator of the soldiers' utopian unity. His role as facilitator and entertainer, however, is the high price he pays for his narrative centrality. He is above all a stage performance figure, and he functions primarily as the story's healer; he is determined foremost by the public perception of him (Nagl 737) and by his usefulness to others.

After the Second World War, the cinema of the Weimar years would seem to offer a much less sullied resource than the cinema of National Socialism for the re-making of a national cinema that could entertain, educate and heal. In the next section of this chapter, I will examine the ways that the widely publicized 1952 feature *Toxi* takes up the discourse from the Weimar years. My reading of the film demonstrates that the themes raised in Stemmler's production reveal continuities in racial thinking from German colonialism through National Socialism, and that the cinema's reliance on many of those tropes indicates reluctance to seeing Blacks as part of German culture. Furthermore, production and publicity for the film, and the actor Elfie Fiegert's role within them indicate that significant changes for Blacks in the film industry as well as a more progressive counter-discourse in film was limited by the lack of agency that Blacks were allowed in film production.

Robert Stemmler's Toxi: Race, Culture and the Location of "Home"

After World War II, a new generation of Black Germans garnered a great deal of attention in the government, press and popular media. In an attempt to avoid another situation like that of the so-called *Schwarze Schmach am Rhein* after World War I, both the German and the American governments instituted stricter anti-fraternization rules, especially between Black soldiers and white German women. The rules were largely ineffective, and an estimated 4,776 births resulted from sexual relationships between Black American or Moroccan soldiers and white German women in the ten years after the war (Lemke Muniz de Faria 344). This time, however, the official rhetoric took a rather different tone when confronting the reality of a growing population of multiracial children than the more blatantly racist and hateful language of the Weimar era press, positing the ultimate welfare of the children as the primary concern. A number of youth welfare bureaus and religious associations consulted by the German Interior Ministry approved of the Ministry's proposal to deport these children, arguing that their "racial peculiarity" would inhibit their social integration, and that the West German public's hostility toward them posed a serious threat to their happiness (Lemke Muniz de Faria 343–4). Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz de Faria writes in an article on the U.S.-German adoption campaign that resulted:

Regardless of which of these two arguments were emphasized, their impact was effectively the same: both state youth welfare bureaus and sectarian associations were convinced of the necessity to act in the best interests of Afro-German children. For their own protection, Afro-German children were seen to be best cared for "among their own kind" – in Africa, South America, or the United States. (344)

Despite the altruistic tone, the official rhetoric only slightly masks underlying and persisting racism. The insistence that Afro-German children would be unable to successfully integrate was based in the theory of essential racial difference and the belief that racially determined personality tendencies (*Negertendenzen*) would deem these children incapable of ever being truly German. Such ideology resonates in the narratives from a number of Afro-Germans who lived in orphanages, many of which were run by the organizations that had advocated deportation (Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz; Hügel-Marshall). Such traumatic experiences are also echoed in the 2003 television movie *Tal der Ahnunglosen*, discussed in chapter four.

In reality, statistical surveys showed that only a small percentage of Afro-German children, approximately 12%, actually lived in orphanages, while the overwhelming majority, 76%, lived at home with their mothers or other family members (Lemke Muniz de Faria 344). The perception of the living conditions for Black German children, however, was greatly shaped, both in the United States and in the Federal Republic of Germany, by minority cases such as one that became known as the Butler Case. In 1951, an African American woman named Margaret Ethel Butler was awarded the right to adopt two Afro-German children whom she had been persistently attempting to bring to the U.S. since reading about German discrimination against Afro-German children in a 1947 *Chicago Tribune* article (Lemke Muniz de Faria 342). The image of the abandoned or orphaned Afro-German came to dominate the perception of the experiences of an entire generation of Afro-Germans and was further solidified in the widely popular German film *Toxi*.

In Easter of 1952, the first children of the generation born after the war were to enter the German public school system. In preparation for the entrance of Afro-German children specifically, a number of measures were taken. The Ministry of Education and the Arts in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia called on teachers and administrators to make an effort to establish classroom environments in which these students would feel themselves part of the school community. In collaboration with the *Gesellschaft für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit*, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft "Bremer Schule e.V.* published Alfons Simon's *Maxi, unser Negerbub*, a book filled with tips and information intended to help prepare the white public for the presence of Afro-German children in open society (Lemke Muniz de Faria 350–1). And in an appeal to an even broader public, Robert Stemmler's film *Toxi* was released in August 1952.

Toxi, starring five-year-old Elfiede Fiegert in the eponymous role, is the story of a young Afro-German girl surreptitiously abandoned by her frail and ill grandmother to the care of the Rose family. Though most of the family members are enchanted by Toxi's charm, the child's presence fans the embers of family conflict, and they eventually decide to place her in an orphanage. Grandfather Rose soon regrets the decision and brings Toxi back into the family home where her bright personality helps initiate the healing of family fractures. In the film's last scenes, Toxi's grandmother reappears during a Christmas celebration, bringing the good tidings that her African American father has arrived to take her "home."

The Rose household spans three generations. The family is headed by Grandfather Rose and Grandmother Helene Rose, a kindly and liberal couple of relatively wealthy

means. Though Helene comments little on the conflict that arises around Toxi's appearance at her fiftieth birthday party, she quietly supports her husband's advocacy of the girl and attempts to establish a welcoming environment for her. Their two daughters Charlotte and Hertha have contrasting personalities that are accentuated by their respective partners. Charlotte Jenrich, the elder daughter, is conservative and traditional in her views. She is married to Theodor Jenrich, a conservative and racist pharmaceutical industry worker with whom she has two young daughters, Ilse and Susi. Charlotte and Theodor are initially adamantly opposed to allowing Toxi to remain in the house. Charlotte's attempts to comment on the situation are repeatedly interrupted, and she is rarely allowed to voice her opinions during the heated discussions that ensue. Hertha Rose is boldly outspoken in comparison to her sister and embodies a modern and relatively independent femininity. Her boyfriend, Robert Peters, is even bolder and more outspoken in his opposition to Theodor in particular, and together, the couple presents an allegory for progressive new politics that sever ties with those of the older generation. Also integral to the family are the two housemaids, Anna and Fanny. Anna is of the generation of Grandfather and Grandmother Rose and shares their kindly disposition toward Toxi. She is the first to step in and act as Toxi's caretaker and acts on behalf of her interests. The teenage Fanny, however, disapproves of Toxi's presence and sees her as a burden on the family and an inconvenient and unnecessary source of unrest.

Toxi was a box office hit. As Heide Fehrenbach writes, it was one of the few films of its time "to explicitly thematize the '*Rassenproblem*' in Germany and call it by its name," and it "played a critical role in establishing a liberal discourse of race in postwar

Germany and popularizing it for the public at large" (108). The film capitalized on the wide-spread public discussion about mixed-raced children and debates about policies of integration and adoption by presenting the public with a melodramatic allegory for the "lived" experiences of abandoned and homeless Afro-German children in West Germany. Throughout the course of the narrative, Toxi gains admittance and is integrated into the Rose family, the symbol both of the West German family unit and more broadly of a relatively affluent West German social class. However, because the film situates its protagonist within an adoption tale, it reinforces the conceptual positing of "all Afro-German children seemingly a priori exterior to German familial structures" (Fenner 168) and by extension, external to German national structures.

The marketing strategy for the film further advanced the image of the abandoned Afro-German child by accentuating the parallels in the biographies of Toxi and the young actor who portrayed her. At the time of the film's release, Elfie Fiegert had no relationship with her biological mother, and her African American GI father had exited her life after he had been ordered to return home (Fehrenbach 107–8). As Angela Fenner points out, "[t]he fact that actress Elfie Fiegert was herself an adopted orphan unfortunately only reinforced [the] conflation of national phantasm and historical reality – so much so that the film's cast list presents the lead role of 'Toxi' as performed by ... Toxi" (Fenner 169). From Stemmler's recounting of his "discovering Toxi" in her first casting appearance to coverage of her actions on set, Fiegert is portrayed as essentially embodying her fictional counterpart. Filmmakers reported that when they first met Fiegert, they were convinced that they had found their Toxi, that Fiegert *was* Toxi, a re-

casting of sorts that structured the entire promotions campaign. In a feature story for *Der Spiegel*, the director also claims he never explained to Fiegert that she was acting in a movie, and that the young girl was not really acting, but simply repeating lines given to her, though his story conflicts with that of screenwriter Maria Osten-Sacken's account of Fiegert's conscious training and awareness (Fenner, *Race Under Reconstruction* 127). Characterized not as a child actor, but instead as an authentic "Toxi," which became a sobriquet for all orphaned Afro-German children, Fiegert is denied as having any agency in the construction of her role, however limited by her age that agency may have been.

Throughout her intensive and thorough 2011 study of the film, Fenner cites press coverage of the film shooting as well as the reception and social reverberations of the film. Reports of Fiegert's charming exclamations and actions on and off the set demonstrate the media's function as sanctioned voyeurs of Black bodies. In line with the filmmakers' publicity strategy, stories reporting from the set tend to align Fiegert with Toxi and reduce her performance to the simple effusion of "her winsome essence as the eternal Samba" (*Race Under Reconstruction* 126). Fiegert's every move is observed in anticipation of a moment that can be reported to encapsulate how unscripted and authentic Toxi's on-screen moments are. Reporters relate to readers how an energetic Fiegert "romps around like a 'native' (*wie eine Eingeborene*)," stuffs herself on *Mohrenköpfe* and amuses all on set when she displays perplexity about her skin color or tries to scrub her brown skin clean (Fenner, *Race Under Reconstruction* 129, 134, 129–30). The consequent meme: the film narrative may be a construction, but the campaign insists that its adorable protagonist is not. The set of the film and the screen of the cinema

can thus be read as structured exhibition spaces in which Toxi can be "observed" by a curious and adoring public. The film is doubtless progressive in its message, but in terms of production and promotion, it carried on in an established tradition of ethnographic objectification and spectacle.

After the First World War, the more visible presence of migrants from Asia and Africa broadened the German public's references for racialized images that it was exposed to on screen. To adjust for the audience's changing racial aesthetics, filmmakers placed greater emphasis on racially "authentic" depictions. They began to rely less frequently on white actors in ethnic drag and increasingly employed (or utilized the involuntary labor of) actors of color as extras. As the contemporaneous discussion surrounding Joe May's series *Die Herrin der Welt* (1919) shows, the press and the public were preoccupied with an opportunity to see "real" Africans and Chinese. The promotional campaign capitalized on this, sensationalizing the production stage by arranging press studio tours of the artificial *Filmstadt* that had been constructed outside of Berlin. The delimited world of the production studio lent ethnographic authenticity to the film's exoticism and blended the world of the film's fiction with the reality of its material production (Nagl 55). In a footnote, Nagl notes that May's strategy was quickly emulated by Ernst Lubitsch. Film shoots began to take on a different character under this new ethnographic spotlight:

Aufgrund der Präsenz relativ vieler nicht-weißer Komparsen nahmen bereits die als Spektakel inszenierten Dreharbeiten selbst völkerschauähnliche Dimensionen an und erlaubten, die primitivistischen Inszenierungsmodi des Films an einem populären Alltagswissen abzugleichen. Da es sich auf vermeintlich reale Objekte der Anschauung beziehen konnte, ließen sich die Unterscheide zwischen Schauspiel, Alltag

nach Drehschluss und rassistischen Zuschreibungen leicht einebnen. (Nagl 57)

The press seemed to lose its orientation in the blended world of the studio, and reports from observers on set struggle to differentiate between its realities and fictions. Film reporter Bobby Emil Lütthge's stories, for example, convey his astonishment at the realism of the African set and costumes. His misperception, however, is evident when he designates the personal clothing the actors wear between shoots – frocks and cutaways – as the true costumes, which he emphasizes with the word "Maskenball" (63). His ascription of racist stereotypes of primitive wildness, animalism and artlessness to the actors structures the fluid shifts between his descriptions of their demeanor in scripted scenes and in non-film moments between shots. Lütthge even insisted that the Black actors who didn't know their way around a bow and arrow should be embarrassed, stating that it was "so eine Blamage für einen anständigen Neger!" (qtd. in Nagl 64).⁴ The set of May's highly anticipated and closely followed production became its own *Völkerschau* with "ethnically authentic" actors cast in the role of curious exhibit specimens both in front of and beyond the gaze of a rolling camera.

Just as Lütthge and other media that reported on *Die Herrin der Welt*, the press coverage of *Toxi* mediated the voyeuristic curiosity and desires of the public. Screening and premier events for *Toxi* gave the public even more direct voyeuristic access to Fiegert and other Afro-German children. Openings at local theaters were often launched with fair-like events and appearances by Fiegert so as to attract families and school children,

⁴ Original source: Bobby Emil Lütthge, "Die May-Stadt in Woltersdorf," *Film-Kurier*, 13 August 1919.

and in some towns, choirs of young orphans performed the film's theme song, "Ich möchte so gern nach Hause geh'n" prior to screenings. The publicity strategy was considerable. Promotional materials and copies of the theme song were given to theaters so that they could be distributed to schools and orphanages, and the campaign encouraged exhibitors to organize performances by kindergarten and orphanage choirs, "stipulated as *gemischt aus schwarzen und weißen Kindern* (a mix of black and white children)," at local film openings (Fenner, *Race Under Reconstruction* 121–2). The musical performances targeted the public's sympathy for the figure of the innocent, abandoned and disadvantaged multiracial child and played up a vision of racial tolerance and co-existence that is symbolically reaffirmed in the performance of racially integrated choirs of children joined in harmonious song.

The interconnectedness of sympathy and curiosity elicited among white Germans with altruistic intentions is captured powerfully in one newspaper's report that the pre-screening appearances of the "endearing Toxi" in Bad Oeynhausen had so moved two families that they pledged to take little "negro" children into their own families (Fenner, *Race Under Reconstruction* 152). Operating as Toxi in the public perception, Fiegert and her character's real-life, "homeless" referents all became the sweet and desirable *Schokoladenpuppen*, and as such, could be perceived as consumable and practically purchasable. These children's desirability and consumability were bound up with a romanticized construction of difference and the temptation of the forbidden. Fenner analyzes this complex ethnographic fantasy in one reporter's fascination with the filming of a bath scene:

The bubble bath and key lighting render Toxi's bath scene an erotic spectacle whose sexual overtones are reinforced by the use of the terms '*Wonne*' and '*Ausdauer*' ... to describe her pleasure in bathing. Cast and crew hover around a nude Black girl poised under bright set lights, restaging the drama of the discovery of sexual / racial difference that demands some sort of epistemological guarantee at the visual level. (*Race Under Reconstruction* 130)

A viewing of the film makes it clear that this fascination was also important not only to the spectator's relationship to Toxi, but also to her relationship with the white German characters within the narrative.

The film clearly strategized to materialize its fictional protagonist as a historical figure, a signifier that subsumed all postwar Afro-German children and characterized their experiences, their identities and their prospects as homologous (Fenner, "Reterritorializing Enjoyment" 169). It is also by way of this highly publicized conflation that the film attempts to coerce the audience to transfer its maudlin sympathy and affection for Toxi onto the "real Toxi's" living among them.

Studies by Fenner and Fehrenbach have highlighted the ways in which Toxi, as an overly determined figure, functions as an impetus for the normalization of social roles in Germany. Fenner's recently published book *Race under Reconstruction in German Cinema* reads the film's "whitewashing" of racist tropes and the reception of those tropes through a psychoanalytic lens of gaze and spectatorship, continually drawing a connection between spectatorship and the material realities of capitalist consumerism. Fenner reads the final scene, in which Toxi is fetched by her African American father, as the scene of Toxi's martyrdom. In essence, by way of caring for the temporarily abandoned child of the allied soldier, the German family redeems itself. In the eyes of the

innocent and ever-willing Toxi, they have become "Germans worthy of love" once again, healed not only of their racism, but also of the dangers of deviant gender roles. Not surprisingly, 1950s Germany struggled to find balance between cultivating a degree of necessary progressiveness in order to move past National Socialist ideology and restoring conservative social norms as a means of bringing about much needed stability. As the central institution of society, the family unit was the primary target for the national conservative restoration project.

In chapter 2, I address some of the sexual, biological and racial dimensions of the ideals and figures with which the conservative social movement was concerned, focusing primarily on the tropes of the "Fräulein" and the "GI." For my purposes here, these particular allegorical figures are less relevant, as the film's narrative largely avoids them and thereby avoids engaging in perhaps a more controversial, heated and highly sexualized discourse. As Fehrenbach observes, *Toxi's* narrative "severed the fate of the child from the "fall" of the mother, shifting the focus away from the latter's sexual and racial transgressions. Thus, Toxi is unburdened from the taint of the past national traumas, both military and moral" ("Rehabilitating Fatherland" 119). I would note, however, that while the film generally quarantines Toxi specifically from direct contamination by the discourse surrounding postwar, inter-racial sex, it does include reactions from characters external to the household family members who only perceive Toxi as an allegory for interracial sex and military occupation, and not as an individual.

Interestingly, *Toxi* instead upholds the positive image of the Black American soldier as a kind and giving provider figure from the early occupation years. His positive

depiction has two important functions. First, it allows the family's acceptance of Toxi to redeem them – as representatives of the nation – for "earlier, misguided and racist perceptions and pathogenic behaviours" (Fenner, *Race Under Reconstruction* 112) toward racialized Others, which is only possible by way of a "worthy" representative of a group that was much maligned in public discourse. Second, it absolves the family of long-term responsibility for Toxi's well-being by presenting a warm, capable and responsible figure to care for her, and vitally, to take her "home" to the United States. The symbolism of Toxi's implicit departure from her native country of Germany to the land of her birth father is powerful.

Ethnographic Evidence

From today's perspective in particular, the question that frames the film's narrative and the public discourse it reflects – What should be done with multiracial German children? – leads us to questions about the role of race in the identification practices of multiracial individuals. Chapter 4 offers a more detailed examination of this developmental process among Black German subjects in film and autobiographical literature, but I would like briefly to address the genealogical, ontological and teleological dimensions of conceptions of people of mixed racial or ethnic heritage. Notions of racial identity that posit identifiable and essential origin, nature and purpose will necessarily seek to adhere to the observance of the "natural" order by which they categorize the world. If individuals or ideas deviate from that order, they must be corrected, or at least minimized so as not to disturb the perceived proper order.

The definitive racial and symbolic dialectic of Black and white historicized by

Gilman continued to evolve in the twentieth century in a nation that was increasingly heterogeneous and globally interconnected. Shifts in the flow of ideas between Germany and other cultures and nations – racial and ethnic others in particular – influenced the configuration of the Black / white binary in the German imaginary. Ethnological obsession with new Others grew as contact increased, and in the aftermath of World War II, American race relations became an increasingly productive resource for race ideology in Germany. Aware of the domestic quagmire that was race relations in America, it is likely that Germany feared that abandoning its racially homogeneous national identity could lead to similar domestic conflict. In such politically and socially unstable times, it is unlikely that the defeated nation believed it could afford the additional instability that could result from a return to race-focused discourse. In light of the still tangible ideology that had justified the former regime's campaigns of forced labor, sterilization, euthanasia and genocide, Germany had little desire to deal with the deeper structures of its racism. By maintaining German identity as an exclusively white identity that continued to define itself in opposition to Black and all that it symbolized, Germany hoped also to maintain its racial and cultural superiority and to regain social and political stability.

Due to the especially oppositional construction of the Black / white binary, the dominant definitions of racialized categories in Germany were, and continue to be a particularly stubborn obstacle to Black German subjectivity. Afro-German children born during the postwar occupation were stigmatized by their racial particularity, and even in the eyes of altruistic Germans, they would always face social exclusion and discrimination because of their visually signified cultural difference. Because German

citizenship was conveyed paternally, the social and cultural exclusion of Afro-German children was legally reinforced. Regardless of their living situation – be it with biological family or under state care – German citizenship laws positioned the children in a state of "homelessness," and by focusing on the problem of location, rhetoric concerning the pragmatics of the children's welfare echoed their legal dislocation. The scene of an earnest discussion between Grandfather Rose and Toxi calls attention to the elision that must occur in a discourse structured in such strict binary terms in order to successfully excise Afro-German children from the body of the nation, both conceptually and physically.

Toxi and her foster sisters Susie and Ilse sit at a table strewn with books while Hertha sits quietly at a desk. The two sisters read aloud "Die Geschichte von den schwarzen Buben" ("The Story of the Inky Boys") from Heinrich Hoffmann's famous collection of grotesque moral stories for children, *Der Struwwelpeter*. The shot cuts to a close-up of the page in the book and Susi's finger points out each of the characters on the page as she identifies them, declaring finally, "Und das ist der Mohr. Der heißt Toxi." In a reaction shot, the camera quickly tilts to a medium close-up of Toxi, who looks on silently with her head resting in her hand, confusion marking her expression for a brief moment before the girls continue reading the story. The camera remains on her as Ilse reads the next lines of the story, now substituting Toxi's name in place of the previously nameless figure of the Mohr boy: "Sie schreien und lachen alle drei / Als dort die Toxi ging vorbei / weil sie so schwarz wie Tinte sei." Without hesitation, Toxi counters that she is white here and there, showing the palms of her hands to the girls as proof.

"Kannste sehen," she states matter-of-factly and then tells them that the soles of her feet are also "quite white." Susi and Ilse are as eager to see Toxi's foot as she is to offer up proof of her partial whiteness, and she strains to hold up her de-socked foot for the two sisters who lean their faces within just a few inches of the object of their curiosity. They shout out an approving and enthusiastic "ja" and then quickly return to their seats on the other side of the small table. No longer concerned with the matter of Toxi's skin color, they abandon the rest of "Die Geschichte von den schwarzen Buben" in favor of "Die Geschichte vom Daumenlutscher" ("The Story of Little Suck-a-Thumb"). A tightly framed full shot shows Toxi just right of center sitting upright in her chair, her head hanging and her eyes down. Susi looks over Ilse's shoulder in the right of the frame, and behind Toxi in the left of the frame, a concerned Hertha silently observes the girls' interaction. After a moment of contemplation, Toxi asks Ilse why she is Black, to which the girl replies that she does not know and then shrugs nonchalantly as she returns her attention to the book. Now consumed by the question of her difference, Toxi abandons story time to pose her question to Grandfather Rose.



Figure 2: Proof of Whiteness. Ilse and Susi inspect the white soles of Toxi's feet.

The interaction between the girls, overseen by the usually outspoken Hertha, is depicted in roughly a minute, yet it captures rather acutely the structure of the contemporaneous discourse of racial difference. First, the story that instigates the awkwardness is itself a befitting emblem of an entreaty for racial tolerance that is confined by racist ideology. In "Die Geschichte von den schwarzen Buben," three boys, Wilhelm, Kaspar and Ludwig, relentlessly tease a passing Moor. Nikolaus appears and commands the boys to stop making fun of the "poor, Black Moor," who can't help that he isn't as white as they are. When the boys defiantly intensify their teasing, Nikolaus punishes them by dunking them in his giant ink well, making them even blacker than the Moor. Like the film itself and the tolerance campaign in which it participated, the story conveys the moral that it is wrong to make fun of people who are born different. The more specific moral of racial tolerance, however, locates racial difference in a hierarchy

that positions the poor, harmless Moor as helplessly inferior and reinforces his racial inferiority by way of Nikolaus' ironic punishment; the boys are meant to suffer as a result of their literal denigration. Being now "even blacker" than the Moor, the "Tintenbuben's" status is even lower than his, and they follow behind him as he continues his walk in the sun.

German child welfare agencies and sympathetic media producers invoked a similar motif in their portrayals of Afro-German children as homeless innocents who needlessly suffered at the hands of the intolerant and unsympathetic. But at the same time that they solicited German tolerance, they reinforced racial difference by persistently emphasizing and sensationalizing the children's skin color (*Negerkind, kleines Negerlein, Negerbub* and eventually also *Toxi*), fetishizing them with chocolate-coated terms of endearment (*Schokoladenkind, Schokoladenpuppe*). They also conflated epidermal difference with essential cultural difference, since Afro-German children were generally understood to face socialization problems not only because of racial intolerance, but also because of the intrinsic difference that their brown skin signified. Furthermore, the relentlessly perpetuated image of the Afro-German as an innocent child, like Hoffmann's helpless Moor boy, posed less of a threat to the engrained sense of racial superiority than did images of Black teenagers and adults from previous generations. Afro-German adults could live with some degree independence from white German altruism and had a more justifiable claim to equality, but Afro-German children, represented as parentless wards of the state, were reliant on the willingness of white Germans to accept and care for them. The structure of the parent / child relationship retained white Germans in a position of

authority and control over the future possibilities for Afro-Germans and the boundaries of their identities. By casting itself in the role of parent to Black children, white Germany continued to conceive of itself quite literally as *Erzieher* of a small *Kindernation* comprised of children of African heritage within its own borders, and as such, could reclaim its colonial glory in some small way.

In addition to the insertion of Toxi's name, a subtle switch from the story-telling simple past tense of the lines from Hoffmann's collection, first published in 1845, to the present tense creates a sense of continuity between the world of his time and the allegorical world of the film. But more significant, it establishes a direct link from the experiences of the Moor in the tale and Toxi, who is generally received by the public as a non-fictional figure. The equation of Toxi with the teased Moor foreshadows both the ridicule and rejection she later endures at Susi's birthday party and the final scene in which the three girls put on a musical performance of the three kings' journey to offer gifts to the Christ child in Bethlehem, which I will address in more detail later.

When Toxi is confused by Susi and Ilse's placement of her in the story, she presents herself to them as an ethnographic object for inspection. For a brief moment, their interaction strongly takes on the atmosphere of a *Volkerschau*, with Toxi as the human exhibit and the girls as the curious observers. It recalls the voyeuristic setting of the tub scene shoot in Fenner's analysis and the actual tub scene in the film when the girls are first introduced to Toxi who has just been bathed and is physically vulnerable to their curious gaze. In the story time scene, any sexual undertones that the voyeuristic gaze may otherwise carry are eliminated by focusing the gaze on one bare foot of an otherwise fully

clothed Toxi, and the childish innocence of Ilse and Susi casts the self-indulgent act of human inspection in the harmless light of children's natural curiosity. The indifference of Ilse's reply to Toxi's existential inquiry accentuates that the sisters have made no judgment and are not overly concerned with her difference. The exchange closes with the sense that the girls' curiosity about Toxi and their identification of her with the Moor are not only natural, but free of any ill intention. If we read the budding friendship between all of the girls as an allegory for the relationship between Black and white Germans, this scene in particular pardons the intrusiveness of white German fascination with Black bodies. It is still able to maintain some critical distance, however, by conveying the emotional harm that such fascination can inflict on the developing, young Black subject by depicting Toxi's crestfallen demeanor after she has "proven" herself.

In a later scene, one of the guests at Susi's birthday party, a particularly aggressive "meangirl," taunts Toxi and refuses to include her in any of the fun and games. She tells Toxi not to touch the string telephone she has gifted Susi with her Black hands and runs to tattle to Susi as Toxi sits alone on the stair, speaking into one end of the toy with no one on the other end to reply. The image of Toxi speaking into a disconnected toy phone overtly symbolizes her loneliness and the disinterest of those on the receiving end of her search for understanding and reliable companionship. When Toxi later searches for a seat at the dining table or attempts to join the circle in the game "Taler, Taler, du musst wandern,"⁵ the meangirl either tells her there is no place for her or pushes her away.

⁵ As Fenner point observes, the sung verses of the game correlate Toxi with the Taler (coin) through the imagery of image of a perpetual wandering. I would like to make an additional note about the film's

The correlation of Toxi and Hoffmann's Moor is further underscored when Toxi hesitantly asks for a *Mohrenkopf* (Moor's head), a small filled pastry covered in chocolate glaze. The meangirl mocks her and tells her that she doesn't need one, since she already has her own. A young boy seated next to the meangirl gives her a stern look and tells her that one shouldn't say such things, but otherwise, her nasty behavior remains unpunished, unlike the three boys in Hoffmann's tale. The film lingers on Toxi's moment of utter dejection in a close-up of her frowning and inspecting the pastry before returning it uneaten to her plate. The visual conveys her internalization of the association between her and the Moor, one she had been able to complicate earlier in the story time scene.

Ethnographic Geography

Notably, when Ilse is unable to offer Toxi the comfort of an answer to her pressing question, Toxi does not turn to Hertha for an answer, despite her being the nearest adult and someone with whom Toxi has established an affectionate relationship. Instead, she heads off to see her strongest advocate, Grandfather Rose. As Toxi walks alone to Grandfather Rose's office, the camera tracks alongside her down two flights of

particular use of the ring-game. The children in the movie sing the lyrics: "Taler, Taler, du musst wandern / von dem einen Ort zum andern. / O wie schön, o wie schön! / *Hat zwei Augen und kann nicht sehen.*" While the text naturally has a number of variations, the final line in the film version is very uncommon; more common variations of the last line are "Taler lass dich ja (nur) nicht sehen" and "Niemand darf den Taler sehen." This minor change in effect more strongly personifies the coin, making the association between the Taler and Toxi more direct. It also points to Toxi's inability to see and be seen, highlighting her predicament as a struggle for recognition. It further alludes to the contradictions of her two, mutually exclusive identities; the Taler's two eyes (two sides of the coin) are metaphors for the two sides of Toxi (her German and her Black heritages).

stairs, and the sound of her footsteps are the scene's only audio. When Toxi arrives at the office door, the shot cuts to Grandfather Rose seated at the desk with a jeweler's magnifying glass pressed to his eye as he inspects something beneath a desk lamp in an otherwise dark office. He asks who is there when Toxi's small frame enters into the shadow of the room and fearfully repeats his question when there is no immediate reply. After declaring herself, Toxi steps from out of the shadow and through a bright key light that is concentrated in the center of the shot frame and leaves the rest of the room in dark shadow. Grandfather Rose suspects that she has come to say goodbye, since she is to be taken to the children's home the next day, and he is surprised when Toxi says she has come to ask him a question: "Warum bin ich schwarz?" In the simplistic and evasive reply that follows, Grandpa Rose continues the ethnological motif by using the globe that sits on his desk to locate the origins and distribution of Black and white people throughout the world.



Figure 3: Ethnographic Geography. Grandfather Rose explains racial origins.

In a tightly framed two-shot, Grandfather Rose opens his explanation with a short verse, his face close to Toxi's. "Schwarze Hand in weißer Hand, Sonne, Mond und Sterne," he lilt and then continues, "Gott, der alle Kinder schuf, hat sie alle gerne." The lines situate Grandfather Rose's moral of racial tolerance within the frame of Christian ethics, similar to Hoffmann's employment of Nikolaus as the sustainer of justice in "Die Geschichte von den schwarzen Buben." The theological grounding of his moral assertion places it above the social and national dimensions of racist ideology, according it a higher and less disputable value, and yet it may also have the effect of downplaying the indisputable impact of those dimensions. Grandfather Rose then sets Toxi on his desk next to a globe and further expounds on his lyrics of comfort.

Du bist ja nicht allein schwarz, Toxi. Da gibt's viele, Tausende, Millionen.
Pass mal auf. Alle Menschen, die hier auf diese Erde geboren werden
[spins the globe], die sind entweder hell oder dunkel. Wird hier ein helles

Kind geboren [fingers a point in the northern hemisphere], wird hier ein dunkles Kind geboren [fingers a point in the southern hemisphere]. Als Susi geboren wurde, da war sie hell. Und als Toxi geboren wurde, da war sie dunkel. Hier auf *diesem großen* Fleck [circling Africa with his finger], da leben lauter Menschen so wie du, klein und groß. Die sind so dunkel auf der Haut wie du. Und wenn du da wärst, da würden sie gar nicht darüber nachdenken. Hier wohnen die weißen Menschen [spins globe around without specifying a point], und wenn Susi allemal zu denen auf der anderen Seite käme, dann würden die schwarzen Kinder sagen, "Nu, guck mal! Die ist ja weiß!"

The structure and geography of Grandfather Rose's ethnographic explanation are revealing in a number of ways. First, he divides the world into two distinct categories – light and dark – an ethnological system by which he maintains the validity of white superiority and at the same time distances himself from anti-Semitic, Aryan supremacist ideology. Instead, he describes the world to Toxi in terms of the Black / white binary that had come to dominance in the discourse in a Germany that ironically postured as post-racial. In the new post-World War II world, anti-Semitism was distinguished from other forms of racism, especially racism against communities of color, both in scholarly and lay discourses, "in effect treating these as two distinct social, psychological, and historical phenomena" (Chin et al. 3). By 1950, racial categorization in the Federal Republic had developed along the question of the color-line, and more specifically, around Blackness, and the Afro-German children of the occupation generation were the focus of their attention. The preoccupation with Afro-German children and the focus on their skin color eventually lead to "one explicitly racialized yet denationalized category keyed to 'color,'" and "in effect de-raced the offspring of Soviet paternity and rendered Jewishness invisible, implicitly coding the occupation children of these formerly racialized groups 'white'" (Chin et al. 38). Grandfather Rose's binary categorization

demonstrates the postwar political and social climate's influence on the restructuring of racial categories in Germany and the place of that new structure in the imagination of a post-fascist German state.

Second, he assigns each category a location on the globe. He both originates and restricts Blackness to the African continent, thereby essentializing it as a static, uniform and immobile identification. Whiteness, on the other hand, is accorded no specific geographic origin or finite location; instead, it is implied as unbound, universal, and yet diverse. The freedom and mobility that he affords white identities and contrasts with the confined lack of agency of Black identity demonstrates the continuity of the ideologies of colonial imperialism.

Third, and perhaps of greatest significance, his categorization conflates skin color with ethnicity, equating a phenotypic characteristic with regional and cultural differentiation. In this equation, in line with the second point above, German-born Toxi is placed outside of the white world, and her identity is restricted to a foreign region and culture. The binary structure allows no room to account for the particularity of her bi-racial identity, to afford her the other "half" of her ethnic heritage. She has brown skin, so she cannot "be white," and according even to the new definitions of post-fascist national identity, Toxi cannot be German.

Believing that she had proven at least her partial whiteness only moments before, Toxi is once again returned to the role of the Moor. Not unlike American racial definitions of the time (e.g. the "One Drop Rule"), Toxi's racial identity is determined by her African blood, not by her white German lineage. In accordance with white

supremacist ideology, the definition settles white as universal and pure, and Black becomes a kind of contaminant, by which the purity of whiteness is nullified. When whiteness is defined in terms of purity and cleanliness, Blackness, as its antithesis, is understood as a lack of cleanliness, a state of being that is marked by dirtiness that threatens to sully the purity of whiteness if brought into contact with it. The trope of Black dirtiness had widespread traction in popular culture. Even in Germany, it was widely employed in advertisements for cleaning agents, and the film plays with this idea when Susi and Theodore dirty their faces eating chocolate covered treats. Even press coverage of the film's production enjoyed relating stories to the public about Fiegert's supposed preoccupation with scrubbing herself clean (Fenner, *Race Under Reconstruction*). By way of the dirt symbolic, the Black body is also associated with sin and punishment, for example, when the three naughty boys are dunked in ink in Hoffmann's children's story. Further, paternal citizenship laws recognized first and foremost the legitimacy of the non-white lineage of the generation of Afro-German children born primarily to German mothers and Black fathers, underscoring the definitiveness of their African (or African American) heritage over and above their white German heritage. It is clearly reflected in the discourse of the 1950s that Afro-German children fill the role of the Black Other to a far greater degree than they do that of the bi-racial German subject.

The Afro-German subject complicates the national body because she is a Black German who challenges the national conception that defines itself against the Black Other as one external to the nation. As African Diaspora Studies scholar Michelle M.

Wright explains:

For those who lie within its borders as signifiers of differences – whether racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, or religious differences – they must necessarily be constructed as antithesis to the nationality's thesis. "They" serve as a marker of what the nation is continually attempting to "overcome." Both liberals and conservatives respond to this system: the latter argues that they are not actual members of the nation; the former argues that, despite their differences, they are still part of the nation, that there is "room" to incorporate them. In either case, difference is always already antithetical to the idea of nation. (38)

The result is that even the liberal and affectionate Grandfather Rose is unable to locate Toxi within the conception of his white German world, the one into which she was born and with which she is culturally and linguistically – in other words, ethnically – affiliated. His geography of origins, which explains that white children are born "here" (or all over) and Black children are born "there" (Africa), does not account for Toxi's existence, and it kindly, yet thoroughly ignores the question of her existence as a Black German.

When Toxi asks, "Why am I Black?" the question she is really asking is, "Why am I Black when nearly everyone else around me is white, and why does this difference appear to be so significant to others?" She knows that her grandmother is white, and even if she does not remember her deceased mother, she has likely seen pictures of her. She also knows that she has a father in America, but none of this explains to her why she looks the way she does and, more importantly, why it matters. By emphasizing Toxi's skin color as an ethnic signifier of her patrilineal heritage, the film attempts to evade as much as possible the issue of her maternity, which would bring attention to interracial sex and the heated nationalized discourse surrounding it. Tragically, Toxi's existential inquiry is met with an answer that precludes her bi-racial identity and reduces it to a monolithic

and static Black African singularity. It seems she is the Moor that gets laughed at in the story after all. And yet, the young protagonist is shown to be pleased with Grandfather Rose's tale of origins, and in a tone of satisfied wonder, she declares him a "wise" man.

A Multicultural Messiah?

I will close my analysis with a discussion of the film's conclusive scenes, which build up to a Christmas spectacle in black- and white-face. Susi, Ilse and Toxi descend the main stair of the Rose house dressed as the Magi in a musical rendition of the biblical nativity scene. In a symbolic scene prior to the performance, Susi asks to play the role of the African (Moor) ruler, since Toxi, who was (naturally) originally given the role. Anxious to be the center of attention, Susi laments, "Die Toxi war das ganze Jahr Mohr. Ich möchte auch mal Mohr sein." When her mother and Hertha explain that they would have to make her Black ("schwarz machen") and Toxi white, both Ilse and Susi erupt in joyous excitement at the prospect that "Toxi soll weiß werden und Susi soll schwarz werden!" The girls' role exchange, visually highlighted by the face cover they wear during the performance, connotes the "interchangeability and relativity of skin color" that is associated with the racial tolerance the family has developed (Brauerhoch 123).

As two of the girls cheer loudly (Toxi is silent and looks distracted, but this appears to be an effect of Fiegert's boredom during a stretch of scene in which she has no lines), the scene cuts abruptly to the kitchen and directly relates the enthusiasm about the race swap to the familial harmony that has taken over the house. In the kitchen, the young housemaid Fanny, who had long considered Toxi a problematic imposition, beams a bright smile and declares to the elder housemaid Anna, "Oben ist alles ein Herz und eine

Seele – Friede in der Familie!" The allegorical Rose family no longer lives amidst divisive animosity and financial uncertainty, and their unity and prosperity have been restored as a result of their interaction with the little Afro-German of mysterious origin.

As Brauerhoch and Fehrenbach propose, the true concern of the film is indeed the rehabilitation of the German paternal figure and the reestablishment of gender delineated family roles. Through their respective interactions with Toxi, each of the troubled members of the family is redeemed, and the "proper" order of the family is restored. Theodor Jenrich's redemption comes when he is freed from the confines of his racist beliefs, which the film characterizes as a fascist relic. Intending to take her to the children's home, Theodor spends a pleasant morning alone with Toxi and is softened by her pleasant disposition and the affection she shows him. When Toxi gets lost, Theodor is overcome with fatherly worry and actively participates in the ensuing search. When Toxi is recovered from a group of traveling performers she has been living with, Theodor's paternal authority is restored, signaled by the physical affection he thereafter shares with Toxi. With a softened heart, he also recovers the affection of his more liberal family members and, importantly, of his previously disapproving father-in-law, and is thus able to reclaim his familial authority.

The transformation of Hertha and Robert is far less dramatic. The two rebellious youth are in a serious relationship, and while the older generation hopes that they will soon marry, the couple has expressed no such plans. When Hertha takes Toxi to visit Robert's apartment, Toxi asks if the two are married after she sees them kiss. Robert replies that people can kiss without being married, and Hertha confirms. By way of their

expressed liberal views, Robert's modern and artistic occupation in advertisement and the conversations the couple shares in Robert's trendy city apartment, the film characterizes both figures and their relationship as nonconventional and Hertha in particular as living on the borders of decency.⁶ Toxi presents the couple with a picture she has drawn of them on their imaginary wedding day, reflecting an image of their potential future back to them. In a later scene, Hertha tells Robert that Toxi will have to return to the children's home, and he promptly Robert suggests that they get married as soon as possible. "Weißt du, ich hab mir nämlich überlegt, dann könnten wir vielleicht Toxi zu uns nehmen," he continues, and Hertha confesses that she, too, had been thinking of adopting Toxi. Having had a chance to play at home through their involvement with Toxi, the two develop a taste for family life, albeit one that, with Toxi, would not be seen as particularly conventional. The film drives home Toxi's positive influence in the couple's lives when the dialog abruptly turns from the intimate proposal to a discussion of the assured success that Robert's Toxi-inspired chocolate ad campaign will have.

In *Toxi*, Robert Stemmle and the team of filmmakers created a work that is inarguably progressive in its message of racial tolerance and "integration." But that message is positioned and maintained within the confines of the family realm.

Fehrenbach writes:

The film suggests that while black German children may be able to find the necessary "*Nestwärme*" in the private sphere of home, their experience in public is fraught with dangers. But even here, the film's depiction of

⁶ That she could be perceived in such a light is hinted at when her Aunt Wally, a single woman of wealthy means, assumes that Toxi is actually Hertha's secret offspring from her time working at a U.S. duty station after the war.

home is ambivalent and ultimately problematic for Toxi - for the child is bounced between an ailing white grandmother who cannot care for her, a home inhabited by a surrogate white family rift by conflict over her, and an institutional home people by abandoned children like herself. None, then, are presented as optimal solutions or as places where Toxi unambiguously *belongs*. (Fehrenbach, *Race After Hitler* 121–2)

Despite the allegorical function of the three generation Rose household, the family melodrama clearly asserts the limitations of its progressive moral to the structure of the rehabilitated family home. It is only after Theodor has been "won over" and "cured" of his racism that Toxi's presence in the family is unanimously met with acceptance, but even then, her position is an unstable one. The film foreshadows this in the kitchen scene just after Fanny pronounces that peace has finally been restored to the family. When Fanny leaves the kitchen, the camera tracks Anna as she walks over to Detective Plaukart, the detective investigating the case of Toxi's abandonment. He is seated at the kitchen table and Anna, who has kept secret the truth about Toxi's origins, offers him tea and *Stollen*. The private dialog between Anna and Detective Plaukart reveals that he, too, has uncovered the mystery of Toxi's sudden appearance on the front step of the Rose home, and it forecasts Toxi's emigration and her subsequent exclusion from the Rose family's newfound happiness.

According to Fehrenbach, the scenes depicting Toxi's life outside of the family – those that narrate her brief experience after her accidental separation from Theodor and her adoption by the group of outcast vagabond performers – illustrate the possibilities that the filmmakers imagine for Toxi's future outside the protection of her adoptive family. She reads a shot of Toxi gazing at a lingerie window display, the girl's involuntary absorption into a panhandling endeavor and the panhandler group's decision

to exploit her exotic appearance to the strongly held belief that Toxi and other Afro-German children would necessarily have limited social and professional options as adults. The currency of her value as an exotic object, captured also in side story of Robert's caricature-based advertising campaign, permeates all scenes of the film, and suggests "that [her] exploitation [is] inevitable" (Fehrenbach, *Race After Hitler* 123). As Fehrenbach further explains:

It also, however, signals her anticipated social and economic status in West Germany if left to her own devices: not the lofty ranks of the respectable bourgeoisie that Theodor and family [inhabit], but the more lowly ranks of "gypsy" street performers or ailing indigent grandmothers. (*Race After Hitler* 123)

Fortunately for Toxi, she is rescued from the dangers of the outside world and returned to the safety of the family. And it is there that she fulfills her role as a catalyst for their transition.

The children's performance of the nativity story captures the duality of Toxi's acceptance in the family by first erasing and then restoring and amplifying her difference. Since the filmmakers can find no accepting and healthy place for Toxi, even in their fictional West Germany, they fashion a future for Toxi outside the state. The Christmas pageant scene, rife with allusions that associate Toxi with the figure of the Christ child and set her up to perform sacrificial role of martyr (Fenner, *Race Under Reconstruction*), ushers in the arrival of a solution to the "problem" of Toxi's mis-location.

While the children sing the story of the magi, the first and second buzzing of the doorbell coincides with lines that correlate the Biblical journey with Toxi's journey. The first buzz occurs at the end of Susi's first solo lines. "Ich bin von den dreien am besten

bekannt. / Ich bin der König aus Mohrenland," she smilingly sings, decorated in blackface. The camera cuts to Theodor and his wife Charlotte when everyone repeats the word "Mohrenland" in choral unison, and the doorbell rings, but is ignored. The performance continues, and all three of the children sing about continuing their trek to bring gifts to Mary's son. When they sing the lines "damit wir das kleine Kindlein sehen," the buzz of the doorbell is heard for a second time, and Grandfather Rose sends Fanny to answer it. The camera cuts to Fanny welcoming the unexpected guests: Toxi's grandmother Frau Berstel and a tall Black man in glasses. The shot returns to the girls' performance, and a white-faced Toxi points to a lamp that represents the Star of Bethlehem and sings the following lines: "Der Stern steht stille über dem Haus. / Gesang der Englein tönet heraus." Toxi's transformation into a white character in her performance, enabled by Charlotte and Hertha and initiated by Susi and Ilse, symbolizes her (circumstantial and temporary) acceptance into the white, bourgeoisie family. The star "now stands still above the house," indicating that the searching Magi have found the residing place of the Christ child. But when Toxi describes the resounding singing of little angels, her biological family members enter the background of the frame just in time for her poignant performance.

The camera moves in to frame her in a close-up, and Toxi begins to sing the song she learned while staying in the children's home, the theme song of the film. The candles of the Christmas tree flicked to her right, and in the left of the frame, the arms of Grandfather Rose and Toxi's father are just visible.

Ich möcht' so gern nach Hause geh'n, ay-ay-ay.
Die Heimat möcht' ich wiederseh'n, ay-ay-ay-ay.

Ich find' allein nicht einen Schritt, ay-ay-ay.
Wer hat mich lieb und nimmt mich mit? Ay-ay-ay.

The child's song is noticeably marked with a melancholy tone, that is, until she sings the final lines. With the last lines, Toxi's voice rings out boldly, and her face takes on a merry and hopeful character. Once again, Toxi finds herself cast in a story role intended to correspond with her lived experiences. The textual transition of the performance lyrics leaves Toxi's song ambiguous. It can of course be read as a lament from the Magi, who in the Biblical account receive warning by way of a dream not to return to Herod and thus must find an alternate route home. But the close of the preceding verse also aligns Toxi's emotional solo performance with the song that resounds from the choir of little angels in the story, and further, with the children's choirs that occasionally opened film screenings. With her rendition of "Das Toxi-Lied," Toxi takes on the role of both the angels and the baby Jesus by sounding the arrival of one who searches for his own little babe, her father. After completing her song, Toxi steps out of the frame, and the musical accompaniment plays on as the camera turns its focus to Grandfather Rose and other family members. They greet the tall, Black stranger who has come into their home and quietly usher him into the privacy of the dining room before the children can notice him. Still playing at their instruments, Hertha and Robert exchange a concerned glance; their shared dream of a nuclear family with Toxi is now in danger.

In the dining room, the stranger introduces himself as James R. Spencer and offers up his passport as proof of his identity. Toxi's grandmother explains that Mr. Spencer, who has a gas station "over in America," has been searching for his daughter and has come to retrieve her. Charlotte is distraught at the thought of separating the girls

after they have spent so much time together, but Grandfather Rose states that though they will all miss her, Toxi's real father has come, and the resolution is self-evident. "Tja, wir hätten gerne was getan für eins von diesen Kindern, ihm ein Zuhause geben," he says. "Und nu' kommt der wirkliche Vater, und – nee, nee, nee, Kind, da können wir nichts machen." Mr. Spencer expresses his thanks and his pleasure that everything has "turned out so nice."

Despite the loss the family has already begun to feel, the situation has turned out nice, indeed. As Brauerhoch elucidates:

Die beste Lösung für alle, trotz inzwischen erfolgter »Integration«, an der alle ihre Menschlichkeit und zum Schluß selbst Herr Jenrich seinen guten Willen bis hin zur Konversion unter Beweis stellen konnten, ist die »Heimfahrt« Toxis mit ihrem Vater nach Amerika. Somit wird das Problem mit gutem Gewissen aus der deutschen Welt geschafft und entspricht den historischen Tatsachen der schon erwähnten breit angelegten Adoptivaktion in den deutschen Medien der Zeit. (124)

The film's solution to the "problem" gives irrefutable precedence to Toxi's blood relation over the familial bonds she has over time developed with the Rose family. With Toxi's birth mother conveniently absent from the plot, the film can unproblematically reiterate the German state's social policy of *jus sanguinis* that determines citizenship not by place of birth, but by the citizenship of the parents. The return of Toxi's biological American father releases the family from the altruistic obligation it felt to do something for "one of these children" while leaving them with the liberal badge of honor that their willingness to sacrifice has earned them. Toxi's imminent departure also serves as a corrective to the "accident" of her birth that Grandfather Rose's earlier binary explanation alluded to: the misplacement of a brown body within a white geographic location.



Figure 4: Becoming African American. Toxi wipes the white makeup from her face when she meets her biological father for the first time.

Toxi's final racial and cultural realignment is captured in the final scene when she is finally introduced to her "Daddy." In a symbolic moment of paternal transference, Theodor takes the hand of the hesitant girl and gently deposits her in front of her new father. A low angle two shot captures Mr. Spencer bending his large frame to greet his daughter, and the intimidating height of the stranger is visually present, but minimized. Seeing that she should now identify with the Black face before her, Toxi wipes at the white color that obscures her brown face. "Das hier geht ab," she explains quickly. The concerned look on her face disappears once her father lifts her up and she can see his smiling face up close. The shot tightly frames the newly united family in an intimate close-up, isolating them from their environment, and thus from the West German society it connotes. "Ich kann Englisch," she assures him and begins eagerly to count as proof

that she belongs in his world. The scene then cuts to an over-the-shoulder close-up of Toxi's face as she continues to count while held in her father's embrace. This final shot signifies Toxi's transition to her proper ethnicity and nationality. Having wiped part of the white coloring from her cheek, she has begun to shed the markers of her integration into the white German family, and by attempting to communicate with her father in what little she knows of his language, she begins to relinquish ownership of her native German language. The screen fades to black in a swell of a sentimental string rendition of the theme song, and Toxi is effectively excised from the German national body – geographically, ethnically and linguistically. The proper global racial order, at least in the eyes of progressive West German ideals, has been restored, and with it, the proper social ideals and roles of a progressive, liberal society.

Toxi's Legacy

I have focused on this film because of what it reveals about the complicated transition that race discourse undergoes in the postwar years. But it is also of great significance because of the legacy it leaves. In the 1960s, the film began running on television, and the story became a source of identification for subsequent generations of Afro-German children. *Toxi* is referenced in the poetry of Afro-German women that begins to appear over three decades later and is also referenced as an unrealistic, romantic ideal commonly held by Afro-Germans in Angelina Maccarone's 1998 film *Alles wird gut*. *Toxi* also helped to establish a precedent in a national cinema under reconstruction that, instead of imagining Black Germans and Blacks in Germany as part of the nation's narrative structure, continued to represent them as outsiders whose origins, and

consequent "proper" location, are understood to be external to the German nation.

Interestingly, one of the historical legacies of the Black / white binary that returns to the fore in postwar German consciousness, the Hegelian dialectic, arguably demonstrates the difficulty of accounting for the synthesis of Black and white within a white supremacist framework. Michelle Wright explains the way in which Hegel's conception of the Black Other in the relation to the white subject deviates from his standard dialectic and the process of *Aufhebung*. According to Wright, Hegel's dialectic process is one by which thesis and antithesis unite to create a synthesized form in which their respective essences are retained while the contradictions in their difference are simultaneously overcome.⁷

Yet this is not what happens in the dialectic of the Black Other and white self because the contradiction is resolved through the obliteration of the Black: he is enslaved by the white (and rightly so, according to Hegel), for the Africans need to learn how to be free, and the only way to do this is for whites to enslave them. (Wright 34)

Instead of whiteness and Blackness achieving some state of equal relation, the Black identity is superseded by the superior white identity. However, this "dialectic" relationship, which in reality is a supremacist justification for oppression under the guise of altruistic assimilation, only functions at the social level as a reflection of cultural

⁷ It is Johann Gottlieb Fichte who introduces the concept of the *synthesis* of thesis and antithesis as a means of overcoming the dualism of Kant's categories of noumena and phenomena. Fichte's posits the dialectic as a regulative principle of historical practice, one that is ultimately restricted by illusion. Hegel builds on Fichte's "subjective" dialectic, but posits a more "objective" dialectic that is an infinite process spurred by logical necessity. Each "initial" category contains within it its own contradiction. Synthesis is thus for Hegel a process of actualization by which a category alienates and then by way of sublation actualizes itself by recognizing its internal contradictions as a part of its manifestation. The process itself enables the emergence of a category that is newly shaped by an understanding of the unity of the contradictory elements.

identities, and it insists on a system of segregation. The Black Other cannot be accepted within the boundaries of the identity of the white self; it seems the contradictions are too great to be overcome in the process of Becoming, and this is attributed to the assertion that Blacks do not possess the full subjecthood that whites do.

As we see in the development of Black subjecthood in German film of the 1960s and 70s, Blacks continue to be represented in problematic ways. But *Toxi* is the beginning of a growing, postwar, white German consciousness about the interconnectedness of race and national identity, and it represents an important shift in the depiction of Black German experiences. The counter-discourse offered in *Toxi* reflects a desire for an alternative to the antagonistic structure of Black-white relations that resonated with its viewers, and it marks the nascent stages of the attempts to move Black experiences out from the decorative margins and into the structural architecture of the German national narrative.

2. Re-framing Racism in Black and White

In the realm of race relations, sex has always possessed a great symbolic potency, a power that is clearly observable in the discourses of Black-white relations both in the United States and in Germany. Until 1967, state-level statutes in the United States reflected widespread racist ideology, outlawing marriage between whites and "coloreds." But that year, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Loving v. Virginia* found the state of Virginia's anti miscegenation law in violation of the 14th Amendment. That decision set a precedent that caused the collapse of such laws throughout the country, but it was one that ran contrary to much public sentiment.

The debate about interracial romance made a sensational appearance in American popular cinema. In 1967, Sidney Poitier, one of film's most identifiable Black stars, appeared in two significant cinematic roles in the popular, but highly controversial films *To Sir, with Love* (1967) and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* (1967). These two films flamed impassioned discussions about the decency and morality of interracial sex and its portrayal and added new dimension to the debate through their non-stereotypical depictions of Black masculinity.

During this time in the Federal Republic of Germany, a nation whose history also includes anti miscegenation laws and citizenship restrictions regulating interracial relations, the discourse on Black-white relations was also gaining much attention. Similar to the discourse in the U.S., much of the discussion concentrated on interracial sexual relationships. As Moritz Ege describes, "Es scheint, als wäre im weißem Europa nie zuvor derart öffentlich über Sex mit einem schwarzen Partner beziehungsweise einer

schwarzen Partnerin fantasiert und debattiert worden" (80). In the West German context, most of the political and social aspects of this fascination surrounded relationships between white German women and Black members American military, whose presence had become a particular point of contention in the years following World War II (Brauerhoch, *Fräuleins*; Fehrenbach, *Race After Hitler*; Höhn; Lemke Muniz de Faria; Poiger). The popular 1960s focus on Blackness was characterized by a shift in practices of simultaneous othering and identification in which Black cultural products and bodies, laden with stereotyped signifiers, were frequently associated with a counterculture that rejected the conservative values of the era.

At the end of 1967, the same year in which Poitier's films made their splash in the United States, Paul Verhoeven's made for television movie *Gottes zweite Garnitur* premiered on West German television. With an interracial, international, intercultural couple at the center of its plot, *Gottes zweite Garnitur* was one of the earliest German film's to reflect the shifting perception of Blackness and Black-white relations in the late 1960s and early 70s. The film takes a critical stance, using the archetypal characters of the *GI* and the *Fräulein*, as well as historical reference and narrative and visual scenic parallels that thematize and contextualize contemporary race relations. It addresses underlying ideological structures by linking racism in Germany not only to racial hierarchies in other geographic and temporal contexts, but also to the problem of German identity as affected by concepts of German masculinity and femininity, family dynamics,

and economics.¹ Additionally, it explores how these aspects are influenced by West Germany's relationship with the United States and its occupation forces.

In this chapter, I offer an analysis of several scenes in which referential techniques are employed to articulate the role of race in the construction of West German identity in an era in which "race" (*Rasse*) remained taboo and was deftly avoided as both term and discourse topic. It is my assessment that *Gottes zweite Garnitur* utilizes the format of the television movie (*Fernsehfilm*) in order to: 1) offer direct criticism of anti-Black racism and its underlying origins as being also "German problems," 2) question commonly accepted identity definitions and signifiers by evoking and complicating stereotyped identities and 3) challenge traditional identity construction practices in both a national and global context. In the end, the film's critique has its successes, including progress toward the widening of the definition of *Rassismus* beyond the dominant ethnic Jewish-Aryan understanding; however, it continues to represent the stark segregationist mentality of previous eras and reinforces a hopeless trajectory for those cast to the margins of mainstream West German society.

Gottes zweite Garnitur (1967) – An Overview

Filmed as a Bertelsmann Television Production under contract of Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) and produced in the studios of Arnold and Richter in Munich, *Gottes zweite Garnitur* debuted on ZDF on December 13, 1967. The film tells of

¹ For a detailed discussion of the inextricable relationship between race and reproduction – economic, ideological and biological – see Alys Weinbaum's profound genealogical analysis *Wayward Reproductions: Genealogies of Race and Nation in Transatlantic Modern Thought*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004.

the intimate and fated bond between Claire Heggelbacher (Monika Madras) and Sergeant John Baako (Jimmy Powell). Claire a young, white, German medical student and daughter of an intellectual, is dissatisfied with her position and has become resigned and apathetic. She feels trapped in her engagement to the son of a wealthy real estate broker and suffocated by her entanglement with his conservative and controlling parents. Baako, born in Southern Rhodesia, broke off his university studies and ties to a controlling father to join the United States Army and become a naturalized citizen. Stationed in Germany during the Vietnam War, he struggles to progress his career in a racist military that controls his future. The main narratives follow their separate conflicts, which become entangled during a disastrous family dinner. Eventually the two become romantically involved.

Both Claire and Baako are presented as social outsiders imprisoned by conservative ideologies in West Germany, as well as in the United States and Southern Rhodesia. The main source of both of their difficulties, and thus likely also of their bond, is those conservative societies' rejection of liberty and flexibility in their accorded identities. That rejection is embodied in a large supporting cast, whose varied characters can frequently be easily read as significant historical and cultural references². In cooperation, these many references offer a vast critique of 1960s West German society,

² Because it is beyond the scope of this chapter, I will not detail the representational significance of those characters here, but these representations are also very critical of the capitalist democratic model offered by the United States. The film is especially critical of the FRG's enthusiasm to implement the American model and encourage a post-war forgetfulness and superficiality in the new republic, a common theme in the works of the new generation of authors and filmmakers at the time. I discuss some of the other critical aspects of Verhoeven's production in "Kritik und Konventionen: Der Fernsehfilm also Mittel der Gesellschaftskritik? Am Beispiel von Paul Verhoevens *Gottes zweite Garnitur*." *andererseits* 2.1 (2011): 145-58.

but for my purposes here, I will focus mainly on the relationship between the protagonists and the Fehringer family.

The Fehringer's are a well-off family with traditional, conservative, *gutbürgerliche* values. Herr Fehringer, a timid personality, spends most of his time tending to his successful real estate business and preparing his son to be his successor. Frau Fehringer, a model housewife, takes care of her family and household while maintaining involvement in community social projects, including a friendship with the town mayor and his wife. She has a very outspoken and bold personality, and tries to maintain tight control over her family, especially her son Fred. Fred possesses his father's timid nature and an insecurity that finds many expressions, including an unwavering obedience to his parents and an arrogant and dismissive attitude towards his fiancée Claire.

At the center of this stylistically traditional film is a critical consideration of race and interracial interaction in the FRG. Director Paul Verhoeven's screen interpretation presents race, history, gender, and class as complexly interrelated influences on the re-imagination of West German identity. The movie is reproachful of the ideological structures that stabilize hierarchies and mentalities that are the targets of its criticism, and uses far fewer stereotypical, sensational and fetishistic images than its literary source. Its conclusion, however, is cynical and ultimately pessimistic about the direction of West German society.

Gottes zweite Garnitur is an adaptation of a 1962 Willi Heinrich novel of the same name. Despite the success Heinrich had enjoyed among his American audience, his

480 page novel was not well-received by West German critics, who considered Heinrich merely a writer of *Trivalliteratur*. Though reviews of his early works praised his "elementare Leistungskraft," critics never saw a realization of his latent potential; eventually he was considered a "sentimentale[r] Kolportage-Autor, der 'kein Zeitbild, sondern ein Zerrbild' ('Die Zeit') bundesdeutscher Wohlstandplagen gab" ("Willi Heinrich - Zweite Garnitur" 125). For example, Heinrich's 1961 Dial Press publication *Rape of Honor*, described in an American blurb as "shining a mercilessly revealing light on today's Germany," was unable even to find a German publisher, and *Der Spiegel* described it as having "kaum mehr als drei normale Bettszenen, eine Vergewaltigung und zwei weitere abartige Sexualaktionen" ("Willi Heinrich - Zweite Garnitur" 127).

But it was with this critically belittled writing style that Heinrich sought to confront several controversial issues facing his society. He viewed his works as ironic treatments of serious social issues, and asserted that he held himself responsible primarily to his conscience, and not to his critics. He intended for *Gottes zweite Garnitur* to be a blatant critique of Germany's *Rassenproblem*, an issue that few in Germany wanted to confront directly. "Da waren berufene Leute der Meinung, solche Probleme gebe es hierzulande gar nicht. Mittlerweile wissen sogar die Asylbewerber und die Aussiedler ein Lied davon zu singen," Heinrich wrote (Heinrich). The style of his ironically tinged, entertainment driven story seems fitting for translation into the TV-movie genre.

***Fernsehfilm* as Educational Form**

I would like to divert briefly to explain of the significance of the *Fernsehfilm* genre in the context of my analysis. Because of its origins and the context of its early

development, the genre was characteristically different from the often experimental, critical work of contemporaneous new-school filmmakers. Much of German film scholarship concerning the 1960s and 70s is focused on new cinematic directions that are marked by abrupt and decided attempts to break from media practices of the 1950s and of the Nazi era. The aesthetics and politics of film and television are sites where the ideological struggle between generations is very visible, and scholarly investigations have shown us how this intense struggle influenced not only the artistic, narrative and cinematic techniques of new film-makers, but also the discourse about Germany's National Socialist and conservative post-war history. Contrastingly, the *Fernsehfilm*, despite its newness, had a relatively traditional form and relied on production and editing techniques that were familiar to the audience, as opposed to the more reflective, abstracted, and alienating effects that were often utilized by young filmmakers. It is part of my argument in this chapter that the TV-movie, by way of its comparatively traditional form and journalistic association, provided a particularly effective form for the translation of Heinrich's pedagogical written work.

As in many western democracies, the 1960s in West Germany were a time of intense social and political turbulence in which a young generation rebelled against the conservative structures that had been so effectively established and reinforced throughout the 1950s. In the Oberhausen Manifesto, young German film-makers expressed disapproval of the stabilizing function of genre traditions and declared a new independence from it and from the influence of the industry and interest groups. "Der alte

Film ist tot. Wir glauben an den neuen."³

In reality, the support of the industry and of public television in particular became quite instrumental in the development of New German Cinema, providing financial and production backing for the cinema projects of a number of young film makers. Ironically, the introduction of television and the resulting diversification of popular media were seen as one main cause of West German cinema's decline. But during the cinema's waning success, especially in the 1970s, public stations like ZDF became an essential source of support for "innovative film makers and controversial projects, including documentaries and experimental films" (Hake 171). ZDF, for example, introduced a program called *Das kleine Fernsehspiel* in the mid-1970s as a platform to showcase new filmmakers and productions from members of marginalized groups. Though these projects sought to work against genre conventions, it was those conventions that enabled the survival of West German cinema during a commercially difficult time (172, 161). Therefore, television productions had a central role to play along many points of the artistic spectrum through its financial and creative support for both unconventional and more traditional, generically common productions.

As did popular cinema, television continued to rely heavily on traditional narrative and cinematographic forms. Despite young, avant-garde filmmakers' legitimate denouncement of these forms as fortifying undesirable social conventions, many directors and producers still believed in the ability of those forms, not to reinforce, but to challenge those conventions. The new medium of television contained the potential to reach a new

³ This was the closing statement of the Oberhausen Manifesto, published February 28, 1962.

audience with brand new packaging, and the nascent genre of the *Fernsehspiel/-film* in West Germany became an important location for the exploration of this potential.

The theoretical discussion about *Fernsehspiele und -filme* in media studies during the 1950s focused on whether it qualified as a distinct genre. Dominating the discourse were scholars who concluded that television productions were indeed primarily adaptations that worked well within the generic practices of previous media forms. In his 1980 study on the German *Fernsehspiel*, media studies scholar Knut Hickethier writes:

Es gibt kein Fernseh-Spiel. Es ist noch keins geschrieben worden, daß nicht als Spielfilm im Kino oder als Bühnenstück im Theater aufgeführt werden könnte. . . . Es gibt keine spezifische Form des Fernseh-Spiels, die mit dem Kinofilm, dem Bühnenstück, dem Hörspiel unverwechselbar wäre. Und es gibt sie in der Tat nicht mehr, weil die Entwicklung zu eigener Struktur - unverwechselbar, unaustauschbar - unterbrochen wurde, noch ehe sie richtig begonnen hatte. Kaum gab es das Fernsehen als Publikationsmittel, wurde das Fernseh-Spiel mit den konventionellen technischen und dramaturgischen Mitteln des Spielfilms vermischt und so seiner Eigenart sogleich wieder beraubt. (53)

Early television productions did indeed rely primarily on theater adaptations, frequently stylistically similar to conventional cinema adaptations, but the medium had three characteristics that, when considered with the medium's other qualities, significantly differentiated it from other media: 1) its pervasive reach as a popular mass media, 2) the structural and programmatic role of the public/government through funding, and 3) its journalistic origin.⁴ These are the same qualities that had made radio such a powerful

⁴ In regards to the former two, Hickethier notes the following: "Vor allem von den Massenmedien mit ihren technisch bedingten neuen Formen sieht Kaiser [Gerhard R.] die Entwicklung und Veränderung der Gattung forciert" (61-2). He continues: "Schon allein der Einfluß, der durch die öffentlich-rechtliche Konstitution des Fernsehens und der durch sie bedingten Möglichkeiten und Zwänge auf die Programmproduktion des Fernsehens geübt wird, schiebt sich als zentrale Differenz zwischen der

medium, a medium that has played a central role at all pivotal moments in the social and political history of twentieth and twenty-first century Germany. Combined with the formal, narrative and visual aspects of television, this speaks powerfully to the potential role for television in the reconstruction of a defeated and demoralized nation.

During the 1960s, television viewership in the FRG was inclining at a rate of approximately 1.1-1.4 million each year, and "die Empfangsbedingungen des Fernsehens führten zu einer bis dahin nur beim Hörfunk in ähnlicher Weise erlebten Integration des Mediums in den Alltag der Rezipienten" (Hickethier 21). Like radio, television was rapidly becoming part of the everyday lives of West Germans, with ever more middle class households acquiring a television set. And like radio, television was capable of reaching its audience in an increasingly intimate and pervasive fashion. In contrast to the public, communal viewing experience offered by the cinema, television viewing was rapidly becoming a common family affair, with family members gathering together in front of their living room set to watch informative evening broadcasts. As a result, the integral position of television also became the target of activist criticism in the 1960s, and many feared that the medium had too much power to influence social and political affairs. In light of the influence of government in programming decisions, the fear of manipulation was not wholly unfounded.

The Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der

Fernsehproduktion und -Programmplanung einerseits und der Kino- und Theaterproduktion andererseits" (63).

Bundesrepublik Deutschlands (ARD) was the collaborative body of West German public broadcasters and had a monopoly on the industry, with private broadcasting not having been established until the 1980s. The ARD was under the direction of the *Deutsche Bundespost*, a *Sondervermögen des Bundes* (a special asset of the federal government), and funded predominantly through collected public fees. And though the government had no official legal responsibility for programming, it would be injudicious to assume that it had no influence. In fact, the journalistic character of television, the third quality listed above, made it an especially attractive and susceptible medium for government meddling, and the national re-founding projects of government rhetoric undoubtedly found an outlet in public-funded programming.

Its journalistic character positioned television optimally for deployment of an expansive *Erziehungsprojekt*. Early broadcasts were primarily informative or pedagogical in nature and they rarely presented entertainment-focused programming or explored the fantastic, and thus set a standard both for audience expectation and for programming producers. Even as late as 1967, television was described by Gerhard Prager, the head of the *ZDF-Hauptabteilung Fernsehspiel und Film* as "in erster Linie ein publizistisches Mittel in der Hand von Journalisten," and that "als künstlerisches Medium habe es nicht seine besondere Bedeutung gewonnen" (Hickethier 54). As some critics of the medium feared, producers recognized the authenticity and air of truth that this gave television, and sought to make the most of it. Günther Rohrbach, head of *Westdeutscher Rundfunk's* (WDR) division for television plays, attested to the potential for this less defined genre to utilize its unique positioning to influence society through television programming,

suggesting that "man könne es 'freimachen für eine massenhafte Aufklärung, für ein gigantisches Bildungsprogramm'" (55).

It is within this context that *Gottes zweite Garnitur* was translated to the small screen. Verhoeven's film adaptation maintains the critical character of Heinrich's novel, positioning race at the forefront of the narrative. Without the exciting sensationalism characteristic of related literature, or the cinematic experimentation of the new film movement, *Gottes Zweite Garnitur* criticizes using the plain conventionality of television productions, characterized by Hickethier as depicting standard life situations and behaviors and identification figures that together offer viewers orientation through models for appropriate social action (23). Heinrich's original intention to enlighten his readers using his narrative of an international, interracial romance made his novel an ideal candidate for adaptation into a genre that was not received as mere entertainment, but from which "Erkenntnisvermittlung und Orientierungshilfe" were expected (Hickethier 23). I am convinced that it was precisely television's unique constellation of qualities during this time that enabled Paul Verhoeven to offer surprisingly heavy social criticism through a conventional form.

The Frame of "Race": Imagined Blackness, Real Racisms

In the introduction and the previous chapter, I have reconstructed some aspects of the framework of racial identity that are the context for the social criticism in *Gottes zweite Garnitur*. The stereotypes and expectations that accompany the constructed borders of racial (and national and sexual) identity are locations Verhoeven utilizes to draw his audience's attention and to convey the film's pedagogical message. It is along

these borders that the film appeals to the historically and culturally specific triggers which themselves carry the potential to challenge precisely the conservative concepts that reinforce them.

I would like to divert briefly to a compendium on the construct of Blackness in the German context, which will touch on the interplay of German and US-American racial ideologies and practices. After offering some historical context about imagined and actual Blackness in Germany, I will then proceed to my main analysis, in which I will discuss specific moments in which this context is recalled or referenced. At times these references create parallels that expose artifices and contradictions within the conservative and racist traditionalism of West German society at the start of a new age of activism.

As discussed previously, imagined Blackness has a history that, to a considerable degree, is shared by Europeans and Americans. As is the nature of cultural products, ideologies of racialized categorization and hierarchies flow freely across national and geographic boundaries, mixing with new imaginaries and cultural specificities and developing new connotations within their respective cultural contexts. While each context's historical and cultural circumstance has left its own indelible imprint on racial ideology, the common threads remain intact. That shared essence – visible, for example, in the tropes of representations of Black identities in the cinemas of the U.S., Germany, France and Great Britain – is precisely what Verhoeven's Fehringer family, and by proxy West Germany, seeks to deny in this context. After the notorious war crimes committed under National Socialist rule, Germany was determined, at least rhetorically, to leave behind a national and cultural identity deeply embedded with biological and cultural race

ideology, and one that is to a large extent shared by Europeans and Americans. As is the nature of cultural products, ideologies of racialized categorization and hierarchies flow freely across national and geographic boundaries, mixing with new imaginaries and cultural specificities and developing new connotations within their respective cultural contexts. While each context's historical and cultural circumstance has left its own indelible imprint on racial ideology, the common threads remain intact. After the notorious war crimes committed under National Socialist rule, Germany was determined, at least rhetorically, to leave behind a national and cultural identity deeply embedded with biological and cultural race ideology.

Social commentator, activist and artist Noah Sow attributes the avoidance of contemporary reflection on racism to a continuation of the eager avoidance of the difficult questions facing postwar Germany,⁵ questions that acquired an interesting new dimension after re-unification in 1989/90. Among other things, the failure to engage lies primarily in a refusal to inquire into whiteness as a constructed category. That refusal enables whites to deny their position within the hierarchy as a constructed, "strategic deployment of power" (Fiske 42). In so doing, it denies that the "space of whiteness contains a limited but varied set of normalizing positions from which that which is not white can be made into the abnormal; by such means whiteness constitutes itself as a universal set of norms by which to make sense of the world" (42).

⁵ Noah Sow co-founded "der braune mob" in 2001, a black media watch organization whose stated goal is a public German media free from discrimination. Her work attempts to raise public awareness of racism in German language and in the structures of dominant discourse. She garnered heightened notoriety with the publication of her book *Deutschland Schwarz Weiß: der alltägliche Rassismus* in 2008.

It is precisely that inability or unwillingness to question the category of whiteness, the placement of whiteness in a central, default position from which Germanness is frequently constructed, that this work seeks to address. And what is of central importance to this inquiry is the development of concepts of race and racism in official and public discourse. For this reason, I have chosen to consider how the treatment of these two concepts in *Gottes zweite Garnitur* addresses the difficulty of race discourse in Germany more than two decades after the Second World War.

As I suggested earlier, German race ideology has much in common with those in other western countries; however, when looking critically at the progression and development of race as a biological, social, cultural, and political category, the particularity of the history of race in Germany requires specific considerations. For that reason, I have tried to be thoughtful in my use of critical approaches developed in the U.S. and other western European scholarship. What interests me are the racial signifiers employed to exclude "Blackness" from the possibility of "Germanness," and the more subtle signifiers that mark German cultural and social belonging. Historically, the most common racial signifiers have been linguistic and biological, but these are less central to my arguments in this chapter. While there are undoubtedly strong remnants of the linguistic and biological elements of racial categorization in Germany, even today, the legacy of the Third Reich has indelibly marked the biological as taboo. And current debates surrounding the language test that accompanies the new German citizenship exam, for example, are proof that the linguistic still has a very strong hold in national and racial signification today. But for my analysis, the linguistic only plays a role in its

symbolic function. Therefore, I have chosen to focus on two of the three racial signifiers identified by Diane Fuss as dominating the work of Franz Fanon: the symbolic and the moral.⁶

After World War II, Germany sharply turned away from institutionalized racial categorization both in its law and in its rhetoric. Both the collection of racial designations from individuals and race-based discriminatory practices were outlawed, and any open criticism of Jews was socially tabooed and frequently met with vocal, public denunciation. However, the racial constituent of Germanness was still quite visible in the discussions of the place of another racial other in German society: Blacks. The tone of these discussions has been examined in a number of scholarly works that consider the role of race in German identity discourses in two significant contexts: the "mixed race" children of the post war occupation, and the black American GIs who fathered them.

As noted in the previous chapter, the public debate about how to address the "problem" of Germany's "brown babies" was heated and highly symbolic. It was perceived as a test of German democratic liberalism: How would the nation face up to the challenge of a new "race problem?" It was also considered by many to be an opportunity to re-educate the population by teaching racial tolerance within a new frame of reference. With "innocent" children like Robert Stemmler's Toxi as the racialized subjects, the debate was able to circumvent the kinds of formulations and accusations that accompanied discussions of the "Jewish problem," while maintaining at its center the

⁶ Fanon also emphasizes the economic as a racial signifier, which is beyond the scope of my considerations of *Gottes zweite Garnitur*.

controversial concept of race. Though race as a concept continued to be employed, it was reduced to the radically simplified terms of the black / white binary – or at its most articulated, the black / white / yellow triad – thus redrawing the lines of meaningful difference according to stereotyped phenotypes (Fehrenbach, *Race After Hitler* 96). By re-framing the debate in terms of what was arguably an American codification, it was possible to create a public space for racial discourse. But it also ensured the limitations of that discursive space.

A similar "confluence of racial taxonomy between West Germany and its Cold War patron" characterized the intense public debate about the behavior of Black American GIs (*Race After Hitler* 96). Because the "problem" of Black soldiers was perceived as an American import, it was possible for Germans to engage in racialized and often racist rhetoric and action without necessarily perceiving their prejudice as product of their German cultural heritage. Extracted from the *Rasse* context of Nazism, there was no social or political taboo, and therefore no requirement to appear unprejudiced in discussions about Blacks. Maria Höhn's case study of the Kaiserslautern "Steinstraße Affair" in the late 1950s reveals the freedom with which politicians and the media throughout the Federal Republic utilized racialized language, both encoded and direct, to decry the moral and social inferiority of Black American GIs stationed there, and that they did so without fear of rebuke (especially ch. 8). Despite this tactic of re-contextualization, the racial tropes used by Germans are undoubtedly tied to Germany's own history of racial hierarchization.

Re-Framing Racism

The following analysis discusses the specific moments in which *Gottes zweite Garnitur* references the interplay of German and US-American racial ideologies and practices. At times these references create parallels that expose artifices and contradictions within the conservative and racist traditionalism of West German society at the start of a new age of activism. In order to draw viewer attention to the *Rassenproblem* in Germany and its influence on West German identity construction, Verhoeven's primary technique is the creation of narrative and mise en scène parallels, some of which are blatant, others rather subtle in their internal reference. By illustrating parallel structures of inequality and instrumentalization, the film exposes the contrasts and congruencies in similarly constructed constellations, thereby pointing out how more abstract social, cultural, political and economic structures influence the concrete, everyday experiences of the individuals living within them. The parallels drawn in the film allow for an indirect and less confrontational criticism that is less apt to unsettle a sensitive and self-conscious audience. Thus, the film pushes to broaden the understanding of the term *Rassismus*, traditionally equated with anti-Semitism, re-framing its conception to include anti-Black racism as not only a foreign or imported issue, but also a German one.

The first major re-contextualization occurs early in the film when the Fehringer family and Baako first meet. The Fehringer's reactions to their Black guest quickly position race as a central narrative issue. The scene opens with the family anxiously

awaiting the arrival of the American soldier they have invited to Christmas dinner.⁷ The camera follows Fred into the foyer as he goes to answer the ring of the doorbell. When Fred opens the door, the shot cuts to a close-up of Baako; he is standing on the front step in his uniform, framed by an empty dark night. In contrast to the inside / outside party scene in *Toxi* that invites the viewer to temporarily identify with the perspective of the young girl and her Grandmother, the audience never sees the Fehringer house, nor the family members, from Baako's outside(r) perspective. The camera does not invite identification with Baako as a subject, but instead establishes him as the object of Fred's gaze and a source of distress. When Fred promptly closes the door, leaving Baako standing in the winter night, the camera follows Fred inside as he conveys the shocking news to his family: "Sie haben uns einen Schwarzen geschickt!" The scene maintains the spatial separation by which the viewer identifies with the Fehringers, inside the warm and festive interior of their home and within the Germanic tradition that just moments earlier had been so heartily celebrated by a radio announcer. Baako remains off-screen, associated with the contrasted cold and darkness and Fred's rejection.

As previously mentioned, the introduction of the figure of Sergeant John Baako shares similarities with Stemmler's introduction of the figure of Toxi. But unlike Toxi, Baako is an invited and expected guest. However, when he arrives, he is immediately faced with rejection. To read his rejection as connected to his status as a member of the United States Army is circumvented by the film's prior emphasis on the family's

⁷ The Fehringers represent of the many real life German families who were encouraged to invite soldiers to holiday celebrations as part of a government initiated outreach project.

enthusiasm about having an American soldier over for Christmas dinner and more obviously by Fred's exclamation that they "sent a Black." While Baako's national and military affiliations help establish his archetypal "GI" role, the film immediately insists that his skin color is his primary determining identity marker. This clear external marker provides a surface to reflect racism in Baako's surroundings, and it serves as an important symbol for the film's attempt to affect race discourse.

The first significant attempt occurs in a conversation between Baako and Herr Fehringer in which brief, nonchalant references to three racism constellations position the family's prejudice within a broader critical context. The uneven dialog takes place after a round of very uncomfortable introductions. While Fred hides in the kitchen with his mother, Fehringer and Claire accompany Baako into the living room. The soldier maintains a calm and unaffected exterior as Claire and Fehringer try to ignore the ring of the word "Neger" spilling through the swinging kitchen door. Fehringer attempts to ease the tension by making small talk, but during the conversation, he makes fleeting and nonchalant reference to two specific racist constellations that place the family's prejudice within a broader critical context. He first presents himself as a colorblind liberal, distancing himself from his guest's mistreatment at the hands of his wife and son. He directs attention away from the racially charged conflict in his home and toward racially motivated conflicts beyond both his personal and national boundaries. In this short scene, he creates an interestingly connected triad of racial hierarchies as reflected in: first: the US-American civil rights movement, second: German colonialism and finally: German anti-Black sentiment.



Figure 5: The "Race Problem." Sgt. Baako and Herr Fehringer talk about race while Claire uncomfortably looks on.

FEHRINGER. Sehen Sie, ich bin Makler. Grundstücke, Häuser –
apartments, you understand?

BAAKO. Yeah.

FEHRINGER. In diesem Beruf kommt man mit so vielen Menschen
zusammen, also, mir persönlich ist eine so lieb wie die Anderen.

BAAKO. Welche Anderen?

FEHRINGER. Man liest in den letzten Wochen wieder so viel in den
Zeitungen von – ich meine – ... liest man so viel von der
Gleichberechtigung, Sie verstehen?

BAAKO. Rassenprobleme?

FEHRINGER. Ja, wenn Sie wollen. Für einen liberal denkenden
Menschen gibt es so was natürlich nicht. Die farbigen Völker sind auf
der besten Wege, gleichberechtigt zu werden.

BAAKO. Meinen Sie die schwarzen oder die roten Völker?

FEHRINGER. Wieso? Ach so! Ja, Sie meinen, dass man bei den
Schwarzen nicht gerne rot sieht! Sag mal, Spaß bei Seite, man darf
nicht alle Schulden auf der einen Seite suchen. [Baako nods in
agreement]

Zum Beispiel, Südwestafrika, alte deutsche Kolonie – also, diese
Leute, die würden uns heute noch mit offenen Armen aufnehmen,
wenn wir wieder zurückkämen.

BAAKO. Waren Sie einmal dort?

FEHRINGER. Nein, ich selbst nicht, aber ich hab einen Geschäftsfreund,
dessen Vater im Südwest, von – der damaligen Zeiten, von der ...
Askan – [trails off]

In the dialog, Fehringer first avoids directly addressing Baako's inquiry as to which "others" he means, and instead makes reference to media reports on equal rights. At the time, news outlets, including newspapers and radio stations, regularly reported on the crimes, violence, and protests that were part of the American civil rights movement. As Myrdal noted in his 1940s discussion of global perceptions of America's race problem, "the German media often [mentioned] America's harsh treatment of Negroes in its propaganda broadcasts to European peoples" (qtd. in Dudziack 67–8).⁸ As some factions of the civil rights movement grew increasingly militant, both American and German authorities grew increasingly concerned, and stories of violent conflicts and growing unrest often reached the public via major German newspapers. The African American community's struggle for civil rights was not only a useful weapon in East German and Soviet anti-American propaganda; as social unrest rose and the student movement gained prominence among West German youth, it also provided ammunition for growing anti-American sentiment in West Germany.

The U.S. handling of its domestic race problems was of particular interest to Germans living in areas occupied by U.S. military and those living near bases. It affected their perception of the soldiers they encountered daily, and it also encouraged them to reconsider those perceptions. According to Uta Poiger, "[i]n encountering American

⁸ Original source: Myrdal, Gunnar, Richard M. E. Sterner, and Arnold M. Rose. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. New York: Harper, 1944. 1016.

soldiers, who come from various racial groups, as in encountering diverse strands of American culture, Germans . . . have confronted their own notions of racial hierarchies" (54). This confrontation, however, did not always initiate self-reflection. Unfortunately, as one can see from the manner in which this information was often utilized (Ege; Varon), the confrontation generally resulted in little criticism of racist practices by white Germans, and often instead allowed most Germans to continue to view themselves as non-racist by comparison to the systematic, segregationist, and oppressive policies and attitudes observable in the United States.

This is especially visible as political leaders sought to protect German society from what they considered to be the dangers of Americanization. Their anti-American rhetoric frequently pointed to failures in US-American foreign and domestic policy, including the increasingly violent "Rassenkrawalle" as evidence of the hypocrisy and moral superficiality threatening to infect German society. To be fair, many young activists also insisted that Germany take a closer look at its own recent history and the dangerous remnants that plagued German social and political structures. However, the connection between racism abroad and at home was thematized primarily by more extreme leftist movements, and any solidarity with the Black civil rights movement was usually expressed by the transference of protest methods to student protests in wholly different contexts – ones in which racial ideologies were not specifically addressed. Similar to the problematic identification with Jewish victims of the Nazis, student activists saw themselves as fighting a battle similar to that of Black American citizens, a position that focused on systematic oppression without acknowledgement of the

specificity of its racial aspects (Ege; Varon).

West German student activists' identification with Black Americans as victims of oppression relied heavily on the growing fear of Black radicalism and violence in West Germany, and in particular in cities populated by African American soldiers. The public and official fear of the spread of Black radicalism within Germany was not wholly unfounded, and the radical student movement used this to their advantage. In 1967, the year *Gottes zweite Garnitur* was first broadcast, radical West German students had begun to seek more official political connections with Black GIs serving in Germany; the *Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund* (Socialist German Student Union) declared official solidarity with the Black Power movement at its 1967 convention (Höhn, "Black Panther" 133). In hopes "that an alliance with Black Panther GIs could forge anti-imperialist solidarity against U.S. militarism and racism in both Germany and abroad" ("Black Panther" 133), the radical student movement was outspoken in its support of militant Black activism and used the power of the issue of racial conflict to radicalize and mobilize its own anti-establishment movement. As Ege notes:

Auf Seiten deutscher Polizei und Behörden, die (nicht ohne gelegentliche Konflikte) mit dem amerikanischen Militär zusammenarbeiteten, herrschte offenbar beträchtliche Angst vor einem "Import" der gewaltbereiten schwarzen Emanzipation. Die Angst, die Black Power-Bewegung könne von den schwarzen Armeeinghörigen aufgegriffen werden, entbehrte nicht jeder Grundlage. So ist in GI-Zeitschriften immer wieder zu lesen, dass nicht alle Soldaten gewillt waren, politisch motivierte Festnahmen durch die deutsche Polizei einfach hinzunehmen. So brüsten sich die *Voice of the Lumpen*-Autoren,⁹ der Polizei eine Abreibung verpasst zu haben, als

⁹ Founded in 1970 by the Solidarity Committee and Black U.S. activists, *Voice of the Lumpen* was an underground newspaper presence for the Black Panther Party in Germany. (see Höhn "Black Panther Solidarity" 140).

diese sie wegen ihrer Black Power-Flugschriften festnehmen wollte: "We stood up to let the Pigs know that they were not dealing with the ex-slaves, Niggers, Toms, but with revolutionary black men." (107–8)

The spectacle of the actions of German sympathizers afforded new visibility to the radicalization of the Black GI movement within Germany during a time of rampant public denial of the existence of racial discrimination in West German society.

That spectacle also took advantage of stereotypes of Black masculinity that were at the root of much of Germany's fears, and arguably increased those fears in its often re-contextualized adoption of Black Power movement tactics. In a brief analysis of the public response to the 1970 "Rammstein 2" case in which a confrontation between two Black American civilians and German police led to the shooting of a German guard – he consider this incident to be one of the most sensational regarding violence and the Black Power Movement in Germany – Ege observes the instrumentalization of those stereotypes:

Während also die Lokalpresse die Präsenz militanter Afroamerikaner und ihrer Unterstützer in das mindestens seit der Besetzung des Rheinlands durch französische Kolonialtruppen bekannte Muster bedrohlicher schwarzer Männlichkeit, die nicht nur weiße Frauen, sondern zugleich die nationale Geschlechterordnung gefährdet, einordnete, zeigte sich an Schilderung aus dem Unterstützerkreis erneut, dass genau diese Männlichkeitsbilder von einer anderen Gruppe in affirmativer Absicht aufgegriffen und idealisiert wurden. (109)

With modification, radical Black militarism provided an effective model and motivator for the student movement, and the threat of its importation was capable of inflaming public fears that were both spurred and reinforced by stereotypes of Blacks as wild and naively impulsive. This perception of Black primitiveness aligned with already deeply imbedded concepts, and mainstream German public reactions to radical protests for Black

civil rights and desegregation ranged from hesitance to outright disapproval, responses that were undoubtedly also influenced by the FRG's relationship with the United States, as the alliance was understood as one between two white nations (Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins* 222).

What would a revolutionary and violent uprising of Blacks in the United States, symbol of democratic freedom, mean for social and political stability and for racial hierarchies abroad? How would a sudden shift in long-established power structures affect the stability of white identity and German national identity, particularly with the presence of African Americans in Germany? For a society in which race remained imbedded in national identity and essential to the unexamined expectation of white privilege, these questions carried great weight, even if they could not or would not be clearly articulated. To quote a line from a popular German children's game: "Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann?"¹⁰ Und wenn er dazu noch wütend ist?

Fehringer's attempt to sympathize with the battle for equal rights as a liberal thinking West German is indicative of the complications I've just discussed. In the shot, Fehringer is positioned so that he is not facing his guest directly, but is slightly angled. When the dialog begins, the camera shows him from the back, and he is only shown from the front when the classic dialog shot-counter-shot begins. I have read this as a visual reflection of Fehringer's hesitation to engage fully with Baako. Baako is positioned more

¹⁰ "Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann" is a popular children's tag game in which the "tagger" is the "schwarzer Mann." When the game begins, the "schwarzer Mann" calls "Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann?" to which the other players reply, "Niemand!" The "schwarzer Mann" then usually asks "Und wenn er aber kommt?" to which the other players reply "Dann laufen wir davon!" before running to avoid being tagged. All those who are tagged before reaching the "safe zone" are recruited as "schwarzer Männer" until only one safe player remains, who is declared the winner.

frontally and faces Fehringer more directly, cueing that he is open to Fehringer, not intimidated by him. This simple framing visually supports the nervousness in Fehringer's speech and Baako's calm, direct and even confrontationally interrogative responses. Fehringer already enters the conversation with a qualification, that as a liberal thinking person, he "personally" is not afflicted by racist ideology. By positioning himself as an exception, he effectively implicates his social environment as less liberal in its thinking. More importantly, his insistence reveals his own fear and his insecurity.

In her book *Deutschland Schwarz Weiß*, Noah Sow comments on what she calls the "Schönfärbereimärchen, dass 'die Hautfarbe keine Rolle spielt':

[W]enn Aussehen oder Ethnoherkunft für ihn wirklich keine Rolle spielte, müsste er das ja gar nicht groß erwähnen. Ähnlich wie ein aus heiterem Himmel gerufenes 'Ich bin übrigens total hetero!!' ist diese Aussage irritierend. Und sie bedeutet eigentlich: Hier will jemand Absolution und einen Freifahrtschein als 'toller, toleranter Typ'. . . . Diese Prägung für sich selbst einfach so beiseitewischen zu wollen, zeugt von Angst und zeigt eine Unreflektiertheit (und nebenbei Unentspanntheit bei dem Thema). Wo liegt die Angst? (70)

That fear has many sources, but the lack of reflection on the part of Fehringer and the liberal thinkers he represents means that those sources are left unexplored. The "Unreflektiertheit" is in part symptomatic of the suppression of the past (*Vergangenheitsverdrängung*) that is at the heart of the discursive double-bind of race issues in Germany, and it is exemplified by Fehringer's clumsy deflection.

That deflection allows him to praise his relatively liberal colorblindness while avoiding addressing the racist encounter happening before his very eyes. He is thus able to de-emphasize the significance of his family's, and by extension German society's racist practices, which allows him to refrain from critically considering the colonial and

National Socialist ideology pervading both his home and his society. Despite his attempts, however, Fehringer stumbles upon precisely that ideological connection by way of a complex triad he himself unintentionally constructs.

Fehringer remarks to Baako that "colored people" are well on their way to equality, and that one cannot place the blame only with white society. His position reflects the position that was taken by many in the German media. The suggestion that despite continued colonialism across the globe, apartheid in South Africa, and segregation and Jim Crow laws in the United States, "colored people" were "well on their way" to equality under the law is at best a nervous attempt at placating, friendly chatter. The glaring inaccuracy of his assertion, however, indicates, if only at the subconscious level, his fear of the potential backlash of the increasingly urgent and aggressive demands for social change that were being made by Blacks globally.

Additionally, as Baako's response exposes, Fehringer's word choice reflects his perception of "colored" communities as not only foreign, but also homogenous. "Die farbigen Völker" are those people over there – the U.S., Africa, elsewhere. And those people should be content that there is any progress at all, especially since they themselves share the blame for their position as oppressed people. When asked by Baako to clarify specifically to which "colored people" he is referring, Fehringer completely misses the validity of the question and responds to it as if it had been intended as a joke, a point to which I will return. His response further reveals a subconscious fear of an angry Black revolution. Fehringer unwittingly shows the true superficiality of his liberal thinking, and as a narrative representative of liberal West Germany, he fails accordingly to recognize

the racist within him.

In his next attempt to divert Baako's direct questioning, Fehringer turns to the case of German Southwest Africa, using the former German colony to support his claim of shared blame. He confidently explains that, "diese Leute, die würden uns heute noch mit offenen Armen aufnehmen." Fehringer implies that native people initially welcomed colonial take over, and that German colonialism provided unequivocal progress for colonized societies.¹¹ Though the fact of German colonialism's substantial economic impact cannot be denied, Fehringer's assertion blatantly clashes with the reality of German colonialism.

During the period of German occupation from 1885 to 1907, Southwest Africa was the site of numerous Herero and Nama revolts. The Herero originally signed a treaty with Germany in the hopes that Germany would support their struggle for supremacy over the rival Nama, but opponents of the agreement were pessimistic about what a treaty with Germans would mean for all native people. Chieftain of the Nama, Henrik Witboi stated, "Mit der Ankunft der Deutschen kann ich den Frieden nicht kommen sehen, denn sie rühmen sich ihrer Macht und ihrer Werke zu sehr" (Blackshire-Belay 117). His pessimism proved to be well-founded.

Germany's official colonial policy was riddled by racism and the abuse of native peoples and resources. Injustices found their moral justification in the "denigration of and

¹¹ In light of his enthusiastic prediction, Fehringer's career in real estate is not insignificant. He is depicted as driven primarily by a business that involves the acquisition of land and property and which connotes progress and expansion. This draws an interesting connection between his pursuits following the *Wirtschaftswunder* and Germany's unexamined project of colonial acquisition and expansion in the name of progress.

contempt for the indigenous peoples as 'culturally inferior,' 'morally depraved,' 'lazy and hopeless, and the like,' attitudes that were supported by the theory of Social Darwinism and which eventually became part of the German government's official doctrine (Blackshire-Belay 118–9). Even Major-General Baron H. von Puttkamer admitted the following in 1907: "The entire colonial policy is based upon the principle of Europeans depriving the inferior natives in foreign lands by main force of their land, and maintaining their position there by force" (120). Practices included forced labor, intentional starvation and the violent suppression of the revolts that had become frequent after the joint Herero-Nama rebellion in 1896. Through his reference, Fehring positions himself as part of this history, even more actively in his use of the pronoun "uns." As is characteristic of colonial fantasies, he imagines himself part of an admirable colonial undertaking; instead, he has affiliated himself with the violent and racist execution of Germany's mission of cultural and moral rearing (*Erziehung*).

Despite this, it is reasonable that Fehring be so confident in his beliefs. Critical assessments of Germany's colonial history are a relatively recent scholarly phenomenon and are even more elementary in German public discourse. Until very recently, even the official rhetoric from government representatives has been characterized by historical inaccuracies and doctored depictions, contributing to the propagation of distorted images of Germany's true colonial past (Blackshire-Belay, "German Imperialism in Africa"). Again, we see symptoms of *Vergangenheitsverdrängung*, specifically a suppression of reflection on the nature and history of racist ideology in this chapter of Germany's national narrative.

Thus, as Fehringer trails off, stumbling unsuccessfully for some real connection to the colonial fantasy, the triad of racism brings Fehringer and the audience back to the problem of racism at home. Though Fehringer points his finger of blame elsewhere, it returns to face him, reflected by the very points via which he sought absolution. To escape personal recognition of and responsibility for the racism occurring in his own home, he deflects, praises his liberal tolerance, relativizes, patronizes, blames, justifies and in the end, finds himself stumbling in his own confused trap. His reference to race politics in the U.S. reveals his own racist views and fears. His appraisal of Germany's benevolent imperialism in Southwest Africa exposes his ignorance and his acceptance and even celebration of acts that have been justified by racist doctrines. Those racist doctrines connect the point of his triad, utilizing concepts of Blackness as grounds to relativize treatment according to race. And in all three situations – Black American minorities in a predominantly white U.S., white Germans in colonized Southwest Africa, and a Black U.S. soldier in a white German household – the roots of these concepts are the same: fear and anxiety associated with (imagined) Blackness.

The global racist parallels drawn here appear throughout the film and illustrate pessimism about the possibilities of escaping racism, a conspicuously global reality. Thus, the film very successfully reveals not only the specificity of German racist ideology, but also the universality of racial and cultural hierarchization, as well as the interrelation and interdependence of ideological specificity and universality. I would like to briefly address two other hierarchical parallels drawn in the film.

The Black / white racism parallels introduced by Herr Fehringer is the means by

which the historical and geographic flow of a binary Black / white racial differentiation is thematized. What I find especially astute about *Gottes zweite Garnitur*'s depiction of race ideology is that it reaches beyond this binary by drawing connections to different hierarchy forms. Two connections of interest are: 1) the hierarchy of Blackness in the U.S. that differentiates between native Blacks and migrant Black Africans and 2) the French / German hierarchy during and after the First World War. By making these more distant associations, the film's criticism more patently reaches beyond that of specific racist practice to the ideological, structural underpinnings of any specific practice of hierarchization and their transferability.

The native Black / migrant Black hierarchy is addressed briefly when Claire, noticing two Black GIs at a nearby table in a bar, turns to Baako and excitedly tells him that she has spotted some of his countrymen ("Landsleute"). Baako replies that those are not truly his countrymen, as they are American-born, slave-descended Blacks who look down on African immigrants like him. He explains that Black Americans don't like to be reminded that they themselves are not white, and that African-born Blacks remind them of "God's second string" ("*Gottes zweite Garnitur*"). The Black / white hierarchy is depicted as so pervasive that it penetrates even the psyche of the Black American, who, like the Black as described by Fanon, seeks to shed his Blackness in an attempt to move closer to whiteness. The result is an extension into the Black community of a racial hierarchy based on "degrees of Blackness"; in this instance, one's position in the

hierarchy is determined by his temporal and cultural distance from Africa.¹²

The French / German parallel is introduced much later when Claire and her father talk about her future with Baako. Avoiding any direct judgment of the morality of their relationship, Herr Heggelbacher instead questions its sensibility by comparing it to his troubled marriage with Claire's French mother. Claire's parents had begun a secret romance during Heggelbacher's service as a prisoner of war on his future wife's family farm. When Claire's mother became pregnant, the couple married to reduce the shame already cast on their involvement. Heggelbacher describes the humiliation his wife endured as a result of her involvement with a German, and he tells Claire that even once they moved, her mother "ist nie heimlich geworden in Deutschland." He asks her, "Meinst du es würde dir anders gehen in Amerika?" implying the irrationality of her intentions to cross racial, cultural and geographic borders. Claire argues against him, explaining that they will not be in America, but in Rhodesia, and insists that today the world is no longer "wie vor fünfzig Jahren." But her father is adamant that the world has not changed; "Sieh dich um," he says. "Glaubst du die Welt werde vernünftig werden?"

The film uses this rare moment between father and daughter to relate the two romances in terms of the *Feindbild*, or enemy stereotype that accompanies war, and the anger and condemnation attracted by relationships that cross enemy lines. In this analogy, Baako (an American in post-WWII Germany) and Herr Heggelbacher (a German in post-

¹² Interestingly enough, this reference comes at a time when Fanon's post-colonial psychoanalytic theories are gaining recognition in English translations, though it precedes German translations that appeared in the 1980s. In this respect, and others, Verhoeven's film and Heinrich's novel are at the forefront of the re-contextualization of race discourse in Germany.

WWI France) occupy the position of the original wartime enemy. Claire and her mother, as native women in relationships with foreign men, are cast in the role of the female traitor to the nation. In both situations, the intercultural sexual relationship is read as both a cultural and a moral transgression, and thus both participants – the original enemy and the female traitor – are marked as social, cultural and moral transgressors.

Additionally, Heggelbacher's relation of his wife's suffering (and his warning to Claire about the consequences of her decisions) draws an analogy between oppositional Black / white binary constructions and the oppositional wartime enemy lines of the First and Second World Wars. In so doing, it attends more broadly, if only briefly, to ideologies of essentialist cultural and national identity and their impact, not only on cultural and social, but also on private spheres. Verhoeven uses this scene to interrogate, or at least point to, the problematic of identity framed in pure and essentialist terms. That this is the only scene in which Heggelbacher, who is played by Verhoeven, appears at length or has more than minimal spoken lines is an implication of the scene's significance for the director and for the film's overall message.

Black GIs, White Germans and Gender Constructs

The continuous presence of Black American troops added a new dimension to the discourse about West German values. Beyond a widespread fear of the Americanization of German economics and culture, there was now an opportunity to confront race in a context that allowed a return to the racialized rhetoric that, ironically, had remained untainted by association with Nazi doctrine. In addition, Black GIs functioned in many cases as scapegoats, allowing Germans to project their concerns about moral degradation

onto a racialized object that represented a threat to their economic, social and political ambitions. African Americans could easily be categorized as "illegitimate" Americans, a categorization that was supported by the domestic policies and practices in the U.S. This allowed for a differentiation between the supposedly inferior moral capabilities of Blacks from American morality more generally and reaffirmed the relationship between Germany and the United States as one between nations defined in by whiteness. Both nations feared the spread of the revolutionary sentiments that were gaining ground among Black Americans, and like most white Americans, many white Germans perceived the now more apparent Black-white conflict in Germany as an imported American product of which they must also be wary.

It is in the context of this constellation that I now focus on the relationship between John Baako and the Fehringer family as the location of the film's depiction of the interplay between race and gender in West German identity construction. Often invoking a blunt use of cuts and scenic composition, the film creates scenic parallels that criticize while avoiding directing accusations at its audience. These parallels create associations that reveal not only the ideological underpinnings of the gender constructions at the heart of the project to rebuild West German society, but also the interlacing of gender concepts with concepts of racialized sexuality.

First, I will revisit the scene in which the Fehringer's and Baako first meet. As Herr Fehringer welcomes Baako into the house and takes his coat, an anxious and curious Frau Fehringer peeks from behind a door to get a preview of the guest. Baako is facing Fehringer, his back is to Frau Fehringer. She remains unnoticed by both men as they

make small talk, but before her silent retreat, the camera pauses on her face in a close-up. For a brief moment, the audience can read not only shock, but an obvious and intense fear on her face.

Baako is then escorted into the living room. The camera frames Baako in a medium close shot with all four family members, lending the encounter an uncomfortable intimacy. The characters stand lined across the frame, Baako to the left, followed by Fehringer, his wife, Claire, and Fred in the right end of the frame. Frau Fehringer is nervously hiding a Beethoven record behind her back, a gift that had been deemed perfect, but was now an unsuitable gift for a Black. Though Frau Fehringer's anxiety is obvious, it draws no visible reaction from her husband. As Baako presents the lady of the house with flowers and bids her good evening, she offers no verbal reply, takes the flowers and scurries quickly into the kitchen, from which she does not reappear for the remainder of the evening.



Figure 6: Fear of the Black GI. Frau Fehring reacts to Sgt. Baako's arrival.

Frau Fehring's discomfort in this scene is elicited by her visceral fear of Baako. She immediately assesses the presence of a Black GI in the intimacy of her own home as a threat, and the incongruity of her visibly emotional response and the calm demeanor of Herr Fehring, who is physically smaller than Baako, suggests that the presence of her husband has no reassuring effect; in fact, his pleasant and even ingratiating treatment of Baako only further agitates Frau Fehring. Her racially ignited aversion alludes to a gender specific historical narrative that was utilized in public and official narratives of German victimization during and after the war (Heineman).

The racialized propaganda after both World War I and II aligned the occupation and desecration of the German homeland with the claiming and desecration of its women. After World War I, campaigns against the so-called "*schwarze Schmach am Rhein*" employed posters depicting Black French colonial soldiers with animalized characteristics carrying away delicate, helpless, and scantily clad white German women. Post-World War II posters utilized images of Asian Red warrior rapists reaching out to grab a piece of Germany, and such concepts later found manifestation in news stories reporting on the morally abhorrent, hyper-sexual interracial relationships between Black GIs and *Veronikas*. *Veronika* was just one of a number of pejorative monikers attached to white German women who were publically denounced as sexually promiscuous materialists who traded sexual favors with GIs for "luxuries" like silk stockings, chocolate and cigarettes. Violent sexual acts were categorized as distinctly non-European, even in official publications of the German federal government. According to a mid-

1950s publication from the Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and War Victims:

It can be recognized that behind the rapes stood a form of behavior and a mentality that seem strange and repelling to European concepts. . . . The fact that Soviet soldiers of Asian origin distinguished themselves by a particular ferocity and lack of moderation confirms that certain strains of the Asian mentality contributed substantially to these outbreaks [of rape]. (qtd. in Heineman 370–1)

The rhetoric, targeted here at Soviet occupiers, indicates the continuity in the rhetoric used after the First World War in post-WWII public consciousness and discourse. Annette Brauerhoch points out the aftereffects of those propaganda campaigns:

Die damals von französischer wie deutscher Seite für politische Zwecke funktionalisierte Imagologie vom "Schwarzen Mann" als tierähnlichem Vergewaltiger und Angehörigen einer minderwertigen Rasse prägte, neben nationalsozialistischer Propaganda, projektiv die Erwartungshaltung der deutschen Bevölkerung gegenüber den afroamerikanischen Angehörigen der US-amerikanischen Armee nach der Niederlage im Zweiten Weltkrieg. (*Fräuleins* 179)

The propagated fear of the threat of Black soldiers' presence to the vulnerable purity and sanctity of the German feminine finds reflection in the figure of Frau Fehringer.

Frau Fehringer's abhorrence of Baako is also a reminder of a fearful perception of Blacks that relies on deeply rooted stereotypes. But it points not only to fixation on the physicality of perceived Black essence, but also to the instability of gender roles that characterized Germany after World War II. The implied association to the rape narratives of the postwar period recalls the absence of German male protectors and providers during that time.

. . . [R]ape was a common experience for women in eastern parts of the old Reich, and fear of rape was universal. Confronted with the conquering armies, German women were left largely to their own devices. German men, when present, were rarely able to provide any defense, and they often seemed all too anxious to trade women's safety for their own.

(Heineman 364)

If we read Frau Fehringer's reaction in this historicized context, the confused structure of gender roles and the weakness of her husband become even more significant. Baako is perceived as more than a physical and psychological threat to her; when he becomes involved with Claire, he does in fact destroy the already unstable Fehringer family unit, the structural center of Frau Fehringer's world and the practical and symbolic center of West German morality and social cohesion. This becomes even clearer in the context of Baako and Claire's relationship, the Black GI-Fräulein character constellation to which I will later return.

The postwar project to establish a cohesive German nation without relying on nationalist sentiments was a challenging undertaking. A principle focal point for the re-establishment of communal stability was the traditional family, a social institution that had been devastated by war and its aftermath. The traditional family unit, through all that it enabled and represented, served as an important resource for the push to return to the familiar comfort of prewar social conservatism. As Konrad Jarausch explains:

Die Wiedereinrichtung einer männerdominierten Familienstruktur, die Wiedergründung von freiwilligen Vereinen, die Wiedereröffnung von selbstverwaltenden Institutionen, die Wiedereinführung des herkömmlichen Berufsbeamtentums, die Wiederbelebung eines öffentlichen Bürgersinns waren, wie das Präfix »wieder« zeigt, Versuche eines Rückgriffs auf bürgerliche Traditionen des späten Kaiserreichs. (*Die Umkehr: Deutsche Wandlungen 1945-1995* 210)

Despite the somewhat superficial implementation of prewar social standards, the turn to a more admirable national past was largely successful, but the stifling tendencies of those traditions were also the root of the social unrest of the 1960s (*Die Umkehr: Deutsche*

Wandlungen 1945-1995 210).

When we take into account the centrality of the traditional, patriarchal family unit, the threat that Baako represents has a substantial influence on the West German identity represented on the screen. In relation to this threat, not only does Herr Fehringer fail as a dominant masculine figure to protect his family from the threat of Baako, he welcomes him and treats him with kindness. In so doing, Fehringer illustrates his masculine deficits and his incompetence as protector of wife and family. The family unit that should be grounded in his dominance is exposed to danger as a result of his masculine failings.

I digress here to comment briefly on Fehringer's masculine identity in the context of what Heide Fehrenbach refers to as "the three Ps that had traditionally defined and justified [German] masculinity" – their position as protectors, providers and procreators ("Rehabilitating Fatherland" 109). I have already cited Fehringer's real and symbolic incompetence as protector. As provider, Fehringer has built a successful business that has assured financial stability for his family. As procreator, Fehringer has continued his family line in Fred, the son who will one day take over his thriving business. But his position as the paternal head of the family is undermined by the more dominant character of his wife and, as the audience observes throughout the film, by the control she exerts over their son. Fehringer's ability to identify with a successful West German masculinity is thereby limited to his capitalist interest, and in light of the heated debate surrounding the Americanization and capitalistic greed of West Germany in the 1960s, even this success rests on a shaky foundation. The film's blatant criticism of the capitalist obsession of the time in the opening sequence, along with its intermittent reminders of

the imbalance of the Fehringer family gender dynamic, supports a reading of Fehringer as an emasculated figure.

Another character triad in the film – that between Fred, Claire and Baako – illuminates even more clearly the role of race in the destabilization of the traditional family unit and its gender dynamic. The underlying tensions in Claire and Fred's already strained engagement become more visible when Baako arrives, and as is required in any love triangle, the two men are compared and contrasted in their suitability as love interests. In addition to a commentary on manhood, the film offers its own perspective on the so-called *Fräulein* or *Veronika* figure that is prominent not only in the literature and film of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, but also in public and political conversation. Heinrich and Verhoeven take a highly stereotyped constellation – the young, white German woman and her Black American GI lover – and populate those roles with characters that do not perfectly fit within those stereotypes. The film's representations challenge several aspects of the popular notions of the Fräulein-GI relationship; however, they uphold the role of economic power and largely fail to move beyond the Fräulein-as-prostitute construction.

German women who were perceived to have submitted to conquerors for their own benefit were frequently shunned, cursed as Fräuleins, *Veronikas*, *Amiliebchen*, and "Yankee whores." Equivocated with prostitutes, the image of the Fräulein powerfully symbolized "the assumption that German women were failing to live up to codes of honour associated with the German military tradition" and "supposedly refusing to subject themselves to any inconveniences" (Biddiscombe 620). As Perry Biddiscombe

notes:

The German language was enriched dubiously with the term "Schokoladensau" (chocolate sow), or its variants "Schokoladenhure" (chocolate whore) and "Schokoladenmädchen" (chocolate girl), suggesting that German and Austrian women were prostituting themselves for candy and that this was the only motive for associating with the Americans. (627)

This imagery provided a provocative metaphor for West German society's "whoring out" of itself to the United States and to capitalist ideology. Accordingly, fraternization was a frequent target in the movement to reconstruct conservative social and sexual values.

Relationships with Black GIs were more controversial. In the decades following the Second World War, there were two narratives available to relationships between white German women and Black occupation soldiers: rape and immoral and dishonorable fraternization. In both instances, the German nation is presented as doubly victimized. Rape involved the sexual abuse and defilement of the German maternal and pointed to the ineffectual position of the German man. Voluntary fraternization was a desacralizing of the German fatherland and the sacrifices of German men, and while it also pointed to German men's ineffectuality, it emphasized the promiscuous materialism of German women. As a transgression against national values of racial and cultural purity, these relationships were seen as contributing to the degradation of values that were of central importance to the national rehabilitation project. Because it was considered of national concern, a great deal of public attention was dedicated to Black soldiers and their interaction with white Germans. Maria Höhn explains public perception of GI-Fräulein relationships:

Not only were these relationships perceived to be highly offensive, the

attention dedicated to them suggests that many Germans did not judge these relationships as private matters that concerned only the couples involved. On the contrary, these interracial couples were perceived as a public concern. Their existence not only threatened bourgeois respectability but also undermined national integrity. (*GIs and Fräuleins* 221)

Considered a corroborator in the persistence of this threat to national integrity, the Fräulein is, simply put, a traitor to her nation.

The triangular Black American GI-white German woman-white German man constellation has intrigued and irritated audiences, making an appearance in a number of popular literary and cinematic works. What makes this triangular arrangement so fascinating? For me, it is not only the actual interplay of race, gender, economics and nationality, but also the symbolic power of their juxtaposition. German citizens' extended contact with Black GIs during occupation did instigate some scrutiny of German sentiments about race and racial hierarchies, but more thoughtful introspection is something that is only now becoming part of the national discourse. At the time of this film, as is often still the case today, the racist ideology from which Germany sought to distance itself was considered wholly separate from anti-Black sentiment. But the race doctrine that had fueled National Socialism continued to influence Germans' perceptions of Blacks and consequently, also their opinions about relationships between white German women and Black men.

The film's comparison of Fred's and Baako's contrasting relation to Claire in this love triangle returns us to the issue of gender and its entanglement with race and sexuality, and thus the issue of manhood. What perspectives does the film offer on the masculinity of these two competitors? Fred is a young capitalistic success who is

intimately involved in his father's business which he will eventually inherit. He is determined and hard-working, but his weaknesses feature far more prominently in his characterization. Fred's greatest weakness, the one most fatal to his romance with Claire, is his dependence on and subservience to his parents. He is dedicated to the family business, works long hours and has no intention of moving out of his family home, despite Claire's expressed wish that they start a home of their own. Fred's relationship with his mother, a determined and domineering socialite who tries to keep tight control of her son's life, is also a source of tension with his fiancée. He is perpetually perturbed, and yet resigned to a future under the command of his parents. And like his father, Fred's commitment to economic success, his status as provider, is central to his confidence, to his self-understanding and to the image he projects. The security of his engagement with Claire and his control over her are also important to his confidence and self-conception, and it is within the context of their relationship that the economic and the gender dynamic intersect.

Fred's parents plan to invest in a private practice for Claire, and, as the couple's romance has faded, Fred's wealth and stability have become powerful underpinnings of their bond. As a result, Fred's confidence in his relationship with Claire is bound to his economic success and his confidence in her financial dependence on him. The audience can see his overconfidence in his dismissive and reproachful attitude towards Claire. For example, he does not acknowledge the importance of Claire's exam preparation, often speaks to her in a patronizing tone, ignores her suggestion that they move into an apartment of their own, and dismisses her long held desire to visit Giffaumont, the

hometown of her deceased mother, as silly and pointless. Like his mother, he is controlling, and several intimate scenes emphasize that this attitude extends to their sexual relationship. Fred's place as provider and dominant man are key to his identity, especially in capitalist West Germany, and it is that position that John Baako challenges. To illustrate this displacement and the destabilization of Fred's self-conception, the film again makes the use of narrative and visual parallels.

The scenes in which the process of displacement is clearest are what I will refer to as the money exchange scenes and the bedroom scenes. Both of these scenic constructs stem from an encounter between Claire and Fred when he takes her to Oberstdorf instead of Giffaumont for Christmas vacation. Oberstdorf is the setting of the first money exchange scene.

Follow the Money

In Oberstdorf, Fred has attempted to ease the tension with his fiancée by suggesting they forget all about the family dinner and the argument that followed when he later found Baako at her apartment. While holding her affectionately, he tells Claire that he knows she had only invited a Black man into her home to ruffle his feathers and that he has forgiven her transgression. He downplays his mother's abhorrent behavior at dinner, and after the two revisit the conversation about their future and his parents, Fred makes an aggressive sexual advance. Claire resists, tells him to stop and struggles to push him away. During the struggle, Claire threatens to ring the service call bell, but Fred ignores her and continues to force himself on her. When a hotel service woman comes to their room, Fred is shocked that Claire indeed had the audacity to ring. When she reaches

for her things and tells her fiancé that she is leaving, he fishes her wallet from her purse and gloats that she won't get very far without it.



Figure 7: Masculinity reclaimed. Fred forces himself on Claire in their hotel room during Christmas vacation.

In this scene, Fred displays his masculinity by exerting his dominance over Claire and his claim to her body, seeking to negate his embarrassment and to reclaim the masculinity he felt robbed of the night before when Claire invited Baako into her apartment. When his first attempt at domination through sex is spurned, he turns to his remaining resource: financial control. Because Claire is relatively independent – she comes from an intellectual family, is a medical student and shares an apartment with her retired father – it would be insufficient for Fred to deny her access to his money. So he takes hers, employing his perceived dominance to deny her access to her own independent finances. In both of his attempts to dominate (sexually and financially), Fred

overexerts his position, transgressing into explicitly violent and abusive behavior. As a result of that transgression, he irrevocably weakens his connection to Claire and creates the very situation that initiates her re-connection with Baako.

Without her wallet, Claire is unable to purchase a ticket out of Oberstdorf that same evening. After her attempts to have money wired from her father and Herr Fehringer fail, she calls Baako at the army barracks and asks him to lend her the money. When Baako has one hundred marks wired to Claire, he sets in motion the displacement of Fred and his family, and this moment becomes the narrative source of the entanglement of Baako, Claire and the Fehringer's. And by framing Claire and Baako's reunion within the economic context, the film positions them in a particular frame of the GI-Fräulein relationship discourse.

Once Claire and Fred have returned to home, Fred insists on returning the borrowed money to Baako in Claire's place, though she protests. When he arrives at the gate of the barracks for his arranged a meeting with Baako, an extended waiting scene shows his powerlessness in this situation. While waiting for his escort, Fred wanders aimlessly in front of the gate, in front of which stands one armed guard. In a full shot, the camera frames Fred and the soldier side by side. Fred eyes the soldier insecurely and removes his hat briefly in greeting. The soldier only responds by eying Fred with brief scrutiny and apparent disapproval, or perhaps simply ambivalence. The discrepancy between the two men is blatant. The uniformed soldier is larger in stature, physically fit and stands confidently, still and erect with a large rifle. In contrast, Fred, who is slightly rounder and shorter in build, is clad in a suit, tie and homburg. His stance is unsure, and

his eyes frequently glance downward. After the side-by-side comparison shot is established, Fred seems to sense his inferiority to the soldier, and he distances himself from the soldier, breaking the visual parallel established in the shot.



Figure 8: Measuring Masculinity. Fred Fehringer compares himself to an American soldier.

The scene sets up the power dynamic between Fred and Baako that becomes clear in the next scene, the second money exchange scene. Baako's friend and colleague Winters brings Fred into the barracks canteen, which is quiet and sparsely populated. As the two men meet again, the camera captures Fred and the two soldiers in a three-shot from below eye-level. He is holding his hat nervously and facing Baako and the camera. Only Baako's back is visible as he greets Fred standing, and Baako's body, his shoulders squared, dominate the visual space, creating an effect similar to that in soldier comparison shot at the gate. Though the two men are actually similar in height, Baako, in

uniform as always, visually dominates Fred, who appears apprehensive in the American's intimidating presence. This sense of domination persists after the two men are seated and begin their discussion.

Baako assumes a teasing tone when speaking to Fred about having loaned Claire money, and Fred, unsettled by his position, exhibits none of his usual impudence. In fact, his body language and tone indicate a great lack of confidence as he attempts to explain why his fiancée would have needed to borrow money from another man. The conversation becomes more embarrassing when Fred asserts that Claire had not actually needed the money because she was with him in Oberstdorf – something Baako had not known – thus admitting to the difficulties in their romance. He loses what is left of his composure when he hears that Claire called Baako and insisted on bringing him the money herself. Before leaving, he assures Baako there has been a misunderstanding and leaves one hundred marks on the table.

The financial transaction between the two men is powerfully suggestive in its symbolism. Fred returns the money to Baako in an attempt to sever the economic bond between the soldier and his fiancée and to re-establish his position as Claire's financial resource, thereby reasserting his role as the primary male presence in her life. Baako's provocative teasing shows his amusement at Fred's attempt, though we later discover that he is not pleased to have been put in such a position. And because Fred is paying Baako with his own money, and not Claire's, he is both literally and symbolically paying Baako to stay away from Claire. The two financial transactions – from Baako to Claire and from Fred to Baako – mirror the development Germany's relationship to the U.S. military, and

more specifically, its attitude towards Black American soldiers.

When Black GIs first became a common sight in postwar occupied Germany, they experienced a sense of solidarity with white Germans (Brauerhoch, *Fräuleins*). In many cases, members of both groups felt themselves to be under the oppression of the American military, Blacks as second class citizens and military personnel, and white Germans as occupied people. It was this sense of shared suffering that influenced the way Black GIs treated white Germans, leading Germans to generally perceive them as friendly protectors and providers who were kinder and more open than their white counterparts (Brauerhoch, *Fräuleins* 175). In the absence of German male providers, American GIs, Black GIs in particular, gained a reputation as providers, especially for white German women, a status that can be seen reflected in many literary and cinematic works, for example the films *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1979), the 1956 novel *fräulein*, and numerous *Trivilliteratur* publications. However, with its growing economic success beginning in the 1950s, West Germany sought ways to reassert its sovereignty and national uniqueness, which meant distancing itself from the U.S.

Previously warm relations with Black soldiers began to cool, and as the public backlash against occupation and Americanization was on the rise, public attitudes toward Black GIs depreciated. "[E]xpressing resentment against Black soldiers in particular [became] a way in which Germans voiced their opposition to the American military presence in general"(Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins* 220). The media focused on the perceived immoral behavior of Black soldiers at the exclusion of white GIs, and Black soldiers' involvement with white women, seen as an especially offensive moral transgression, was

a vulnerable point of attack. Grabbing hold of ready racial stereotypes, West Germany shifted its focus to Blacks as the primary source of the threat to its national morality and cultural purity, resulting in often fierce attempts to segregate from Blacks and depict them as morally deplorable (Heineman).

The trajectory of the one hundred marks in the film mirrors that social shift; Baako provides financial support for Claire when Fred does not, and Fred, recognizing the threat, seeks to assert his status by rebuffing Baako's support and declaring his ability to provide for Claire. And from Fred's language – he only ever refers to Baako as "der Schwarze" and "der Neger" – it is clear that he is upset not only that Claire is involved with another man, but that she is involved with an African American soldier in particular, a relationship that he perceives as a double, perhaps even a triple insult. It is not only in his masculinity that Fred feels vulnerable, but via Baako's potential intimate involvement with Claire, he also fears cultural, moral and social contamination of his independent and "pure" concept of his identity as a West German man. In this line of the narrative, the potential contamination is represented by the hundred marks, a symbol of the relationship between West German economic success and the U.S. government and military.

The third money exchange scene takes place between Baako and Claire in the same canteen. Claire has come to personally return the hundred marks, a transaction the two had originally planned to make at a public park. Upon learning that Claire had been in Oberstdorf with Fred, Baako attempts to back out of the meeting and sends Winters to meet her. Claire insists that Winters take her to see Baako in person. When she arrives in the canteen, escorted by the same man who earlier had escorted her fiancé, she seems out

of place. Her classy clothes and demeanor contrast with the relaxed and playful atmosphere and the improvisational tones and rhythmic beats of the jazz ensemble that plays in the background. As Claire and Baako sip on whiskey, the medical student insists on paying Baako back with her own money. The two slide their hundred mark bills to each other across the table as the camera captures their hands and the bills in close up. The shot's visual accent on the moment of exchange implies its significance; by participating in this purely symbolic and principled transaction, Baako offers the pay-off from Fred to Claire as an emblematic gift. In so doing, he allows Claire the room to assert her financial independence from both her benevolent GI and her controlling fiancé.

In contrast to the men's canteen exchange, the tone between Claire and Baako remains friendly and relaxed. Embedded in the scenes visuals and its dialog are also elements that explore Claire as an interpretation of the Fräulein figure. As previously noted, Claire's appearance suggests she is out of place in a jubilant bar where one might expect to find a Fräulein. She is dressed in a classy fitted suit and jacket, and her tone, while friendly, is earnest. When she first sips from whiskey, her reaction is quaint, and implies that she is not a regular drinker. Moments later she comments that the bar "motivates one to drink," the implication being that spending time in such an atmosphere could allow one to loosen one's morals, and that she is acting outside the bounds of her usual behavior.



Figure 9: An even exchange. Claire and Sgt. Baako swap bills at the army cantina.

The *Fräulein* figure has been the site of interesting developments in the last century. Prior to World War II, the term was often used to describe independent, single, working women. After the war, however, it acquired a negative connotation and usually referred to women who were seen by society either as the victims of rape or as prostitutes (Brauerhoch). As the postwar situation in West Germany began to improve, women involved with GIs were less often considered victims and were more frequently marked as immoral, sexualized, greedy pursuers, and defilers of their national culture. They were often described as especially Americanized in their behavior and appearance, wearing American-style makeup, nylons and outfits and having brightly painted nails, all visual signifiers of promiscuity and moral looseness. Relationships between white German women and Black GIs in particular were perceived and portrayed primarily in terms of sex and economy, not in terms of romance or meaningful intimacy, and therefore fell

under the prostitution designation (Fehrenbach, "Rehabilitating Fatherland").

Defined as culturally and racially pure, sexually conservative, maternal and subservient to German male dominance, German femininity was often praised as the foundation of the German nation (Fehrenbach, *Race After Hitler*; "Rehabilitating Fatherland"; Heineman; Brauerhoch, *Fräuleins*). The allegedly materially and sexually motivated fraternization with Blacks was contrary to all of the main elements of moral femininity; these relationships crossed cultural and racial boundaries, denied German men positions as head of German households and according to stereotypes, were unreserved, wild and animalistic. Measured against conservative West German social mores, such women failed to meet the standards of true femininity.

The figures of the Black GI and the Fräulein have been key resources in the redefinition of the boundaries of German identity. Within this conceptual structure, it is impossible for either figure to achieve a "normal" or socially acceptable position in German society. In an ongoing process of negation and negotiation, the borders of a re-imagined West German identity are reinforced.

Claire Heggelbacher is an atypical Fräulein figure, and the film utilizes the money exchange scene in the canteen to highlight some of the ways in which she challenges the limits of the stereotype. Her attire and demeanor accentuate her place in middle or upper society as a medical student and daughter of an intellectual, contrasting starkly with her relaxed and jazz-infused surroundings. She is not ostentatious, and her appearance is not aligned with the expected depiction of a Fräulein. She is not conspicuously flirtatious towards Baako, nor is she predisposed to typical bar behavior – drinking and

boisterousness. However, with Baako she enjoys several whiskey drinks, noting that being in such an establishment can have a freeing impact. But this acknowledgment implies that under the influence of the jazz bar environment typically associated with Black GIs, Claire is more vulnerable to the immorality disparaged by her conservative society. This scene exemplifies the film's tendency to simultaneously challenge and reinforce the problematic stereotypes it seeks to address. Though the film has Claire toe a thin line, her virtue is upheld when Baako escorts her home. When he slowly leans in to kiss her, she asks him politely not to, stating plainly, "Sie wollen mich ja wiedersehen." This simple encounter, which occurs just before an elderly neighbor couple passes them to enter Claire's apartment building, implies that Claire is not driven solely by sexual motivations; together with the money exchange scene, Verhoeven's Fräulein figure is ultimately constructed outside the definition of the morally depraved stereotype.

The film also calls for a re-examination of the Black GI stereotype. Baako is not presented as an aggressor in this situation; when he learns that Claire was with Fred in Oberstdorf, he attempts to cancel their meeting, and he is upfront with Claire that he is uncomfortable that she turned to him despite appearing to be committed to Fred. It is instead Claire who insists on meeting with him. Also, his physicality is not the visual focus of this scene. He is not depicted as driven only by sexual motivations and is neither sexually aggressive nor insistent towards Claire. In the context of the typical hyper-sexual and animalistic depictions of Black men at the time, Verhoeven's Black GI is decidedly more demure, and, as can be seen in an analysis of a second parallel construction, the bed scenes, Baako does not exhibit the sexual aggression that his

competition, Fred, does. In a sense, he represents an opportunity for Claire to break free from the confines of her oppressive situation. But that "freedom" is read as immoral and socially unacceptable in conservative West Germany. That conservatism is portrayed as the source of racist and sexist attitudes and behaviors and is the main target of Verhoeven's and Heinrich's criticism.

What we find in the narrative of Verhoeven's film and Heinrich's novel is that Claire, and not Baako, is the true protagonist: the West German woman who challenges conservative social standards and the racist ideology of her country in favor of independence and tolerance. Her assertion of freedom from social constraint is represented in the final money exchange scene when she returns the hundred marks to Fred. The scene takes place in the living room of her apartment, where Fred has come to confront her about her seeing Baako. In a panic, he bangs and rings insistently at the apartment door, likely believing that Baako is there. He composes himself and apologizes when Herr Heggelbacher answers the door. When he accuses Claire of having been with Baako the previous night, she uses the stereotypes of her and Baako's positions to her advantage. "Wir haben Whiskey getrunken und getanzt. Es war ganz lustig," she tells him as she browses through a text book. As Fred becomes more embarrassed and his temper rises, Claire takes the hundred marks from her purse and holds it out to Fred, who is flabbergasted. When he hesitates to take the money, she drops the bill, and the camera follows it as it falls before his feet before she walks away and asks him to leave. With that, Claire declares to Fred that he no longer has control over her and breaks their financial bond both literally and symbolically.

But this interaction between Fred and Claire also reveals the protagonist's instrumentalization of Baako. Earlier, when Fred suggested that Claire was only meeting with a Black GI to agitate him, Claire did not respond to his accusation. Her actions in this scene expose that her involvement with Baako is at least partially motivated by a desire to injure Fred's pride. Fred and Claire's interaction here most clearly exposes that Baako, like the character Toxi, is a tool for rehabilitation; however, instead of rehabilitating the traditional family structure by repairing West German masculinity, Baako helps to deconstruct it by rehabilitating West German femininity. He passively exposes the structural foundations of Claire's suffocation and dissatisfaction, enabling her to effectively identify and then reject their restraints. He initiates and bolsters the white German woman's escape from the economic, social and emotional oppression imbedded in her society's conservative ideology.

Sex and Freedom

The other scenic parallel construction I would like to discuss, the bed scenes, uses the powerful symbolism of sexuality to present the trajectory of Claire's rehabilitation. One of these four scenes is the same instigating money scene in Oberstdorf in which Fred attempts to forcibly have sex with Claire, which I will not revisit in detail. Prior to this scene, however, is an implied sex scene between the engaged couple on Christmas Eve, just after Fred has confronted Baako and his fiancée in her apartment. It provides a point of comparison for the couple's intimacy and the escalation of Fred's sexual aggression. After Baako's departure, Claire asks Fred to leave, and Fred, not taking her request seriously, simply closes and locks the door before making himself comfortable. As he

wanders around the living room rambling aloud about the silliness of the situation, the camera closes in on the family photo Baako has left behind. A subsequent close-up of Claire's face lingers to show a mischievous grin after she hides the photo in her purse.

Though her passivity appears to win out, the scene suggests here, and in one other shot, that something in Claire has been awakened as a result of her encounter with Baako. As Fred sits on the couch and begins taking off his shoes, Claire politely asks him to turn off the light. A full shot of the two shows Claire standing beside the couch directly next to the light so that Fred must stand and step past her to fulfill her request. This small act reveals the duplicity of Claire's consciousness at that moment in the film; in a sense she is still passive – she will not initiate sex, i.e. turn off the light – but she is also aware of her power to command through her sexuality, symbolized by the minor, silly inconvenience Fred undergoes to move things forward. Considering how consistently and frivolously Fred complains and belittles Claire, it is not insignificant that he acts on her request without question or comment in this moment.

While the scene presents the passivity and complicity that characterizes Claire early in the film, it also documents a moment of awakening. Claire's pleasure in guarding the photographic token of her connection to Baako is ignited by her satisfaction in Fred's unwitting victimhood. Furthermore, by juxtaposing the implied sex scene and Claire's hiding of the photo, the scene alludes to the intimacy Claire associates with Baako and to her sexual desire for him, drawing the first tangible sexual link between the two characters. The film uses the imagery and powerful symbolism of sexuality, a theme at the center of the discourse about national identity and the attempts to rebuild it, to depict

and criticize the standards by which cultural and social belonging are measured.

The utilization of the race-gender interplay in *Gottes Zweite Garnitur* is similar to the critical approach in Robert Stemmler's *Toxi*. Stemmler's film poses interracial paternalism as a path to rehabilitation of German masculinity (Fehrenbach), chronicling the paternal figure's re-acquisition of his masculine duties and his return to his status as the familial protector and provider. In *Gottes Zweite Garnitur*, the path is not interracial paternalism, but interracial romance – sexual, emotional and mental intimacy –, and the object of rehabilitation is not German masculinity, but German femininity, thus still challenging its masculine counterpart. The interaction between Baako and the Fehringer family enable Claire to see some of the intertwined threads of the institutional fabric that impede her freedom in the new West German society. In her growing enlightenment, Claire sees the utility of Baako for pushing against those restraints and perhaps freeing herself from them completely.

The next bed scene takes place during Claire and Baako's vacation in France. Baako has taken leave, and after passing through Giffaumont and Verdun, the two spend the night in a hotel. This hotel scene, and their entire vacation, is an interesting contrast to Claire's vacation with Fred in Oberstdorf. While the room in Oberstdorf had two single beds separated by a night table, the French hotel has one double bed for the pair to share, implying physical closeness and sexual intimacy.



Figure 10: The gentleman. Baako falls asleep in bed with Claire on their vacation in France.

As Claire unpacks her things, her anxiety about with Baako's sexuality becomes clear. From off camera, the viewer hears the corporeal and guttural sound of Baako gargling in the bathroom. The shot cuts to pause briefly on the open bathroom door and then returns to a close-up to show the apprehension on Claire's face as she considers her immediate situation. Baako steps into to the door frame and quietly asks Claire if she is afraid to be with him, to which she honestly replies, "Ich weiß es nicht. Es ist schwieriger, als ich gedacht habe." Baako then approaches her, places his hands on her arms, and turns her gently towards him before reaching down and taking her hand, which he kisses reassuringly before returning to the bathroom. Claire continues to unpack and asks Baako which side of the bed she should sleep on before laying her night clothes on her pillow, where the camera pauses in close-up. The viewer then becomes voyeur as the

scene cuts and focuses for several seconds on Baako's naked body, shot from the waist up as he showers. The shot makes the sexual current of the scene more explicit. Despite the overtly sexual tone, however, the scene strongly suggests that the couple does not have sex that night. The next shot shows Claire in her night gown placing her jewelry on the dressing table before getting into bed next to Baako, whose naked torso recalls his complete nakedness in the shower shot. Claire asks her silent partner if he is already sleeping and remarks aloud that he is "erschöpft" before she slides under the covers.

The final bed scene is a powerful one and occurs near the end of the film. Fred has discovered the apartment that Baako and Claire have rented together, and after some prodding, he informs the U.S. Army, who are looking to arrest Baako for failure to report to duty at the end of his leave. Back at the barracks, Lieutenant Horne, a racist and Baako's most prominent enemy in the army, comments that Baako is likely running around with the "übliche Sorte," the typical Fräulein, and that she is not to be handled gently in the encounter he has orchestrated. He orders the military police to arrest Baako no earlier than 11pm, hoping thereby to instigate a physical confrontation.

Accompanied by local German police, the American MPs arrive at the apartment, and Baako answers the door in his robe. They enter the bedroom, where Claire is sitting upright in the bed in her nightgown, and begin a search for Baako's weapon. An officer suggests that perhaps it is under the covers, and Baako tells them not to touch Claire. A close-up shows the face of one MP as he glances insidiously to another MP before stepping to the bedside and pulling back the covers to reveal Claire's bare leg. The MPs act of disrespect ignites Baako's temper, and he pulls the MP back from Claire just before

the officers knock him down. They begin beating him with their night sticks, and Claire futilely attempts to stop them, all the while declaring her rights as a German citizen.



Figure 11: A brutal interruption. Claire tries to stop military police officers as they knock him to the floor and beat him.

As Horne had anticipated, Baako readily steps into the trap by acting as Claire's protector. Perceiving her as a whore, the officers disrespect Claire's privacy and modesty, and though his actions will land him in military prison, Baako steps up as her protector, fully displacing Fred's place in her life. This climactic and dramatic moment is the final moment of Claire's evolution and shows that though she has redesigned herself, she is still in no position to make any demands; her declarations of her status as a German citizen gain her neither sympathy nor respectable treatment by the German police present. In the end, there are limits even to her rehabilitated German femininity; Claire has regained her independence and acquired a new awareness, but her internal development

has had no effect on the society around her. Unlike the rehabilitated masculinity of the paternal figure in *Toxi*, rehabilitated femininity does not heal the damaged family, the purported center of West German society and culture. West German identity remains marred by the ideologies from which Claire has attempted to free herself.

Progressive Pessimism

Encumbered by a globally notorious twentieth century history, Germans generally have been eager to distance themselves from racism and to speak and act out against racist behavior. It is critical, however, to consider the definitions that have accompanied that eager activism, not in order to depreciate it, but to understand the resulting limitations posed to its success. The terms race (*Rasse*) and racism (*Rassismus*) have been enduringly shaped by the Holocaust and consequent discourse and so inexorably linked to Jews and anti-Semitism that they have often been understood by the general German public almost exclusively within that very specific context. By implying continuity between multiple and varied forms of racism, *Gottes zweite Garnitur* re-contextualizes those terms. Its commentary on racialized and gendered constructions of cultural and social identity in 1960s West Germany creates a moment in which it is possible for a reluctant viewer to consider a broader definition of *Rassismus* that includes anti-Black racism in a specifically German context. It is because of this potential that I have read the film as a historicization and re-contextualization of anti-Black racist ideology that places anti-Black sentiment within the German social, historical and cultural framework from which it has been widely excluded.

Gottes zweite Garnitur makes use of the characteristics of television movie genre

during the 1960s to lend authenticity to its depictions and to validate its social criticism. It takes advantage of the pervasive reach of television and its reception as a journalistic medium to widely broadcast its message of national introspection and social tolerance. In presenting the audience with a prominently discussed contemporary life situation and identifiable characters, Verhoeven's production models the missteps and inappropriate social actions of 1960s West German society. It is a contribution to the *Erziehungsprojekt* of the newest mass medium and in the most essential ways, takes on the purported informative motives of Willi Heinrich's source novel. The film avoids much of the more excessive, explicit and stereotypically problematic representations of the GI and Fräulein figures that were typical in the literature of the time,¹³ and which were also descriptive of Heinrich's novel. Paul Verhoeven's *Gottes zweite Garnitur* capitalizes on the TV-movie format as packaging for an unpalatable educational message.

It is noteworthy that Claire's father is played by the film's director, as Herr Heggelbacher's most prominent scene is a largely one-sided dialog with his daughter about the tragic nature of cross-cultural romance. Because he is depicted as quiet and distanced throughout the film, the intentional emphasis of Heggelbacher's lengthy personal disclosure and concern stands out. Heggelbacher's monolog and the film's fatalistic portrayal of Claire and Baako's romance acknowledge the overwhelming

¹³ Regarding the difference in depictions of racialized sexuality in literature and film, Brauerhoch writes the following: "Beide, der schwarze GI und das 'Fräulein', waren grenzüberschreitende, phantasieanregende Figuren. Die Literatur bemächtigte sich des Potentials auf ganz andere Weise als die Filme: aggressiv und romantisch, rassistisch und fetischistisch werden die Attraktionen ausgelotet, die das Grenzüberschreitende der tabuisierten Liebe beinhaltet. Die Sensationslüsternheit der Schriftdokumente in ihren grellen Stereotypen und pornographischen Phantasien und die Prüderie der Filme in ihrer Askese und 'Läuterung' der Figur klaffen weit auseinander" (*Fräuleins* 482).

difficulty, and perhaps impossibility of achieving societal redemption through individual rejection of essentialist identity constructs. In his pessimistic liberalism, Heggelbacher justifies his resigned acceptance of social intolerance by invoking the power and reach of that intolerance, the resulting social constraints and the impossibility of meaningful change. By casting himself in that role, Verhoeven chose to inhabit the voice of the defeated intellectual patriarch who speaks candidly about this problematic, additionally emphasizing the pessimistic "moral" of the story in a scene whose significance is already narratively framed.

However pessimistic, the film is not definitively fatalist; it offers the possibility of two rehabilitative forces: knowledge (as a result of reflection and introspection) and love. With these forces, Claire and Baako possess the potential to move beyond the limits of their surroundings, but it remains only that: yet unrealizable potential.

What we can begin to see in *Gottes zweite Garnitur*, and what becomes clearer when one observes the development of thematizations of Blackness and German-ness over time, is what is at the core of the obstacles to the realization of that potential, namely, a double bind conundrum. To return to the "joke" in the scene when Baako and Fehringer first meet, that moment contains a key to recognizing the function of the double bind that is at work in German race discourse. It exemplifies the power dynamic that is in play between the white German majority and members of the racial and ethnic minority, be they foreigners, residents or citizens. In my attempt to better understand the structure of this dynamic, I turned to the concept of double bind communication, which has its roots in the field of psychoanalysis. Theories of the double-bind posit that

particular communication failures result from schizophrenic communication, in which linguistic structures and power differentials lead to miscommunications and dialogic entrapment. It is a kind of false consciousness, “an unresolvable sequence of experiences” that leads to pathological communication (Ransom and Sluzki 6) and is often expressed either in a misuse or a misinterpretation of metaphoric communication or in utterances that can be interpreted at both the literal and figurative levels. In an essay on the development of the double bind theory, family communications practitioner Jay Haley expounds on the potential power of these patterns:

. . . [T]he double-bind could be seen as a tactic in the interchange between two people as they attempt to gain control of the range of the system [of communication]. By imposing a double bind, a person can effectively prevent another from governing what sort of relationship they will have. (Ransom and Sluzki 78)

We can observe this playing out in the unintended joke. In his question to Fehringer, Baako uses colors as signifiers of racial and ethnic categories and problematizes Fehringer’s usage of the ambiguous adjective “farbig” – a term that is still in use today. The colors black and red function on both the literal and the symbolic levels of communication, and in this case, the meaning is the same on both levels. Fehringer, however, whether intentionally or accidentally, misinterprets or ignores those meanings and re-contextualizes Baako’s color categories. In his statement, the color red is disassociated from its racial signification and associated instead with the emotional state of anger or rage, which is then associated with Black as a racial categorization. The act in itself is meaningful; color denied as a racial category in one instance and reinforced in another. But after his awkward amusement, Fehringer asks to put the joking aside – it’s

time for serious business – and proceeds to make his assertions about shared blame.

By this “trick” of communication, Fehringer re-positions Baako’s question – and thus his concern – to the level of the figurative, and is thus able to re-direct the conversation and assert control of its terms. The move makes it difficult for Baako – a non-native speaker, a foreigner, a guest and a racial minority – to successfully take issue with Fehringer’s classification and ideology. His categories and understanding of race are not accepted as Real.

This is a tactic frequently employed in contemporary German race discourse in which the majority takes issue with the minority’s employment of terms like “race” and “racism” and assert authority over the language surrounding racialized concepts and issues. The desire to separate post-war racial concerns from historically relevant ideologies and language is strong, and it is just this desire that Black German journalist, artist and social activist Noah Sow censures when she writes:

Wie man durch sprachliche Ungenauigkeit mithilft, den rassistischen Status quo zu erhalten: Sie tun das zum Beispiel, wenn Sie den Begriff “Rassismus“ nicht in den Mund nehmen, weil Sie bei dem Wort zusammenzucken. Wenn Sie so agieren, ist das ein Zeichen dafür, dass Sie Rassismus lieber ausblenden und nicht beim Namen nennen wollen. . . . Das ignorieren oder Verdrängen von Rassismus ist aber eine große Hürde auf dem Weg zu seiner Überwindung. (30)

It is necessary to transcending the adopted and imposed limitations of the linguistic framing of racism discourse in order to effectively combat racist structures, which requires recognizing the existence of racisms, in other words, understanding that racism takes myriad and variable forms.

What the film does achieve in its educational mission is the turning of the critical

eye inward and challenging public hesitation to call racism by its name. It searches within West German culture for origins of social intolerance and oppression and addresses the role of race in the formation of national, cultural and gender identities. It uses the GI and Fräulein figures to expose that interconnectedness while presenting the audience with characters that deviate from stereotypes in such a manner that they are loosened from the insistent burden of blame. These re-imagined archetypes push a thoughtful viewer to reconsider mainstream narratives that mark "others" – cultural, racial and social outcasts – as the source of West German social, moral and cultural decline.

Gottes zweite Garnitur is perhaps one of the earliest German movies to present a relatively considered and conscientious investigation of anti-Black racism in Germany and to address the construction and reinforcement of borders surrounding racialized and gendered identity. It educates its viewers by elucidating a multidimensional, transnational ideological network of which 1960s FRG racial ideology was a part. Verhoeven's television production (and perhaps also Heinrich's novel) makes visible the denied reality of the genealogy of racial concepts: that they extend temporally, reaching back beyond the Third Reich to German colonialism; geographically and culturally, reaching across borders and oceans; and conceptually and socially, affecting ideas about gender, sexuality and family dynamics. Its presentation exposes that interconnectedness while presenting the audience with archetypal characters that deviate from stereotypes in such a manner that they are loosened from the insistent burden of blame. These re-imaginings push a thoughtful viewer to reconsider mainstream narratives about "otherness." And importantly, it insists that anti-Black racism *within Germany* is part of that network, that

it is, for example, related to and tied up with both German anti-Semitism and American anti-Black racism. In so doing, it complicates an accepted definition of racism that suppresses the intersecting roles of Blackness, sexuality, gender and nationality in that definition's historical development.

It is because of these aspects of *Gottes zweite Garnitur* – its pedagogical mode, reflective and introspective tone and attempt at re-contextualization – that I consider Verhoeven's TV-movie to be an incipient forerunner to a critical and self-reflexive discourse on race in German film and a prelude to the appearance a decade later of the first canonical films to thematize white privilege. (Its pessimism, while certainly not as aesthetically pervasive, foreshadows the defeatist left-wing melancholy which many scholars consider characteristic of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's work.) Most importantly, *Gottes zweite Garnitur* is an attempt within the mainstream to open up public discourse around the taboo topics of race and German national identity, and to reconsider the definitions and associations that have hindered that discourse.

3. Shaded Desires: The Shadow of Race in the Double Binds of Fassbinder's Melancholic Romances

In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to demonstrate how liberal German filmmakers have made critical contributions to the shift away from race discourse conceived in terms of Aryan supremacy and anti-Semitism and toward a global racial binary of white and Black. *Toxi's* progressive moral of racial tolerance challenges anti-Black racism aimed at the generation of biracial children born during the occupation years. Moreover, it posits these children as an opportunity for white German redemption. The film explicitly draws attention to the relationship between National Socialist race ideology and rampant postwar anti-Black sentiment by employing taboo terms like *Rassenunterschiede*, *Rassenproblem* and *Kind der Schande*. Paul Verhoeven's *Gottes zweite Garnitur* establishes a similar connection, but goes further in connecting German anti-Black racism to its American and colonial counterparts. In both films, the Black protagonist's explicit function is to reveal and criticize the racist conceptions held by white Germans that dominate discourses about Blacks living in Germany. The static identities of the Black protagonists are depicted in a positive light and, especially in *Toxi*, their representations take on the character of positive racism not unlike the philo-Semitism that pervaded postwar characterization of Jews. Moreover, the stories of both Black figures center on their interaction with a "white" Germany, and occur within a temporally framed moment of contact that, while formative, is not sustainable. Both *Toxi* and *John Baako* are representations of Black residents wholly determined by race. They

remain marginal to the larger national narrative and are only significant for their expositional and transformative function, which is also determined by race. Their relevance for the audience concludes with their departure from Germany and their exit from the narrative of the nation, ultimately deeming them unwelcome, and at best, prescriptively useful in the reconstruction of postwar Germany. They are signified as external impositions that stir up the settled dust of German racism, a problem that, once they are again absent, can return to its settled state.

The two films that I've chosen to discuss in this chapter demonstrate a period of marked transition in cinematic counter-discourses to the dominant national narrative. In *Angst essen Seele auf* (1974) and *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1979), director Rainer Werner Fassbinder presents Black male characters whose relationships with white German female protagonists are permeated with the complexity of race's entanglement with other social categories. The context and method of Fassbinder's social critique varies in their particularities in each film, but his critical engagement with race always portrays it as a social issue that is inextricably linked with the power dynamics of sex, gender, class, economy and national delineations. His imported Black figures and the behavior of white Germans toward them are thus connected to social structures that are not the result of foreign and imported problems, but instead concerns central to West Germany's economic and social reconstruction. As in *Gottes zweite Garnitur*, anti-Black racism is re-framed as a domestic problem, but Fassbinder's melodramas go a step further by repositioning race and his racially identified figures as internal and integral components of Germany's contemporary national narrative. Instead of portraying them as temporary

and ultimately externally located mediators marginal to Germany's self-conception, the films write the characters Ali and Bill into the central concerns of West Germany's attempts to refashion itself. The results are not without flaws, but I interpret them as a challenge to a national myth that persists in its marginalization and even erasure of historical Black presence and the affective contributions of ethnic diversity to the construction of German culture and identity.

Cinematic Psychoanalysis as Political Activism

The work of Rainer Werner Fassbinder is perhaps the natural source to examine for the continuation of the discourse on race and national identity in German film. As discussed in the previous chapter, television was the main medium relied upon to influence the social ideas of a broad public at a time of social instability. The practice of using television productions primarily as an educational tool began already in the 1950s and continued well into later decades (and is arguably still the case to some degree today). Thomas Elsaesser describes the social and political atmosphere that accompanied Fassbinder's start in film:

After twenty-odd years of 'social peace' that had lasted from the Adenauer chancellorship of the early 1950s to the break-up of the grand coalition in 1971, the old class differences and social antagonisms (especially between the working class and the petit-bourgeois) seemed once more to threaten the fabric of German consensus politics. Fassbinder thus began his filmmaking career at a moment in time when a battle of sorts came to be waged over the hearts and minds of post-war Germany, with regard to its social conscience and political maturity: admittedly, this was a battle fought more on television than in the cinemas, the latter by then already the protected preserve of art house audiences or children's matinees. Yet working for both film and television, Fassbinder had to address with one and the same kind of film different groups of spectators who did not possess shared self-images or self-interests. (50)

The filmmaker's intimate exposure, receptively and professionally, to the various modes and functions of television and cinema likely influenced the construction of the worlds and the characters of his films. He was convinced of the power of convention to affect an audience, and his cinematic style reflects his belief in the inherent potential of Hollywood's generic formulas and in the influential reach of television media's methods. His particular blending of methods and modes from these two related media is one of several characteristics that set him apart from other well-known directors of New German Cinema.

Generally, New German filmmakers "had every interest in distancing themselves from. . . [the] popularity [of Hollywood cinema] and tried to appeal instead to international art cinema audiences, whose tastes were formed by festival reports and auteur retrospectives" (Elsaesser 46). With the knowledge that they could rely on neither a star system, nor a viable genre transition, nor an indigenous commercial cinema infrastructure, they believed in the necessity of innovative and experimental methods to address German spectators. Fassbinder, however, approached these issues differently, creating his own recognizable cast of German stars and "pushing further than anyone else the issue of genre" (47). In an interview, Fassbinder discussed his different relationship to Hollywood's genre reliance and the project of social criticism.

The best thing I can think of would be to create a union between something as beautiful and powerful and wonderful as Hollywood films and a critique of the status quo. That's my dream, to make such a German film – beautiful and extravagant and fantastic, and nevertheless go against the grain. Besides, there are many Hollywood films which are not at all apologies for the establishment, as is always superficially maintained. (qtd. in Gemünden 55)

The use of generic formulas and modifications that inhere Fassbinder's body of work are the results of his obsessive endeavor to create precisely "such a German film," and they are a significant contributing element to the melodramatic and melancholic pessimism that marks the worlds that his characters inhabit, worlds that aid in the creation of a unique relationship between spectator, film and fictional characters that is the subject of so much scholarly fascination.

Given Fassbinder's fascination with psychoanalysis and intra-familial miscommunication, it is hardly surprising that the melodrama was so often his genre of choice. As a cinematic form that is driven by the tensions of ideological contradictions and locates the family as its focal point, the melodrama possessed the basic features Fassbinder needed to reach for his extravagant dream. In *Angst essen Seele auf* and *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, as in the majority of his work, Fassbinder thematizes the oppressiveness of romantic love in two eras of postwar West Germany. He creates an environment in which his protagonists are persistently plagued by conundrums of visibility, caught between self-conception and presentation, between external perception, understanding and recognition, and between perceived responsibility and deep, internal desire. Elsaesser described these conditions as instances of marked "false consciousness" and logical "double-binds" (56). The concept of the double bind is broad as a result of its increasing application across disciplines, but I continue to use the term in the definition established in chapter 2 to refer to an unresolvable impasse marked by pathological or schizophrenic communication. Most often, the confusion or conundrum of a double bind is related to a misuse or misinterpretation of metaphoric communication or

communication that can be interpreted at both the literal and figurative levels – in other words, it is a logical knot.

In the context of Fassbinder's films, Elsaesser relates such experiences to "vicious circles" of substitutions and frustrated desires:

Fassbinder fashioned vicious circles for his characters, as they strove after happiness that eluded them, precisely because it was the manner of their striving that entrapped them or made them seem willing victims. It [is] up to the audience to "distance" themselves, and come either to a higher wisdom or discover a new humility, by appreciating the protagonist's basic humanity. (50)

At the conclusion of a classic melodrama, the characters come to recognize and possibly even understand the discrepancies at the source of their suffering. To varying degrees, the characters are "let in" on the cruel joke that the audience already comprehends. But *Angst essen Seele auf* and *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* exemplify how Fassbinder's films often conclude without aligning the knowledge of the film characters and the audience (52).

The characters are often unable to comprehend the dimensions of their dilemmas, but perhaps more frustrating is the difficulty the spectator can face when trying to understand the actions and motivations of Fassbinder's protagonists. Fassbinder fashions the psychological world of his films with complexities and omissions that rarely paint a satisfactorily complete picture for either his characters or his audience, and in this way, he destabilizes the notion of "safe positions of knowledge" (53), be they objective or subjective, fictional or real.

The "vicious circles" that haunt these cinematic interracial romances and maintain the central dramatic tension are reflections of more than merely the entrapments of individual pursuits of happiness. Fassbinder's allegorical characters and family units

further imply these entrapments as reflections of broader restrictions that shape conceptions of identity in Germany. Throughout their tragic narratives, the characters experience the seeming inescapability of conventional social structures, structures that are portrayed as oppressive and destructive forces. As each film reveals the architecture of its binds, at times boldly and at other times only in glimpses, it is constantly negotiating the relationship between spectator and screen, fashioning a field of vision that "is not bound in the terms of the perspectival and the framed at all, even though it includes them" both. In this way, Fassbinder brings his audience into his psychoanalytic cinema experience. While a great deal more can be said about the social and political possibilities (and limitations) of "cinematic psychoanalysis," a thorough analysis is subject matter for another project and lies beyond the scope of this study.

Troubling the West German Matriarch in Angst essen Seele auf (1974)

The earlier of the two films, *Angst essen Seele auf*, is a story of love between Emmi, an elderly, white German cleaning woman and "Ali,"¹ a Black, Moroccan guest worker employed as a mechanic. Suffering from feelings of loneliness and neglect, Emmi desperately seeks the love and approval of her three children, her colleagues and her neighbors. Ali is similarly discontent, and he struggles to find a sense of home, belonging, companionship and understanding in his adopted German society.

Fassbinder's Bavaria is marked by attentive framing, a conscientious placement of bodies

¹ The character gives his full name as El Hedi ben Salem M'Barek Mohammed Mustapha, but notes that everyone calls him Ali. The character is portrayed by the actor El Hedi ben Salem, and the working title of the film was *Alle Türken heißen Ali*.

and conspicuous spectator gazes. It is within this overtly framed (i.e., staged) setting that the likewise framed narrative of ironic melancholy unfolds. The director uses conspicuous staging to thematize desire and responsibility, and relies on monologue narratives, often in place of interactive character dialogue, to address the connections between desire, responsibility, melancholy and nostalgia and their role in the maintenance of oppressive social structures.

The actor who plays Emmi, Brigitte Mira, was frequently cast as Fassbinder's matriarch character, first as Marion's mother in *Acht Stunden sind kein Tag* and in a number of later Fassbinder films, including *Mutter Küsters Fahrt zum Himmel*, *Angst vor der Angst*, *Satansbraten* and his interpretation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, in which her character, Frau Bast, was a Fassbinder creation that deviated from Döblin's original text (Sontag 129). The matriarch holds particularly powerful symbolism for Fassbinder, and in this film addressing racial discrimination in 1970s Germany, Emmi is at once a dynamic and complex individual and a deeply symbolic figure. As the center and the foundation of the propagation of the nation, both in a biological and an ideological sense, the mother in theory possessed significant control over the direction of the nation; in reality, however, the structures and institutions of a patriarchal society did not allow women enough agency to exert that control. This is observable in the historical development of the politicized rhetoric surrounding German motherhood.

Already in the early phases of German colonialism, the role of women in the expansion of the German Empire and the shaping of German culture was a topic of contention. Their exclusion from colonial work and oppression at home motivated a

number of women to advocate for greater inclusion in Germany's project of expansion. The women of these varied colonial feminist movements were aware that their "ability to sustain racial purity was the basis for their political participation in colonialism" (Wildenthal 6), and thus made claims that women had a rightful, and even vital role to play in the shaping of German culture both in the colonies and at home. They utilized ideas of "geistige Mütterlichkeit" and the "Kulturaufgaben der Frau" (5), acknowledging and reinforcing the connection between maternity, femininity and the raced nation in social and political discourses. On the topic of this connection, Alys Weinbaum writes:

The interconnected ideologies of racism, nationalism, and imperialism rest on the notion that race can be reproduced, and on attendant beliefs in the reproducibility of racial formations (including nations) and of social systems hierarchically organized according to notions of inherent racial superiority, inferiority, and degeneration. (4)

While these entanglements were observable in the daily practices and rhetoric of German colonialism, they gained broader acceptance when they became popular as the rhetorical and practical center of National Socialist ideology. It was here that German women, especially those who exemplified the "Aryan" race, were celebrated, treasured and promoted as the sustainers and propagators of the purity of the German nation and *Volk*. The dominant notion of proper German womanhood was linked publicly, privately and politically to appropriate and effectual motherhood.

While it experienced shifts in the decades after World War II, the link between maternity and femininity remained intact. As previously noted, the presence of non-German and non-white occupation soldiers elicited a response that echoed that of the post-World War I years. The public outcry against fraternization focused primarily on

interracial interactions and their contribution to the degradation of German morals, and the disproportionate preoccupation with multiracial children was an indication of the national anxiety about women's power over the racial composition of the citizenry (Fehrenbach, "Rehabilitating Fatherland"; *Race After Hitler*; Brauerhoch, *Fräuleins*; Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins*; Lemke Muniz de Faria; Weinbaum). Interracial sexual relationships reemerged as a public social and political issue, tapping into long existing "anxieties about the power of the female of the species to alter the course of evolution through the choice of her mate" that had developed with the emergence of the Darwinian theory of racial differentiation in the evolutionary process (Weinbaum 10). In the 1950s, when forty percent of the German population was part of a non-traditional family, the public was fixated with the ideal of the nuclear family, and the feminine ideal of the *Mutter* and *Hausfrau* became a central symbol in the attempts to re-establish a "natural" order of gender and social roles (Brauerhoch, *Fräuleins* 72). "Diese Diskussionen um die Rolle der Frau trugen ganz entscheidend zur Formierung und Formulierung eines gesellschaftlichen Selbstbildes Westdeutschlands bei" (*Fräuleins* 72), and that self-image continued to be relevant in later decades. For the nation, the ideal feminine held – and in many respects still does hold – not only the most valued biological resources, but also the most valued social and moral ones.

The maternal and wifely image of feminine purity reacquired its past significance in the question of German identity, and the rhetoric surrounding it increased in the 1960s and 70s along with the presence of foreign workers and residents who were visually identifiable as racial and ethnic Others. *Angst essen Seele auf* takes on this

contemporaneous issue in a plot that integrates age and class difference – the same driving forces of the conflict in Douglas Sirk's *All that Heaven Allows* (1955) that Fassbinder's film cites – with racial, cultural and class differences that pervade the discourse on "foreigners" in Germany. As an older maternal figure, Fassbinder's Emmi Kurowski at first appears to be less relevant as a biological resource in the film's present; however, her past marriage to a Polish "*Fremdarbeiter*," strategically referenced several times in the film, indicates that Emmi had already disrupted her biological imperative prior to the start of the film. The former member of the *Hitler-Jugend*² produced three white children; however, she reproduced with a white foreign worker, an act that was a betrayal of her maternal and moral responsibility to German society. So while it seems unlikely that she will reproduce with Ali, which would be an even greater offense, she already symbolizes a departure from the feminine ideal, a woman unable or unwilling to contribute to the "Etablierung und Aufrechterhaltung einer 'natürlichen' Gesellschafts- und Geschlechtsordnung" by biological means (Brauerhoch, *Fräuleins* 72).

More significant, however, is Emmi's role as a compass of social morals and cultural standards. It is this aspect of her maternity, defined here more broadly in terms of the *Erziehung der Nation*, or the shaping of the national social order, that is relevant to the reading that follows. The scenes I have chosen demonstrate that Emmi is judged

² The *Hitler-Jugend* (HJ) was the branch of the National Socialist party national organization established for all eligible German youth and consisted of several subgroups. These included, for boys and girls respectively, the *Deutsches Jungvolk* (DJ) and the *Jungmädelbund* (JM) for ages ten to fourteen, and the *Hitlerjugend* (HJ) and the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (BDM) for ages fourteen to eighteen. The BDM was eventually expanded through the establishment of the organization *Glaube und Schönheit* for women age eighteen to twenty-one. The intention was to extend party socialization to the age of eligibility for the party's women's organization, the NS-Frauenschaft (NSF), and thus reinforce loyalty to the party above individual personal pursuits.

according to this broadly imagined maternal imperative; her personal acts are accordingly regarded as an issue of cultural importance, and therefore constantly evaluated for the social and moral values they communicate. As an involuntary vessel of German values, Emmi is eventually compelled to modify her behavior in order to better meet the demands being placed upon her. In the end, she appears unable to meet both sides of a contradictory moral demand, a failure that is a consequence of the double bind constructed by the confused paradoxes of morality and social expectations in 1970s Germany.

The Illusion of Privacy

Emmi and Ali first meet when, as a joke, a brunette, a regular at the bar frequented by Ali and his Arab friends, challenges Ali to ask Emmi to dance. As the two step and sway alone on the small dance floor, the intimacy of their conversation is highlighted by their isolation in the frame, cutting out all other patrons and the bar owner, Barbara. The private dance marks the beginning of the fantasy bubble the couple attempts to create and maintain around their relationship as a shield from the cruelty and judgment of those around them. Shortly after the dance, Ali insists on walking Emmi home, where they wait in the entryway for the rain to stop and engage in several minutes of intimate chatter. When the rain does not cease, Emmi invites her new companion up to her apartment to wait out the rain over a drink. The way in which the film transitions from the building entryway scene to the interior of Emmi's apartment visually offers a more realistic perspective on their pleasant fantasy bubble.

As Emmi and Ali head up the stairs, they greet a neighbor briefly in passing. The

nosiest and most gossipy of Emmi's neighbors, Frau Kargus, immediately scurries to her neighbor Frau Münchmeyer to whisper about the Black man that Emmi has invited up. Arms crossing her chest, she stares disapprovingly up the stairs just before the scene cuts to show Emmi and Ali in Emmi's kitchen. The shot that follows is framed by a doorway, a frequent technique in Fassbinder's often exaggerated framing, and it has several effects here. The doorway itself, a literal and figurative threshold, is open to a number of symbolic interpretations. First and foremost, it marks the zone of transition from one space to another, in this case, the liminal space between the public and the private. The space beyond the frame of the doorway is Emmi's private home, separated by walls from the public space of the apartment building and the bar. In light of Ali and Emmi's trajectory, it also symbolizes their transition from strangers in the bar to future husband and wife. The shot shows the space the two will come to share daily as they eat, plan and argue. Additionally, the space is framed as one of intimacy, and the structure of the visual frame reappears as a motif in other scenes with the couple, as well as in scenes with Ali and Barbara.



Figure 12: The Voyeur's View. Emmi makes coffee for her guest as the camera peeks through the doorway.

The second effect is an extension of the spatial differentiation and calls attention to the illusory nature of these boundaries. Though the threshold marks a transition into the personal space, there is no door to close out the audience or the diegetic spectators. Like the space of the dance floor, the couple's space is fragile, penetrable and subject to the judgments and influences of external actors. Like a bubble, it is transparent, and considering the power of the gaze in this film in particular, this renders it almost a complete illusion.

This is exemplified in a third, related effect of the shot: the voyeur effect. The incomplete outsider view, coupled with the shakiness of a handheld camera gives a sense of voyeurism that is strengthened even further by the previous shot of Frau Kargus'

curious gaze from the stairwell. It is almost as if Frau Kargus has snuck into the apartment to find out "was die wohl will mit dem," and the camera invites the viewer to follow. Frau Kargus is not able to satisfy her curiosity, but as members of the audience, we are allowed this satisfaction, though the framing reminds us that we are uninvited, unwelcome, seeing and yet unseen.

The camera remains in this voyeuristic position for an uncomfortable length of time – approximately thirty-seven seconds – while Emmi begins to tell Ali about her marriage to the now deceased Polish *Fremdarbeiter*, František. Only as the two toast their cognac glasses does the scene cut to a shot from within the kitchen, showing the two seated at a small dining table, framed intimately in medium two-shot. Behind Emmi is a seascape painting with high waves crashing against the shoreline. In the moments that follow, Emmi enthusiastically relates that her father was in Hitler's party – "Wissen Sie wer das war, Hitler?" she asks, smiling – and that she, too, was a member of the party, as were "eigentlich alle, oder fast alle."

Here, the intimacy of the scene, reinforced by the close framing within the private space of Emmi's small kitchen, creates an awkward setting for Emmi's words. This product of the Nazi youth movement and widow of a Polish war laborer sits smiling pleasantly as she reminisces about her days in the party while drinking a cognac with a dark-skinned, Moroccan migrant worker in her apartment late in the evening. It may not quite be irony, but by pointing out the seeming contradictions within Emmi's historical and personal ideologies, the film certainly creates an uncanny effect. By bringing up Hitler and admitting to her membership in the party in such a casual and unashamed

fashion, Emmi positions the film's narrative within the historical trajectory that the film seeks to criticize. Such a moment can elicit discomfort within the spectator, and the fact that the Ali remains unfazed by Emmi's positive nostalgia distances the spectator from the story and its characters. It may also create confusion as to why Emmi's confession elicits no expression of concern, nor any reaction at all from Ali. This would likely be especially true among liberal viewers of Fassbinder's generation, many of whom were adamant in their criticism of the conservative ideologies of the previous generation. Unlike many earlier critical postwar works in which Nazi legacies and continuities were more explicitly denounced, *Angst essen Seels auf* holds that continuity for self-evident and depicts it as simply one imbedded element of West Germany's social reality. The continued growth of the migrant population that resulted from the guest worker recruitment campaign helped create a social and political environment in which racial and ethnic ideologies retained their relevance within the public discourse.

The scene also encourages one to read the dynamic between the odd couple as one of multiple imbalances. Would Ali possibly not know who Hitler was, one of the most globally notorious racist and fascist dictators? Perhaps Emmi is being thoughtful to consider that because of his foreign background, Ali's is less likely to possess what in her eyes is a particular Western (German?) knowledge. Perhaps her assumption simply reveals her own limitations, but her impulse to question also suggests that she views herself as an arbiter of knowledge for her less cultured Moroccan date. This reading is supported by a later scene in the film when the two go to celebrate their marriage; Emmi's flippant repetition of the question makes her seem both forgetful (old?) and

disconnected from her new spouse. Has she not yet learned that he shares much of her cultural knowledge? The same attitude is expressed in the apartment entryway during their first encounter when she lectures him on his wardrobe choices.

In this way, Emmi reflects the ethnocentric cultural arrogance that has often been pointed to as foundational to German imperialism, fascism and racism. This assumption of cultural superiority enables more than abuse; as noted previously, it also provides justification to a culture and its members to educate and civilize "lesser" cultures in the name of benevolence. Emmi sees herself as a bearer of the responsibility, or burden, of whiteness, of a duty to educate, inform and civilize, a responsibility that is connected to imperialism-fueled sentiments. And not unlike colonialist endeavors, Emmi's treatment of her second husband is complicated both by Freudian mother / lover nurturing and the so-called "white man's burden."

However, the scenic construction described raises the important question of spatial division and the permeability of boundaries. The camera not only suggests our voyeuristic social tendencies, but also the seeming impossibility of private spaces, especially when it comes to politicized personal relationships. That Emmi continues to be observed, even judged in her private space is a result of those illusory boundaries. Though she and Ali are spatially isolated in this scene, her every action is bound to her position as an awkward figure of German patriarchy, and the symbolic power thus reaches beyond the walls of her home. Furthermore, the false and tenuous boundary is alas the tightrope upon which Emmi is asked to balance in perpetuity, and it defines the structure of her ceaseless dilemma.

Caught Between Love and Motherhood

After a night with Ali, Emmi is filled with confusion and excitement. When she attempts to share her excitement with coworkers, giving them a much milder, fictionalized account, she is disheartened by the women's expressed disgust about young immigrant guest workers being intimately involved with white German women, especially of their older generation. Desperate for another perspective, and also for reassurance, Emmi visits her daughter Krista. Krista's husband Eugen, played by Fassbinder, happens to be home "sick" from work. The conflict between the young couple, which comes out during a discussion about Eugen's work situation, disrupts Emmi's desperate search for comfort. Instead of an intimate discussion between mother and daughter, the scene constructs a familial environment in which communication breaks down and is used as a weapon, and this punctuates both the implausibility and the intolerability of Emmi's desire.

Emmi is seated at the corner dining table when the couple and the camera join her. Eugen sits on the bench perpendicular, smoking the last of his cigarette. As Krista brings a small coffee tray from the kitchen and sits on the bench next to her mother, the camera moves in to "take a seat" across from Emmi at seated eye-level. Though she sighs quietly, Emmi appears to remain only slightly affected by the unrelenting bickering and insults being traded between her daughter and son-in-law. Eugen stares blankly away from the other characters until Emmi asks him if there are guest workers at his job. Only then does he turn to look at Emmi sternly before pouting and once again looking toward the empty space beneath the camera. Krista speaks to her mother in a near whisper.

KRISTA. Hör bloß mit so was auf. Bei Gastarbeitern, da sieht er rot.
EMMI. Warum, denn?
EUGEN. Weil es Schweine sind!
EMMI. Ach, so.
EUGEN. Ja!
KRISTA. Der hat sogar einen türkischen Meister. Da kommt er nicht
drüber weg.
EUGEN. Was heißt ich komme nicht drüber weg? Den seh' ich gar nicht.
Der ist Luft für mich!
KRISTA. Und wenn er dir was anschafft?
EUGEN. Der schafft mir nichts an.
KRISTA. Doch schafft er dir was an.
EUGEN. Dann . . . – hol mir die Zigaretten drüber.
KRISTA. Ich denk nicht dran.
EUGEN. Krista!
KRISTA. Ja?

Emmi glances downward uncomfortably and sips from her coffee, and the camera perspective cuts to catch Eugen exclaiming, "Ja!" in frustration before it returns to show Emmi looking quietly at him with wide, disapproving eyes.

Eugen, who works as a subordinate to a Turkish migrant worker, expresses a viewpoint commonly held by white German workers, as well as many white German unemployed, who felt (and continue to feel) threatened by the presence of non-native and "ethnically non-German" workers. Additionally, it echoes Ali's own words about his experiences of discrimination as a guest worker. Eugen's blanket assessment of *Gastarbeiter* as pigs reasserts the prejudiced statements about animalism made by Emmi's coworkers, a motif that later reappears when Emmi announces her marriage to all of her children. Furthermore, Eugen's attitude directs us to a recurrent theme in the film and in much of Fassbinder's work – invisibility and the conundrum of external recognition. In his childish and fitful expression of frustration, Eugen declares that he does not even see his Turkish superior – he is "air" to him! – and this despite the obvious

effect that his "invisible" superior has on Eugen's feelings of self-worth and security.

As the scene continues, an instance of schizophrenic communication unfolds, and the audience is witness to one instance of the double bind tactic in play. Eugen and Krista have walked across the room, and Emmi sits alone at the table, a crucifix on the wall behind her. Hesitance shows on her face, and she braces herself for her daughter's reaction.

EMMI. Ich hab mich verliebt.

KRISTA. Was?!

EMMI. Ja, Krista. Ich hab mich verliebt... in einem Marokkaner, der zwanzig Jahre jünger ist als ich, eher mehr.

KRISTA. Du machst wirklich eigenartige Witze, Mama.

EMMI. Das ist kein Witz, Krista. Das ist wahr. Ich hab mich verliebt – in einem Marokkaner, der jünger ist als ich, viel jünger. Ich habe geglaubt, es wäre meine Pflicht, es euch zu sagen. [stands] Bemühe dich nicht. Ich finde schon raus. Wiedersehen.

KRISTA. Wiedersehen, Mama.

[after Emmi has left]

EUGEN. Weißt du was?

KRISTA. Nein, aber du wirst mir sicher gleich sagen.

EUGEN. Ja. Deine Mutter hat nicht mehr alle Tassen im Schrank, überhaupt nicht mehr alle.

The dialog is captured in simple cuts between shots of Emmi and reaction shots of Krista and Eugen. The first reaction shot is a slightly low-angled two-shot, as if we are observing the couple's surprise from a seat across from Emmi. The visual conveys both their shock and their serious concern that their widowed mother is possibly taking on the role of someone's lover. For them, it is disturbing, yet still possible to consider that their mother possesses a sexual identity that is not associated with procreation or confined to the space of the nuclear family. However, when Emmi goes on to explain that the object of her love is a Moroccan at least twenty years her junior, the disturbing possibility

becomes, in their minds, an impossibility. The reaction shot, now a medium close-up at eye-level, shows Krista and Eugen giggling at her confession as Krista deems it a peculiar joke. Emmi's demeanor remains earnest when she explains that she is not joking, but she sees that her feelings will find no recognition amidst her family and calmly leaves. The duty that she believed she had to inform her children is met with derision and calls attention to the realization that her role as mother and widow is incompatible with her desire to be also someone's lover.

Emmi's dilemma in this scene is structured by the double bind that Krista and Eugen create from their side of the dialog. By categorizing Emmi's truth as a joke, they deny the possibility of truth in her statement. The relocation of Emmi's truth to the realm of the absurd is a gaslighting tactic that robs Emmi of the ability to make a metacommunicative statement, one that could be acknowledged not as the absurd statement of a crazy woman, but as a truth, a reflection of reality. She can see that she is trapped in a logical bind, unable to align her reality to that of her family, and seeing the impossibility of her position, she sees leaving as her only option. After her exit, the camera stays for a moment with Krista and Eugen to make the circumstances clear. Even after hearing Emmi's second assertion of her new found love, virtually a verbatim repetition of her initial statement, the two remain amused and hold fast to their diagnosis of Emmi's insanity. The tactic Krista and Eugen use against Emmi is similar to that used by Herr Fehringer against John Baako in *Gottes zweite Garnitur*; by resituating the truth into the absurd realm of the joke, they are able to re-direct the conversation and assert control over its terms. Unable to counter this trick play, Emmi is unable to get her

children to accept her love for Ali as belonging to the realm of the real, and it remains unvalidated.

The visual construction of the scene's close-up emphasizes this disjuncture, leaving Emmi abandoned in the frame, first with the crucifix, and then with the landscape portrait hanging on the wall behind her. Krista and Eugen stand framed separately, united in their laughter and in their judgment of Emmi. The crucifix associates Emmi with the figure of Christ, a dark-skinned Jew who reached out to social outcasts and undesirables, and who unrelentingly promoted unconditional brotherly love.³ Here the protagonist stands in an apartment in Bavaria, a state with a reputation for its conservative Catholicism, expressing her newfound love for another human, an outsider, an Other, and she is met with derision and teasing. Emmi must now deal with the results of her own failure as a moral *Erzieherin*, at least according to the narrative's morality, as well as the ethics of "liberal" Christianity. Her selfish children have not adopted values of tolerance and non-discrimination, and they show neither regard for their mother nor respect for her feelings. Ironically, Emmi's failure is likely related to the success of the paradoxical morality of the national narrative, a narrative in which Emmi, as a member of the Hitler Youth and a nostalgic "fan" of her former dictator, has actively participated. Purportedly, "race" should no longer be a consideration in the new Germany, and yet, it remains, dressed as cultural or ethnic difference, an important, even critical social and political concern in both the private and public realms. As the film plot progresses, we observe

³ The crucifix also alludes to Ali's sacrificial role when the stress of Emmi's betrayals eventually leads to his collapse.

Emmi struggle unsuccessfully to reconcile the paradoxes of her moral imperatives.

The Conundrum of Conformity

Many of the ideas with which this chapter is concerned come together in the film's pivotal Biergarten scene. A wide shot shows bright yellow tables and chairs in a Biergarten framed by green trees in full spring bloom. Wet from a recent rain, all of the outdoor seats are empty save for one table in the center of the frame where Ali and Emmi hold hands, appearing small in a sea of yellow and green. This shot remains on screen for nearly ten seconds, establishing the isolation that both figures have been experiencing since the start of their relationship, though Emmi's losses are more centrally represented. It presents an interesting contrast to one of the earliest shots of the couple when they share a dance at the bar.



Figure 13: Alone Together. Bathed in red light, Emmi and Ali have their first dance at the bar, which is decorated in red tones.



Figure 14: Alone together. The couple sits in quiet a Biergarten surrounded by lush greens and vibrant yellow.

In the first shot (Figure 13), the pair is bathed in red light, a color that is connected to Ali and his space in several scenes throughout the film and serves as a color motif for his character. While there are others nearby, the camera creates a world for just the two of them in which, for the length of the dance, external opinions and gazes, caught briefly in reaction shots for the audience, are inconsequential. Indeed, their union is the result of a mean-spirited joke, and they become the object of disapproving and ridiculing eyes, but their self-imposed isolation is given a positive character and is connected – not without irony – to a fantastic, nearly idealistic conception of romantic love. In the Biergarten, however, that same isolation is literally cast in a very different light. The couple sits in natural sunlight, still isolated, but now exposed in the wide openness of the

outdoors. They are surrounded by yellow, a color visually tied to Emmi and her social spaces. In Emmi's space, that of broader Bavarian society, the effects of isolation are quite different, and their world of two becomes an ironically hellish one that has no sense of having been chosen, but instead has been imposed by others and has become oppressive. Once again, others are just off camera nearby, but this time, the camera shows both Ali and Emmi's recognition of and responses to the powerful and disapproving gazes. Emmi is learning that her judgmental coworkers were right: one cannot live without others.

One moment in particular points out the discrepancy, and even irony in Emmi's romantic desire, and the problem of recognition and identity. Emmi explains the reason for her tears to Ali, saying:

Weil ich so glücklich bin auf der einen Seite, und auf der anderen Seite, halte ich das alles nicht mehr aus, dieser Hass von den Menschen, von allen, allen! Manchmal wünsche ich mir, ich wäre mit dir ganz allein auf der Welt und keine um uns rum. Ich tue natürlich immer so, als macht mir das alles gar nichts aus, aber natürlich macht das mir was aus. Es macht mich kaputt.

Ironically, the result of Emmi's marriage to Ali is that she nearly has the very world for which she wishes; even as she speaks the words, she is (for the second time) sitting together with her husband among countless, empty restaurant tables. Others at the restaurant keep their distance, but their penetrating gazes only make their distance more hurtful. In many senses, their union has created a world in which it is just the two of them. That Emmi still clings to her simple wish despite all that she has recently experienced is an insistent, non-pessimistic and almost hopeful stance. She soon erupts in an angry tirade, shouting insults at her onlookers. "Laute Schweine! Laute, dreckige

Schweine! Glotz doch nicht, ihr blöde Schweine! Das ist mein Mann! Mein Mann," she cries out, before laying her head on the table and crying while Ali attempts to comfort her. After declarations of love, Emmi hopefully suggests that they take a vacation, and that the world will perhaps look different upon their return.

Emmi's frustration is an outcome of "the two sides of 'recognition by an other'" that makes up the conformism Elsaesser analyzes in Fassbinder's work. In describing the central conflict in this film, he writes:

Ali and Emmi suffer from ostracism because of a liaison that is considered a breach of decorum. But the way it presents itself to the couple is as a contradiction: they cannot be 'seen together', because there is no social space (work, leisure, family) in which they are not objects of aggressive, hostile, disapproving gazes (neighbours, shop-keepers, bartenders, Emmi's sons and daughters-in-law). Yet conversely, they discover that they cannot exist without being seen by others, for when they are alone, their own mutually sustaining gaze proves to be insufficient to confer on them or confirm in them a sense of identity – that delicate balance between their social, their sexual and their ethnic selves, in the interplay between sameness and difference, self and other. Love at home or even a holiday abroad is incapable of providing the pleasure that being looked at by others gives. There is thus, apart from the pressure to conform, also the pleasure to conform in the field of vision... (Elsaesser 65–6)

This contradiction shapes Emmi's fantastic desire for an intimate and solitary world with Ali, and her fantasy at once necessarily recognizes and renounces the pressure and pleasure of social conformity. It is a metaphor transposed on top of her literal experience; in communication terms, it is a message (desired isolation) that both aligns and conflicts with the frame (actual ostracism and invasive gazes). As the film's opening motto declares, happiness isn't always fun.⁴ As her romantic vision becomes reality, Emmi finds

⁴ Before the opening credits begin, the words "Das Glück ist nicht immer lustig" appear on the screen.

herself crushed by the very isolation she actively sought out. Like the framed world created in her kitchen, there is only the illusion of isolation; the love she had imagined would provide her with a comforting and impenetrable shield is easily pierced by the sharp gazes of neighbors, coworkers, family and friends. In the end, Emmi's acts of self-preservation help her to return to the outside world she had previously rejected. But in doing so, she leaves her husband behind, alone in the bubble, and creates a new bind from which Ali cannot easily free himself.

In the new bind, Ali has few options to respond "appropriately" to Emmi's expressed desires. She tells him that she wants to be alone with him, and yet she tells him that their solitude is breaking her. She praises the beauty of his culture, yet is frustrated that he has not assimilated to her conception of German culture. She participates alongside her colleagues, friends and neighbors in his objectification, eroticization and exoticization, celebrating his physical strength and telling him that she knows she cannot satisfy his sexual appetite.

The scene captures a climactic moment that marks a shift in Emmi, who eventually adjusts her behavior in an attempt to conform to social expectations. Her participation in the alienation and use of her husband throughout the latter part of the film becomes an ironic pseudo-fulfillment of her "obligation" to emulate "proper" German values. While she represents a certain unreflective, ignorant participation in the ideology permeating the racist public sphere, Emmi eventually allows her marriage to be opened up to the same destructive structures that afflict the public sphere, and she adopts the same tactics as her cultural peers to objectify and marginalize her husband. In attempts to

turn that flood of negative attention to positive and affirming attention, she turns on the very person who has offered her "unconditional" affection: her husband Ali. Her previous pseudo-willingness to put aside race for romance and intimacy is challenged by the demands of morality and decorum of her white peers, and the film always reminds its audience of the impossibility of maintaining true separation between the public and private spheres.

Emmi faces an unwinnable conflict of interests and morals: She is alone and lonely, ignored and underappreciated in her conformist role as widowed mother and working class former Hitler Youth. She finds the attention and appreciation that she is missing in a non-conformist, interracial romance; however, Emmi is drowning in the undesired negative attention that her marriage has earned her. The binds in which both Emmi and Ali find themselves, the reactions of those around them and their inability to find recognition or to confirm the meaning of their realities, demonstrate the episteme that is organized by what Weinbaum refers to as the "conceptual unit" of the "race/reproduction bind" (5). The inextricability of the two concepts, particularly in light of the complexities of racial ideology in post-Holocaust Germany, are glaringly present in the confused "post-racial" racism that characterizes German culture in the latter half of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. The relation of ideals of femininity to racial and moral purity and the strength of racialized national identity is most readily observable in the policies and practices of colonialism and National Socialism in Germany's history, but even after their official demise, the ideologies by which such practices were justified have maintained a definitive place in the conception of German

identities. As such, despite the differences in their social and historical circumstances, the female protagonists in the two films discussed in this chapter have a national representative value that, because of this bind, is endangered by their interracial romances.

It is not only to the spectators, but also within the film's diegesis that Emmi and Ali's relationship functions in both the metaphorical and the literal orders. The multiple valences allow interpretations, both from spectators and story figures, to become easily confused within the bind of race and the reproduction in the ethnic nation, leading to frustration for all parties, and misery for the films' protagonists. The couple symbolizes a matter of great national cultural and political concern – the conflict between attempts to discard with the ideological obsession with racial difference and segregation, and the still significant fear that white German femininity, and consequently white German masculinity and national identity markedly damaged by fascism, will be further demeaned, or even destroyed, by the dark-skinned, masculine other. This same conflict is underlying in Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, in which we see a similar, and yet distinctly different treatment of interracial romance. In the case of *Maria Braun*, the dark other is an African American soldier, a figure whose significance is discussed in chapter 2.

Fassbinder's focus on Emmi's predicament centralizes the issues of white privilege and of the contradictions confronting West German self-conceptions and perceptions. The figure of Emmi embodies the conundrum of the nation's pursuit of a re-imagined national selfhood. As a lonely, elderly matriarch, Emmi is eager to embrace the

attention and affection that Ali offers her. Her desire and the comfort she finds in that relationship is not unlike West Germany's active recruitment of the foreign guest workers Ali represents, who provided the economy with much needed labor. But such a relationship comes with responsibilities, including the need for the nation to thoughtfully consider its conceptions and its treatment of the invited foreign work force. And that consideration insists on reflection about the ideologies that have guided Germany's treatment of racial, ethnic and national others. The misalignment between personal experience and social requirement for these two famous Fassbinder figures is a politicized trap that resounds in another of the director's most prominent films, *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*.

Fatal Romanticism in Die Ehe der Maria Braun (1979)

The Marriage of Maria Braun is a movie about a young German woman who holds fast to her love for her husband, a soldier whom she marries just before he departs for World War II and who is assumed dead in the wake of the war's end. While working in a bar, Maria becomes involved with "Mr. Bill," an African American GI who cares for her and helps support her and her family. From the very start of the film, Maria is established as one figurative canvas upon which Fassbinder projects his study of a new German identity under reconstruction. Maria's cunning and shrewd business savvy and her manipulation of the burgeoning capitalist system are prominent focal points in interpretations of her as a figure. As the allegorical protagonist in one installment of what is known as the BRD Trilogy, Maria's ready amenability to the exploitive demands of West Germany's economic growth, and its role in her emotional deprivation and

inevitable demise is a powerful materialist critique of the socioeconomics of the postwar Federal Republic. But an often underplayed characteristic of Maria is the blindness that results from her deep-seated idealism. While her naïve and idealistic romanticism may sometimes result from conscious and even intentional decisions, Maria remains blind to the conspiracy against her between her husband and her employer / lover Oswald, blind to the cynicism and material selfishness that fuels Hermann's actions and blind to the ways that race as a social, political and sexualized issue could impact her. Furthermore, she does not readily acknowledge the connection between racism and the national narrative of which she is part, and she exhibits a kind of naivety that contradicts the cunning of her own tactics. The symbolism she carries as a figure reflects an ideological continuity of which she appears to be completely unaware, or that is, at the very least, insignificant to her. Maria conceives of the world almost wholly at a micro level, and thus engages with it primarily at a level of specificity and private experience, rarely noticing or acknowledging the connection between her individual desires and actions and their significance in society at large. Most importantly, she is unable to see the contradiction of her own love for Hermann. Her ephemeral marriage remains a perpetual ideal, a promised possibility that is in fact unattainable. Like Emmi, she professes allegiance to a romantic ideal of love and marriage that as an abstraction, contains a power greater than the cynicism and melancholy that mar her destitute postwar surroundings.

In the midst of Maria's impossible pursuit of idealized love, she becomes romantically attached to a Black American occupation soldier, and their romance serves

as a historical and social code that refers the audience to specific historical moments and discourses previously discussed. By way of reference to the controversial GI-Fräulein constellation within this national allegory, Fassbinder situates the interaction between Blacks and whites integrally amidst other key factors in the narrative of national reconstruction. Maria's "colorblindness", which is associated with the naivety of her romantic idealism, becomes thus one of many social concerns that Maria's misguided and capitalism-fueled journey refuses to explicitly confront. And it is the neglect of not any singular concern, but of all of the intertwined issues that are the target of Fassbinder's criticism.

The film opens to the sound of explosions and gunfire as Maria and her groom Hermann exchange vows before a justice of the peace at the civil registry office. The nation is in the process of being destroyed and is losing hope as the couple begins a marriage that offers a promise of a future, of continuity. When the justice attempts to flee to safety, Hermann wrestles to restrain him, eventually tackling him to the ground. Maria dives to save the scattered marriage document, and at that moment, the cries of a baby and a subtle musical score of winds and strings commence to accompany the sounds of war and destruction. Maria joins the two men on the ground to complete the paperwork, and just as she signs the document, a woman screams off screen. Herman forces the justice to give his signature before releasing him and moistens the official stamp with his breath. At the precise moment that the stamp hits the document, a nearby explosion causes rubble and smoke to briefly darken the screen, and the title appears in an italic, red font. The smoke cloud quickly passes to show the couple still lying on the rubble and

paper covered ground, Hermann shielding Maria with his body. The frame freezes and the cast and crew credits appear one after the other in a staggered pattern of repetition until they fill the screen with a visually confusing string of names. There is another explosion, both the crying and the shots cease, and sirens alarm for several seconds. When the sirens stop, church bells and the arrival of a vehicle can be heard quietly in the background. Fassbinder's credit appears, and the screen fades to white.



Figure 15: The opening credits for *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*. The names of the actors appear in a layered pattern as bombs explode in the background.

As he sets the stage, Fassbinder packs an abundance of ideas into this opening scene. The audience witnesses the impending defeat of the German military and hears the arrival of the victors and future occupiers. We hear a foreshadowing of the agony that will underlie all of Maria's future actions and the baby that she will lose. The style of the credits can be interpreted with multiple meanings, all of which relate in some way to proliferation or reproduction: Is it a growing list of war casualties? It is a repetition of

names, a reproduction of individuals, a reproduction underscored by the crying infant. However one reads this pattern, the names have less individual meaning as new names are added; the screen becomes both more orderly and less discernible and the individuals are lost in the pattern of the group. For the purpose of my inquiry, it is this focus on repetition and increasing disorientation that is most significant. Maria, both in her resilience and her persistent faith in her marriage to Hermann, represents the youthful and resilient potential for the continuation of the nation. As the woman who remains behind, she becomes a complex location for hope: hope for the preservation of the German citizenry and for the rebuilding of the nation. She is a potential *Mutterfigur* and a perpetual romantic who never lets go of her (ironically failed) aspirations to fulfill a familial ideal. And yet, even as the reality of this ideal becomes increasingly distorted, Maria holds fast to her idealism, which she is able to maintain through her occasionally intentional and eventually fatal naïve blindness. Her longing for family, which is tied to her obsession with a romantic conception of love, remain her singular motivation throughout the film, and they cause her to overlook some of the most glaringly obvious contradictions to her idealized vision of the future.

Love is Blinding

In light of the depletion of the German population that resulted from war and the perceived threat to the nation and culture of Germany overall, the social, economic and political importance of procreation was significant. It was also a continuation of official Nazi policies that promoted the improvement and strengthening of the race through prolific (and selective) reproduction practices. While her newly wedded husband heads

off to war, Maria remains behind, preserving the possibility of the family and the nation's future. With her youthful vibrancy, blond hair and blue eyes, Maria visually captures the essence of the qualities assessed to be the most reflective of the best of the "Aryan race." These strong visual signifiers reinforce the significance of reproduction that the film's opening scene sets up, suggesting not only the importance of reproduction to Maria's social role, but also the strong expectation that Maria fulfill her procreative responsibility. However, as the plot unfolds, the protagonist disappoints; instead of racially legitimate offspring, she nearly contributes to precisely the opposing idea when she becomes pregnant with the progeny of an African American soldier. In this section, I would like to look at Maria's role as mother and trace how her inability to contribute to the growth of society in a specific prescribed role eventually leads her permanently down an alternative "reproductive" path, one focused on the propagation of wealth.

The love ideal to which Maria holds is based in her longing for traditional family, the nationally revered institutional center that was shattered over the course of the war. She longs to have her husband back and holds to this hope for far longer than all of her peers. Even after she begins to spend time with a Black GI she affectionately calls Mr. Bill, she remains dedicated to the promise of her future with Hermann and sees Bill primarily as a temporary source of financial security, gentle affection and emotional support.⁵ It is only later when Maria learns of her husband's death – news that is later revealed to be misinformation – that she turns to Bill for more long-term stability and

⁵ His responsibility for her financial well-being is further reinforced in later scenes in which Maria uses the English knowledge she acquires from Bill to manipulate several situations to her advantage, and it becomes an indispensable tool to her when she begins working in business.

love and reestablishes her pursuit of family. Only then does the film explicitly depict a sexual relationship between the two.

Maria's childlike naivety is expressed in several scenes that demonstrate its link to both her romantic ideals and her colorblindness. Having shared one dance in front of the camera, Bill and Maria are shown walking along the wooded path that leads to her home while he offers her an English lesson. Maria enthusiastically parrots his words and his intonation when he points out new vocabulary along their walk: "That is a tree. And that which you hear – peep, peep, peep – are birds." He then nonchalantly continues, "I am Black. You are white," which Maria then repeats verbatim:

MARIA. I am Black. You are white.

BILL. [laughter] No, the other way round.

MARIA. No, the other way round. [Bill laughs, then Maria laughs]

MARIA. *You're* Black, and *I'm* white.

BILL. Ja, ja. These are your eyes. . .

Mr. Bill continues the lesson, teaching her the words "eyes" and "lips" as he gently caresses her face. After a long glance, the two walk hand-in-hand toward the house and the shot fades to black.

The scene paints Maria as an innocent, eager and almost child-like student in the presence of her gentle admirer-teacher. Her gait is more playful than erotic, she is bright with smiles and laughter and a close-up of her face highlights a simple and unpretentious humbleness toward Mr. Bill's adoration. Moreover, her reflexive and uncritical repetition of his words signals a puerile acceptance of his offerings, and an indifference about their racial difference, posed here as two dialectical oppositions. The error Maria makes in her lesson is a simple one, but it poignantly reflects the question of racial difference between

her and her paramour. As the only scene in which race comes up explicitly between the two, its context is significant. There is no earnest discussion of difference, nor of its potential implications. Instead, Maria and Bill's difference is addressed as a superficial, epidermal difference – a simple question of color – and formulated in terms of straightforward definitions. The framing of the dialog as a language lesson acknowledges that their difference is also a cultural and national one, since language is a fundamental element of national and cultural identity. However, Maria's humorous parroting error signifies her indifference towards this framing, suggesting that she does not necessarily conceive of the categories as existing in antagonistic or even oppositional relation. Her "colorblindness" is thus further revealed to be also cultural and national in nature.

The reach of Maria's blindness is underscored during a doctor's visit in a later scene. The camera focuses on the doctor washing his hands and gazing at himself in the exam room mirror. He has just told Maria that she is pregnant, and from off camera, Maria asks him how sure he is. The doctor's voice sounds slightly patronizing and chastising when he responds simply by saying her name, but Maria insists, repeating in an exaggeratedly child-like whine, "Bitte, bitte, bitte, bitte!" "Na, schön," he quickly acquiesces, and as they continue talking, the camera shows Maria smiling, obviously thrilled by the news. She sits unclothed, though the camera never exposes her full body; a medium close-up shows her from the top of the chest, another medium shot shows her back while she sits on the exam table, her left side obscured by a privacy screen. These shots present Maria at her most vulnerable and emphasize her child-like eagerness and naivety, which are heavily contrasted with the cynicism of the doctor.

As the scene's dialog continues, it becomes surprisingly clear that Maria does not share her doctor's concern for the social and moral taboos that her pregnancy flaunts. "Hast du für den Jungen einen Vater?" the doctor asks. "Ja," Maria replies. "Er ist Schwarzer und mein Junge wird Hermann heißen." While the doctor's demeanor clearly signifies that he is concerned for the position Maria finds herself in, Maria remains light hearted and insouciant. Instead of fearing negative reactions from her fellow citizens, she expresses enthusiasm that she is going to have a family. One can easily find irony in the unconventional shape that her traditional family dream takes in reality. Her new family, composed of an unwed white German mother (presumed widow of a German soldier), a Black U.S. soldier and a biracial child, is a perversion of the conservative nuclear family that was so central to West German ideals. But Maria either refuses to see, or is incapable of seeing her dream in this light. For her, the specific conditions of her situation have no connection or significance to broader national concerns, and this is a reflection of her unwillingness or inability to consider her private experiences on a metaphorical or symbolic level.

The scene also creates a connection between its female protagonist and the Christ figure, as in *Angst essen Seele auf*. Maria bears the same name as Christ's virgin mother, an image that is associated with ideals of innocence, sacrifice and unconditional love. Like her biblical referent, Maria is with child, and an allusion to the story of the Immaculate Conception is reinforced by the image of the Christmas tree that decorates the doctor's office, and also by the doctor's inquiry as to whether or not Maria has a father for her baby, though the question is posed under vastly different circumstances.

Furthermore, Maria insists that her child will be a boy, and in a later scene, after her baby's death, she refers to him as a "little Black angel." While some interpret that reference as evidence that Maria voluntarily terminated her pregnancy,⁶ I read her statement in the context of the biblical allusion. Like the death of the savior, the death of Maria's little angel poignantly marks the death of the potential to move society beyond strict racial delineations that is embodied in the figure of the unborn mulatto messiah. The allusion can also be read as indicative of Fassbinder's critique of the failures of West German religiosity to inspire effective self-reflection about racist, classist and sexist ideologies.

The film further underscores Maria's idealistic optimism by way of contrasting it with the sentiments of the other women in the film. Her friend Betti and her coworker Vevi, who are her social and generational peers, are depicted as distant and logical thinkers who justify morally questionable behavior by citing necessity and survival, and who have sentiment for neither traditional gender roles nor love. Betti appears to accept that things are as they must be for now and that gender roles have no importance in a society focused on survival. Maria, however, is dissatisfied with such a fatalist stance and holds fast to her hope for the restoration of traditional gender roles. In this sense, Maria longs to uphold the continuity of conservative ideals from earlier times. Vevi, too, is far more cynical than Maria, and her bitterness is evident when she admonishes Maria for her naivety. Vevi's deep, sultry voice accentuates the depressed pessimism that dominates

⁶ Konrad Jarausch, for example, concludes that because the term "making little angels" was a common ___ for abortions, Maria's reference to her child as a little angel implies that she did not miscarry, but terminated her pregnancy.

her character, and as the voice that coaxes Maria to reconsider her idealistic stance, Vevi emphasizes the sense that Maria is, at her core, a woman who acts according to feeling, not reason. Even when Maria appears to act dispassionately and distanced from her emotion, her notion of love and her seemingly unfitting sentimentality for that ideal remain the primary forces that drive her choices.

The following dialog takes place in the bar where Maria works as a bartender and waitress. In the melancholy atmosphere populated primarily by Black GIs, Maria listens to her cynical co-worker, Vevi, as she chides Maria for her focused dedication to her absent husband and for her lofty romantic idea of love. She bluntly counters Maria's declaration that love is "both a feeling and a truth," and like the other women in the film, Vevi asserts the higher value of economics and emotionless logic in hard times. She presses Maria to think first of her survival and to consider seriously the benefits of a relationship that will enable her to meet her financial and material needs.

VEVI. Wenn du mich fragst –

MARIA. Ich frag dich ja doch nicht.

VEVI. Du bist hier und er ist nicht hier, dein Hermann. Zumindest ist er woanders. Möglicherweise ist er sogar schon tot. Die Liebe, das ist nur so ein Gefühl. Das ist keine Wahrheit.

MARIA. Natürlich ist die Liebe ein Gefühl. Und eine große Liebe ist ein großes Gefühl – und eine große Wahrheit

VEVI. Die Wahrheit! Die Wahrheit hat man im Bauch wenn man Hunger hat. Gefühle – Gefühle hat man zwischen den Beinen, und die sind wie ein Jucken wo man sich kratzt. Und für das hier [holds her hand over her stomach], da musst du satt sein im Bauch, und deinen haben, der hier ist, und nicht irgendwo oder nirgendwo ist...

At the start of this short but intense conversation, Maria holds fast to her romantic ideals. Her stance echoes earlier portrayals of her persistent conviction that her husband will eventually return. She routinely goes to the train station in anticipation of his arrival and

insists to non-believers that Hermann is still alive and will return safely to her. Despite having had only one night of matrimony with her husband, she continues to have faith in the ideal of their future together. She does not relinquish this hope until she is told he is dead, and even then, she refuses her new lover's marriage proposal with the explanation, "Verheiratet bin ich mit meinem Mann."

Love is Binding

When the dialog continues, however, the audience gets sight of the strange contradictions in Maria's thinking and in her later actions.

VEVI. Der da, dein Freund, der ist da. Und er hat kein Hunger; das sieht man. Und der hat ein Gefühl für dich.

MARIA. Was für ein Freund?

VEVI. Dein Bill, Schätzchen.

MARIA. Ich kenne keinen Bill.

VEVI. Verstehe schon. Du hast ihn noch nicht mal bemerkt.

MARIA. Wirklich nicht, Vevi.

VEVI. Der da. Gesund schaut er aus, und kräftig. Und schwarz ist er halt.

MARIA. Besser schwarz als braun. [she laughs] Braun.

VEVI. Bis du gekommen bist, war er ein ganz normaler Mensch und jetzt mit seinem Gefühl sitzt er wie gelähmt. Ausgefragt hat er mich über dich. Ein Loch im Bauch hat er mir gefragt. Schau mal – wie Willi Fritsch.⁷

MARIA. Wie sehe ich aus?

VEVI. Schön, warum?

MARIA. Weil ich gerade jetzt schön sein will. [approaches Bill] – Will you dance with me, Mr. Bill?

While Maria hesitates, there is a key moment when her thinking appears to adjust, and she opens up to the possibility of a different conception of romance. As the film's shot

⁷ Willi Fritsch was a well-known actor in Weimar cinema. His roles include a blackface performance in *Die Boxerbraut* (1926) when his character tries to redeem his masculinity by taking on the attributes of another character in the film, Fighting Bob. The role of Fighting Bob was played by Louis Brody, one of the most well-known Black German performers.

focuses on her body language, the audience can observe that the sudden change occurs when, for the second time, Maria utters the key word "braun." At this utterance, a sort of distanced and melancholic smile creeps onto her face, prodding the viewer to consider its significance and its irony.

That Bill is presented and perceived as an attractive, gentle and desirable man is already a challenge to the stereotype of dangerous and lascivious Black masculinity, although it does not deviate from the overall complex and contradictory image of the Black American occupation soldier. But there is more to be found in Maria's wordplay. One obvious referent of her words is the brown representatives of the nation: the *braune Partei* and the *braunen Soldaten*. In this historical context, Maria appears to be asserting that a Black man is preferable to a Nazi, and to the party's military representatives, those soldiers who have lost on the battlefields of Germany's war for domination. Such an assertion would align with postwar sentiments about the wounded masculinity of the German man discussed in the previous chapter, and it echoes Maria and her friend Betti's lamentation of the state of gender identities in an earlier scene.

As the two women wander between destroyed buildings down rubble-lined streets, they are both wearing crudely fashioned signs that advertise their search for their husbands. Like mobile milk cartons, the signs provide identifying information and a photograph.

MARIA. Sind auch keine Männer mehr heute.

BETTI. Was macht das für einen Unterschied, ob man Mann ist oder 'ne Frau, wenn man friert.

MARIA. Da muss sich was ändern.

BETTI. Was willst du denn ändern?

MARIA. Weiß nicht, aber irgendwas muss geschehen.

Maria expresses her longing for the security and comfort she finds gender conventions. Her insistence that things must change conveys her unshakable hope for the rehabilitation of German masculinity. Moreover, the specific preference for the color black over brown alludes to the so-called "double victimization" of the defeated white German male who is relegated to a status subordinate not only to foreign power, but also to his supposed racial inferior. The synecdoche of Maria's statement to Vevi suggests that for Maria, as for a number of white German women, the white German man is less desirable than a Black occupation soldier who is able to offer both economic stability and intimacy.

Hermann, then, whose absence ignites Maria and Vevi's conversation at the bar, is a more specific referent. He is an individual archetype of the "brown" German, a connection made explicit by his last name, Braun. There is obvious irony in this implication, since Maria's dedication throughout the film is foremost to her perpetually absent husband. For both Maria and the audience, Hermann Braun remains an idealized, mostly abstract figure whom the film's protagonist consistently chooses above all other men and against all reason. For example, the young boys making mischief on the street during Maria and Betti's disheartened walk bring the audience's attention to the illusory nature of Hermann's character. Upon seeing Maria's sign, one boy turns to the other and asks if he knows who Hermann Braun is; neither of them does. The film constructs a deep dissonance between Maria's desire and her reasoning. According to her conscious behavior, brown is better than Black – after all, she does kill Bill to rescue her husband's dignity. But her unguarded, almost whispered statement in the bar scene suggests that Maria recognizes, at least subconsciously, the failures of her absentee husband, and that

on some level, she knows that he will never truly be capable of offering her the dream of family she so desperately desires.

Finally, as the wife of Hermann Braun and carrier of his last name, Maria is herself the referent of her statement of judgment. She finds the humor in the pun once she has made the connection to her own new name, and it is possible that she recognizes her unintentional self-degradation. Importantly, her reflection is brought on by her accidental wordplay, a moment where her use of language enables her to see color both as a literal skin color and as a figurative symbol, and in that rare moment, to display this knowledge to the audience. In this scene, the multileveled interpretability of language plays a vital role in framing the protagonist's self-understanding and the audience's reception of her.

Bill, Maria's "Black Willi Fritsch," eventually becomes more than just an opportunity for Maria's survival. He presents her a chance to pursue her dream of family, and this is marked most clearly in a sequence of three scenes. The first occurs shortly after Betti's husband Willi informs Maria that Hermann has died at war. Seeking consolation, she hurries to the bar in search of Bill. Just before leaving, she dismisses her mother's attempt to console her stating, "Ich muss irgendwohin, wo ich allein sein kann." Her statement implicates Bill and the bar patrons as non-persons, or at least as persons to whom she has no meaningful connection and in whose company she can escape the emotional confusion that pervades her private sphere. Maria's flight to the bar is an attempt to isolate herself from meaningful intimacy, from her family and friends, as their connection to the loss of her "life-before" is at the moment too immediate and too painful for her to endure. But as the subsequent scene quickly reveals, in Bill, Maria finds a new,

partially fulfilling intimacy.

The camera tracks Maria when she enters the bar and draws attention to her intentional and direct path. The dancers part, creating an aisle for her, and their gazes turn to observe her as she passes. When she stops, the shot centers Maria standing forlorn at the end of the make-shift aisle, all faces watching her exchange with Bill. The soldier sits alone and appears in the left of the frame, the camera peering from behind his right side. A red-light candelabra hangs from the ceiling above the aisle, and in the rear field of the frame are three high arches and an American flag hanging crookedly from the middle arch that marks the start of the aisle down which Maria has just walked. She left to be alone, but Maria instead finds herself at her own symbolic wedding. She has lost one brown soldier, and in a moment of desperation and distress, she has found herself driven to another.



Figure 16: Dance with me? The crowd has made a path for Maria, who bows to Mr. Bill and asks him for a dance.

As the upbeat swing track (Glenn Miller's "In the Mood") ends, the mostly interracial dancing couples stop to watch as Maria asks Mr. Bill to dance. For a few brief seconds, the camera shows the couple alone at their smoky, dimly-lit altar. The scene cuts to a shot from behind Maria's left waist. Her arm and torso fill the right of the frame, and Bill is in the left, sitting alone with a pack of cigarettes, a lit candle and a drink. There are no patrons in the area of the bar behind him, which is more brightly lit than the dance floor and decorated with empty chairs, a piano on a raised stage and a few burning candles. A hanging lamp hovers above head, and with a slight smile, Bill stands and gently wraps his arms around Maria. Her arms hanging limply by her side, Maria lays her head on his shoulder and says plainly, "My man is dead." Bill's pained reaction to her words is visible on his face as he tightens his embrace, and he sways her gently as "Moonlight Serenade" begins to play. Their ceremonial union is marked not by a signed document and a nuptial kiss, but by the announcement of death and a subsequent comforting embrace. The camera slowly backs down the aisle, bringing the coincidental wedding guests back into the frame as they return their attention to their own dance partners. From his office, Maria's employer Bronski observes the couple dancing, and his displeasure is evident in his facial expression.



Figure 17: My man is dead. Mr. Bill embraces Maria and sways her to comfort her as she mourns the death of her husband.

As the film continues, the subsequent two scenes first reinforce this fantasy matrimony and then disrupt its idealization. The first depicts Maria's family as joyful, cared for and united, with Bill serving as a welcome provider. Outside the house, the family is spread out on the hillside enjoying a lavish picnic. Willi is lying with his head in Betti's lap while she enjoys a banana, Maria is leaning against a tree with her back to the camera, her mother is sitting on a blanket with parted legs hungrily enjoying a piece of bread and Mr. Bill is seated at the top of the stairs with a smile on his face. Her mouth full of food, Maria's mother thanks Mr. Bill for the "good Essen." Maria and Bill then head down the stairs, and the camera pulls back to show the window frame, revealing that the scene is being observed by a somewhat nervous Grandpa Berger. Only after Maria and Bill pass by does Grandpa Berger go out to join the others, and the camera pans to return to a shot of the family through the window. While Grandpa Berger enjoys a

cigarette and drinks from a wine bottle, Betti cynically wonders aloud if she, too, would be comforted as quickly as Maria. Willi says quietly, "Ich würde es mir wünschen, Betti," to which a surprised Betti replies, "Wie, bitte? Warum?" She is critical of the new romance that is the source of the idyll that the others (except perhaps Grandpa Berger) unquestioningly enjoy.

The camera then cuts to a shot of Bill's naked, sweat-covered torso being caressed by Maria's ringed left hand. As they consummating their symbolic wedding, they exchange compliments in sweet whispers and speak with honesty of their shared affection. Maria tells Bill that she is very happy at the moment, that she is always happy when she is with him, and he expresses the same feelings for her. The short scene is constructed in a montage of detail shots that linger on body parts as one or the other character's hand crosses the screen in a hungry caress. The audience hears the couple's quiet dialog, but the framing and editing of the shots creates a sense of disconnect, since we see neither the faces nor the mouths of the speakers. The objectifying visual effect is amplified by the off-screen audio effect, and while the objectification distances the audience from the characters, it also has the effect of distancing the characters from themselves. Maria in particular seems to stand apart from her actions, to observe her affection for Bill with a considerable degree of objectivity. Not until she responds to Bill's proposal does the camera show her face. "Nein, Bill. Ich werde diesen Ring nicht nehmen," she says quietly. The camera cuts to a close-up of the back of Bill's shoulder and the side of his face as he is seated upright to receive his rejection. "Ich hab' dich sehr lieb und ich will mit dir zusammen sein," Maria says from off camera. The shot cuts back

to a close-up of Maria's face as she lies on the bed and says, without looking in Bill's direction, "Aber ich werde dich nie heiraten. Verheiratet bin ich mit meinem Mann."

Despite her genuine affection for Bill, Maria insists on maintaining a differentiation between their actual romance and her idealized marriage to Hermann. In effect, she discards the possibility of attaining the ideal within the circumstances of her reality. Even in death, Hermann remains the abstracted object of her dedication. The absurd juxtaposition that Fassbinder constructs here is a commentary on the absurdity of marriage as an institution, and it is an acknowledgement of the dysfunction of Maria's romantic idealism. And in its visuals, the film gives blatant attention to a factor that remains unspoken, namely, that of race. With Maria's final statement, their sexual act is framed as adultery, made all the more salacious by its flaunting of racial and nationalist taboos. When the scene cuts to the doctor's visit and the announcement of Maria's pregnancy, the depth of this problematic becomes even clearer.

After her visit to the doctor, Maria excitedly tells Bill her good news. Back at the house, Bill is enthused and lifts Maria into his arms. "He! Ich bin nicht krank, ich bin schwanger!" she says as he carries her up the stairs. The scene cuts to show him carrying her across two thresholds as she says, "Man kann auch sagen, ich bin guter Hoffnung." "Das ist schön," Bill replies and repeats her words with careful and deliberate enunciation: "Ich bin guter Hoffnung." The nuptial act of Bill carrying Maria across the threshold, along with her calls for her mother and Grandfather Berger, restores their relationship to a proper familial realm. The scene cuts to a close-up of Bill in the doorway looking over his shoulder at Maria. His face is marked with insecurity, and the

stripe of a shadow covers his eyes as he asks Maria hesitantly, "Bist du guter Hoffnung?" A close-up of Maria is unmarked by shadows as she looks over her right shoulder and replies that she is. She walks out of the frame toward Bill, who says that he, too, is "guter Hoffnung." This choice of repetition positions the couple's shared joy about their unconventional family within the frame of the hope for the salvation and rebuilding of the nation. Unsurprisingly, their shared expectation is only fleeting, and Hermann's reappearance quickly destroys their hope of a shared future.

Bill and Maria two undress while debating what language to teach their future child. Maria will speak German with him, but Bill wants to teach him English so that he can later have a choice between German and American women. "Amerikanische Frauen sind hässlich, Maria declares, to which Bill replies, "Deutsche Männer sind hässlich." At that moment, Hermann appears in the slight opening of the doorway, but he remains unnoticed as he silently observes his wife with another man. Maria says that she knows "nur einen einzigen amerikanischen Mann, der schön ist," looks in Bill's eyes and kisses him. "Ich kenne nur eine einzige deutsche Frau, die schön ist," Bill assures her, and Maria appends his description of her, declaring herself "stark," "mutig" and finally, as "zärtlich." She contrasts the final adjective by vigorously pulling off Bill's pants and shoving him to the bed. Maria and Bill sit on the bed, she now clothed only in a black slip, and he fully naked. A moment passes before Bill looks up in surprise, and Maria turns to see Hermann in the door. The shot lingers in a medium close-up of Bill and Maria as the shock settles in, and a passing train subtly sounds in the background. "Hermann?" she whispers. A look of confused happiness shows on her face and she turns to Bill and says,

"Schau mal, Bill. Das ist der Hermann." Finally realizing that her husband is alive and home, Maria laughs giddily as she rushes to embrace him.

Upon reaching her husband, Maria is met with a violent slap and knocked to the ground, and Bill rushes to her side. Stepping over his wife's fallen body, Hermann rushes to grab a cigarette that he sees on the night table, lights it with shaky hands and sits silently on the bed as Bill and Maria watch him carefully from the floor. When Hermann eventually erupts in a rage, tearing at the bed covers, Bill rises to stop him. In a peculiar act of both compassion and protection, he restrains Hermann in an almost comforting embrace. The image of Bill embracing Hermann has an obvious erotic tone, and the disturbing implications drive Maria to crash a glass bottle over Bill's head, killing him. After Bill collapses, the scene cuts between close-ups of Maria and Hermann. Maria's teary-eyed face is lit in the reverse of Bill's; she is surrounded and covered by shadow, excepting a stripe of light across her eyes. And mirroring Maria's previous counter-position to Bill, Hermann stands in an unshadowed and soft natural light, looks over his shoulder and then faces the camera as his stoic expression slowly softens. Maria smiles and releases an audible breath of joyous relief.

Faced with the decision between the reality of her present relationship with Bill and the unknown ideal of her elusive marriage to Hermann, Maria chooses the ideal without hesitation. Like each of Maria's pivotal decisions, the dramatic violence by which she enacts her decision here is both cunning and damning. Fueled by her foolish romanticism and unwavering devotion to her husband (and all that he represents), Maria's passionate act of homicide both further emasculates and rehabilitates Hermann. Already

defeated in war and held as a prisoner by the Russians, the phantom soldier comes home to find his promise of family defeated as well. Fassbinder captures the racial, sexual and national elements in the calculated visuals of the scene's final moments. The German soldier, unsure where to direct the rage of his humiliation, cowers in the gentle grip of the naked Black American soldier whom he has just witnessed undressing his wife, and who, unbeknownst to him, has also proposed to and impregnated her. The emasculation of Germany culminates in the symbolic rape of Hermann by an altruistic Black soldier. Fassbinder highlights the artifice of his allegorical framing with lengthy stylized shots and exaggerated silent gazes. Committed to the restoration of the old social structures, Maria rescues her husband and kills his "rapist," thereby proving her loyalty and offering him the newly vacant role of her lover, provider and protector. But as the trial scene shows, her act precludes her dream of happily ever after.



Figure 18: A Daming Decision. Maria kills Bill with a blow to the head to save her husband's pride.

Judging Maria

The final scene I would like to focus on is Maria's trial for Bill's homicide. The scene signifies the end of Maria's actual happiness as she answers to charges for killing the man with whom she was "always happy." Bill's death is the rupture that thrusts Maria permanently into the world of unattainable desires. Having sacrificed her reality for the sake of her preferred myth, Maria reignites her commitment to the ideal of Hermann. But when Hermann steps in to take responsibility for Bill's murder, Maria is sentenced to a perpetual pursuit of nonpareil.

The scene opens with the audio of Maria's interrogation and a close-up of an enormous American flag from which several stars are loosened. As the camera tilts down, the focus shifts closer to show the boots and lightly blood-stained uniform of Mr. Bill exhibited on a table, reminding Maria and the viewer of the naked, Black body from the previous scene. Observed by a small, seated audience, Maria stands before a rickety, low-set judge's table in a make-shift U.S. military courtroom. Fassbinder continues this scene in the stylized editing of the previous confrontation scene, often focusing on a figure's response to the dialog that runs throughout. In his analysis of the historical subtext of this scene, Matthias Uecker contends that though Maria's lover and caretaker was a Black GI, the power struggle and differences to which the film alludes in the trial and preceding murder scenes are "national (rather than racial) differences" (53). Ingeborg Majer O'Sickey similarly interprets the courtroom scene as carrying connotations of the Nuremberg trials, where linguistic interpretation and national identities played a significant role. However, O'Sickey finds that the Brechtian and melodramatic

construction of the scene "make[s] explicit Bill's absence and the presence of racism" (19).



Figure 19: Evidence of a crime. Mr. Bill's clothes are displayed as evidence during Maria's trial for his murder.

I am in agreement with this aspect of O'Sickey's analysis. The apparent absence, yet persistent and powerful presence of race as a central concern in this military trial is yet another example of how Fassbinder depicts both Maria's "colorblindness" and its contradiction with the social mores that dominate her surroundings. The military interrogators build their case against Maria by focusing on her job, the type of bar in which she works and the clientele who frequent the bar. As the questioning continues, the German interpreter appends the American prosecutor's wording, and calls her as an *Animierdame*: "So darf man ihren Beruf doch bezeichnen, oder?" he asks snidely. Aware of the liberty the interpreter has taken, Maria notes the disdain in his demeanor and responds with a slight laugh. In its literal definition, the term refers to women who work

in night clubs as socializers to create an attractive and entertaining environment that will attract patrons and motivate them to stay longer and spend more money. Unsurprisingly, the job is often associated or conflated with prostitution, and it is this ambiguity, or rather, this connotation, that the German interpreter aims to put into the minds of the observers. The prosecution continues its vilification of Maria, painting her as a traitorous and materially driven *Fräulein* or *Schokoladenhure* who traded her affection – referred to as "services" (*Dienste*) – for silk stockings and chocolate while her husband sat in captivity. A cut to a close-up of Maria's mother in her coordinating fur hat and coat transfers the court's accusation of materialism onto Maria's family and friends. The camera swish pans to individual close-ups of Willi; Betti, who is sitting apart from her husband; and Vevi before finally returning to Maria's mother. The score of dramatic minor chords that accompanies the shot is conspicuous in the midst of an otherwise score-less scene, and it calls the audience's attention to the weight of Fassbinder's criticism of postwar Germany's hypocritical sexual exploitation of young women.

The sincerity of Maria's affection for Bill is reasserted with she interjects, "Ich hab' ihn lieb gehabt." The court cynically replies that she "seems to have a big heart" and searches in the court transcript for an earlier statement she made. "Sie brauchen gar nicht nachzusehen," she says in a defeated voice. "Sie würden den Unterschied sowieso nicht verstehen." With deliberate and clear enunciation, Maria makes an unsuccessful attempt to clarify: "Den Bill hab' ich lieb gehabt. Und ich liebe meinen Mann." Her statement is translated to the court as "She loved Bill, and she loves her husband," with emphasis on the difference in tense. The ambiguity of the English "love" makes it difficult to translate

the nuanced difference between "lieb haben" and "lieben." Maria's love for Bill can be understood as both tender fondness and romantic affection, and her statement can be loosely translated as "Bill was very dear to me." Because "lieb haben" can be used in the context of both sexual and platonic relationships, it is both broader and more ambiguous than "lieben." By her use of the verb "lieben," Maria connotes her feelings for Hermann with the idea of cherishing, an unambiguous romantic love that, in the hierarchy of affection, is superior to her love for Bill.

While this differentiation remains lost on the court, a shot of Hermann's visceral reaction shows that he has understood Maria's intended delineation. Hermann convulses as if he is about to vomit, but appears instead to be gagging an impulse to cry out. He quickly collects himself, and after a moment, he steps from behind his hiding place in the back of the courtroom and tells the court that it can stop the hearing. "Ich habe den Neger getötet," he announces. Uecker attributes Hermann's sacrificial act to a unique connection between husband and wife. According to him, it is this deep mutual understanding that enables Hermann alone to understand the fine differentiation in Maria's statement (53). Though publically declared, Maria's explanation is only effective as a private message to her husband. Hermann is now able to fully comprehend the nature of Maria's love and sacrifice for him. But Fassbinder rarely presents clear mechanisms of causation and motivation, and I would argue that there is another factor that should not be ignored.



Figure 20: For the love of Maria. Hermann reacts as Maria distinguishes her respective "loves" for her husband and Bill before the court.

Prior to Hermann's confession, Bill's race had yet to be explicitly mentioned in the hearing. In the scene's early moments, the court attempts to get Maria to state that the clientele at the Moonlight Bar where she worked is predominantly Black. She is asked a leading question in which her workplace is described as a "very special" (*ganz besondere*) bar. To the prosecutor's dissatisfaction, but not to his surprise, Maria simply shrugs and says that it was "just a bar, like any other." Not wanting to take the responsibility of making the point himself, the prosecutor sends an officer to retrieve the bar owner, Mr. Bronski, while the questioning continues. As Hermann recovers from Maria's proclamation of love, the camera cuts to a shot of Mr. Bronski. Bronski is the prosecution's key to delivering, in grand fashion, the fatal blow to Maria's defense – the fact that his bar was patronized predominantly by Black soldiers – and he is being brought up from a lower floor in an open service elevator. The factor of race in the case

against Maria is literally and figuratively rising from below the surface of the trial.

Hermann's confession is precisely timed; he stops the trial just after the court calls Mr. Bronski to the stand, but before the bar owner is allowed to speak.

Unsurprisingly, Hermann's self-sacrifice is also an ironic act of violence toward his wife. He takes responsibility for her crime, and though he stops the court from defiling her reputation, he himself "outs" the racial identity of her lover to the court in his confession. His choice of phrase – "Ich habe *den Neger* getötet" – punishes Maria for her infidelity by signifying her affair as *Rassenschande* and marking her as defiled. He has assured that she is a woman who is no longer desirable to other German men.

Furthermore, he frames his falsely confessed crime as a passionate act fueled not only by masculine sexual pride and national honor, but also by racial integrity. Uecker's assessment is not wholly incorrect; the national symbols in this scene and the tensions between the U.S. occupiers and German citizens are at the visual forefront. But Fassbinder maintains a deliberate disconnect between the visible artifice of the trial and the reality of its racial undertones, giving race a palpable presence throughout the scene. As is typical of Fassbinder's critical style, race does not stand as the lone focal point, but instead is woven into other elements of his story, ever attached to the many other issues with which it is inextricably bound.

The Demands of Ideals and the Dangers of Mythology

Fassbinder portrays the trappings that restrict both Maria and Emmi's pursuit of happiness as the result of the binaries that structure their social environments. Ultimately, Maria is caught between the ideal and the actual, and Emmi is caught between personal

desire and social imperative. Their interracial romances, formulated as complex and crossing multiple binary boundaries, highlight the strictly defined expectations imposed on them by their culture. These "inter-social" relationships – crossing the social boundaries of race, class, nationality, and in the case of Emmi, also age – present love as both a restriction and an opportunity in the face of social "responsibility." Emmi's love for Ali awakens in her the possibility of rejecting the restrictive and demanding role of the asexual "social elder" and widowed mother. Maria's love for Bill demonstrates this possibility even more clearly. Her only happiness is bound to her relationship to Bill, a figurative space within which she is, at least according to her naïve perception, free from the limitations of conservative mores and yet simultaneously potentially able to satisfy her own longing for traditional gender roles and family life.

However, Fassbinder presents these peculiar loves themselves also as instantiation of the double bind, and while Fassbinder's double binds need not always function only constrictively, the double bind of love in particular almost always creates an impossible situation in his films. In choosing to love the particularly "off-limit" Others Ali and Bill, both women are able to "exteriorize" their internal selves, but they also "open themselves to [another] demand, one that is by necessity, unfulfillable, impossible" (Elsaesser 69). Elsaesser notes the allegorical possibilities that these "impossible love stories" present:

[B]ecause love has the structure of a response to a demand that it can never fill, it generates not only stories ..., but it can make these stories partake of history, understood as society's particular, historically determined ways of 'calling' upon its citizens as 'subjects'.

In this sense, the characters and stories that Fassbinder creates in *Angst essen Seele auf* and *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* are both reflections and critiques of the postwar national

narrative. Structured by a whitewashing of its history and racist ideology, the reconstruction of the new Federal Republic relied on the reinstatement of conservative social roles and attempted to erase the reality of the continuity between its "new" order and the structures of its colonial and Nazi pasts. This effort included a rhetorical dedication to establish a de-Nazified, "post-racial" state. Through his portrayal of the inability of Fassbinder's protagonists to effectively challenge the double binds of their national narratives, Fassbinder effectively illuminates the hypocrisy and the inescapability of such a framing and calls attention to the damaging effects of Germany's national mythology.

4. Transforming Silence into Language: Self-Narration, Self-Determination and "Community"

In this final chapter, I will be exploring what could be seen as the fractured multiple identities that constitute Afro-German experiences. By this, I mean the multiple positions that Afro-Germans occupy as multi-ethnic citizens of the Federal Republic. The shifting and newly varied narratives about Afro-Germans are the outcome of changes in history and culture within the larger German landscape of the 1980s and forward. As Black Germans and other members of the African Diaspora living in Germany have begun to write and publish their personal stories, a new counter-discourse of national identity is being forged.

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how Fassbinder's depiction of romances between Blacks and whites resituates questions of race as essential to German national identity. In light of the rhetoric about a post-racial German society, Fassbinder's films amplify the restrictions of the double binds in the postwar Republic. In this chapter, I continue this line of argument by analyzing the discourse both in film and literature that emerges as a consequence of the New Black German Movement of the 1980s and 90s. I argue that as a result of the silencing of Black experiences and the omission of Blacks from the record of German history, Black filmmakers take up strategies from the Afro-German literary movement to assert their right to self-determination and rewrite themselves into German civil society. The politics and the strategies of resistance in Black German literature and film can be linked to strategies within the Black American tradition, and W.E.B. Du Bois' concept double-consciousness and Audre Lorde's

emphasis on multifaceted identification and poetic expression in particular help frame my discussion of Black German identity development. The following pages look to explore that history and recover the legacy of Audre Lorde and the women founders of the New Black German Movement.

Contemporary Black writers and filmmakers are offering new figures with whom other Blacks, who have often lived without communities of color, can identify, and they evoke the promise of a community bonded by experiences shared among people of color. Whether through literature or film, white Germany is being presented with new perspectives that challenge mainstream preconceptions about the experiences of minorities in Germany and the myth of Germany's post-racial, progressive liberalism. My inquiry into the problems of German identity politics that confront contemporary Afro-Germans is marked by the concept of "duplicity." As I have shown throughout the previous chapters, duplicity refers to the broad complex character of German identity. This complexity is defined by the conundrum of racial and ethnic national constructs that define the structure of a dominant white society that relies on those structures at the same time that it resists the acknowledgement of their existence. As I have noted, this problematic hinders attempts to combat racism and discrimination. This duplicity also marks the structure of the mutually exclusive African/German binary that restricts the development and recognition of Black German identity.

There has been a marked increase in Black German film productions since reunification, many of which are documentary in nature. Because documentary films require a very different mode of analysis, I have limited my study to works of fiction in

order to continue the analytic mode of the rest of the dissertation. Additionally, because the rise of Black German consciousness was fueled primarily by a community of Black female voices, I have chosen two films by women directors and with female protagonists. The first film I will discuss is Angelica Maccarone's *Alles wird gut* (1998), a film that Maccarone co-wrote with Afro-German and historian Fatima El-Tayeb. The comedy depicts the love that develops between two Afro-German women as they grapple with their satirically exaggerated and contrasting personalities. The two protagonists, Kim and Nabou, and their friends offer new dimension to previously static representations of people of color. Branwen Okpako's *Tal der Ahnungslosen* (2003) depicts an Afro-German detective who, upon returning to her birthplace in former East Germany, begins excavating her family history in an attempt to mend the traumas brought on by her splintered identity. Both films reflect the tactics developed in the New Black German Movement, demonstrating the movement's significance for Black German consciousness and implicating the structures that have shaped its modes of resistance.

The Failure of German Multiculturalism and the Challenges of Diaspora

The 1980s and 90s were a time of decreasing political stability and increased questioning of political, social and economic ideologies. The myths of both Germanys had become reliant on contrasting ideologies, but when the two Germanys reunited, their oppositionally formulated ideologies were no longer sufficient to define a distinct national identity for the new Federal Republic. Amidst the uncertainty of the "new" Germany's political and economic future, both politicians and citizens began to reach

back to German identity structures that pre-dated the postwar division, and this meant a return to conceptions of German-ness founded in nationalist (ethnic and racial) ideologies.

The German reunification in 1989/1990 was accompanied by an increase in racially motivated attacks on visible minorities.¹ The crimes raised concerns in Germany and abroad as to whether these acts were indicative of a racism specific to and necessarily tied to German national sentiments. It has commonly been maintained that such fears are misplaced, and the failure of nationalist parties to gain representation in the German parliament as well as the more popular extremist neo-conservative and national movements in other European countries are often used as evidence of Germany's general liberalism. While I agree that couching racist acts in terms of wide-spread nationalism is uncritical, the attribution of ethnically and racially motivated prejudices and acts of violence to a "skin-head milieu...confined to dispirited and unemployed youths, supported by some incorrigible adults" (Jarausch, *After Unity* 57) is contradictory, and it

¹ In his 2010 article in *ZEIT*, Johannes Radke discusses the problems with the state's maintained statistics on hate crimes and offers alternative statistics from the newspaper's investigation. He writes: "Mit der Wiedervereinigung ging eine drastische Zunahme rechter Kriminalität einher. 63 Menschen sind nach Auskunft der Bundesregierung in Deutschland seit 1990 durch politisch rechts motivierte Gewalttaten ums Leben gekommen – die meisten von ihnen in den ersten zehn Jahren nach der Wende.

Und tatsächlich liegen die Fälle, die Schlagzeilen machten, scheinbar weit zurück: der Brandanschlag auf die Häuser zweier türkischer Familien in Mölln im November 1992, bei dem drei Menschen starben; der Mordanschlag von Solingen im Mai 1993, dem fünf Menschen zum Opfer fielen; die Pogrome von Hoyerswerda und Rostock-Lichtenhagen 1991 und 1992. Doch die rechte Gewalt ist seither nicht verschwunden, nur weil viele Medien Übergriffe kaum noch vermelden. Und auch die Zahl der Todesfälle ist längst nicht so stark zurückgegangen, wie es die offizielle Statistik vermuten lässt.

Nach Recherchen der *ZEIT* und des Berliner *Tagesspiegels* starben zwischen 1990 und 2011 insgesamt mindestens 149 Menschen durch rechte Gewalt – etwa dreimal so viele, wie staatliche Stellen ausweisen.... Bei 12 weiteren Toten liegt der Verdacht einer rechten Gewalttat zwar nahe, letzte Zweifel konnten aber nicht ausgeräumt werden."

is an over-simplification that dismisses the real social and political concerns. These concerns have very real consequences for the safety and legal rights of minorities in Germany, and they must be part of the conversation about German social practices and structures. By relegating racially motivated behavior to the margins, such popular sentiments, evident for example in the language of the German press, contribute to the shutting down of conversations about the sources and effects of what has inaccurately been termed *Ausländerfeindlichkeit*. As Noah Sow asserts in her book *Deutschland Schwarz Weiß*:

Eine Tat ist ausländerfeindlich motiviert, wenn das Opfer keinen deutschen Pass besitzt und wenn erkennbar und explizit die nicht deutsche Kultur des Angegriffenen als Motivation für den Übergriff benutzt wird. Dies gilt etwa für Opfer, die weiß sind, oder für Übergriffe auf nicht deutsche europäische Kulturveranstaltungen.

Eine Tat wird nicht als ausländerfeindlich bezeichnet, wenn nicht die spezifische nicht deutsche Kultur der Grund des Übergriffes ist, sondern das Aussehen des Angegriffenen, etwa im Fall Ermzas M. in Potsdam.

Ausländerfeindlichkeit (sic) und Rassismus sind nicht gleichzusetzen, und sie sind *keine* Synonyme. (31)

The uncritical use of the German term for xenophobia in the media and in politics has endorsed and encouraged a conflation of separate, but related issues, a practice that fails to acknowledge the interrelatedness between visible, sensational, and "exceptional" behaviors, and the more subtle prejudices, misconceptions, and actions that persist in German society. It mistakenly identifies all victims of racially motivated hate crimes as victims of xenophobic hate crimes, regardless of their citizenship or nationality. In this way, the designation reinforces the conflation of epidermal and national difference and of racial and cultural identification.

The atmosphere of new nationalism and increased racism came at a moment in Germany's history when a number of key cultural and political shifts were underway. This turn occurred at the intersection of post-68 West German criticism that was concerned with a new politics of "multiculturalism" (one fraught, of course, with sustained problems), feminism, Green and One World movements and a continuation of the 1960s and 70s fascination with Black American culture (Göttsche 83). A younger generation of activists, artists and thinkers continued to push for more critical engagement, not only with Germany's fascist (and eventually also with its imperialist, colonial) past, but also with its contemporary political and social actions and cultural productions. Guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*), recruited to the German workforce beginning in the 1950s, remained in Germany and established families, and the noticeable changes in the population that resulted from recruitment programs and new migration patterns became the focus of increasingly intense and controversial political attention.

Germany's attempt to shift to a multiculturalist state model in the 1980s and 90s was motivated in large part by the persistent realities of a growing migrant population, with Turkish migrants and Turkish-German citizens at the center of what was framed as the *Ausländerproblem*. The Turkish population in Germany makes up the quantitative majority of the nation's minorities, and in the context of contemporary European identity politics, Turkey symbolizes an extreme cultural Other determined by Muslim cultural traditions that are deemed by the dominant culture to be wholly counter to those of (white) Judeo-Christianity. As such, in the multiculturalist state project, "Turks in Germany bear the force of academic, administrative, legal, and sometimes violent exclusion while they

are at the same time appropriated for a kind of conflated, imaginary otherness" (Adelson 305–6) that is conceptually related to Asia and Africa and necessarily incompatible with Germany.

The increase in violence and discrimination against Turkish-Germans and other people of color in Germany was met with antiracism campaigns from the state and a number of politically engaged groups, and they have varied in focus and approach. As previously noted, the linguistic restraints that have remained since the postwar era have imposed boundaries on the public discussion of racism, and those restrictions have had dire consequences at the individual, community and state levels. Because the debate has been shaped by the absence of the terms *Rasse* and *Rassismus*, both those who actively or passively maintain white supremacy in Germany and those who fight against them have worked primarily within a language that has relied heavily on terms such as *Fremden-* or *Ausländerfeindlichkeit*, *Ethnie* and *Kultur*. In abandoning, or rather, not adopting practices theoretically based in antiracism, the purported goal of a multiculturalist approach is to avoid the trappings of universalizing antiracist theories and the biological implications of race. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. is among many who criticize popular usage of "race" and related terms and its reification of natural difference when he writes, "To do so is to engage in a pernicious act of language, one which exacerbates the complex problem of cultural or ethnic difference, rather than to assuage or redress it" (5). But "race" can have a productive function in social and political discourse, even in Germany after the Holocaust.

Germany's history has allowed for and encouraged the continued conflation of

race and culture. In mainstream discourse, a significant shift has been made from discussing characteristics as racial to discussing them as cultural. Unlike in the U.S., racial categorization by the government is not practiced in Germany. (This is one reason estimations of the numbers on Black and other minority populations vary so widely.) By making the question one of culture, as opposed to one of ethnicity, Germany, along with other societies, sidesteps issues that could be interpreted as reminiscent of their National Socialist history:

Recoiling from the prospect of once again (or still) constructing "race" as a category in German life after the history of the Jewish Holocaust, an acknowledgement of German society as multiracial is a hard pill for white Germans to swallow. But as it is used in writing and in speech most often in its slang, therefore diminished, form, the concept of a "*multikulti*" German society is laden with the grudge of political correctness and the lack of a sincere embrace by mainstream society. (Adams 225)

This German concept of *multikulturell* is not one of integration, and as Adams makes clear, it is often superficially understood. "Disparate" cultures are not considered to be integrable, and instead, cultural diversity is viewed simplistically, primarily as something which can "spice up" German existence and as the foreignness that is automatically and necessarily exotic and defined as antithetical to that which is German. "Culture" becomes code for the taboo category of "race."

This compounding of race with culture has been an increasingly important issue in Germany as the political *Leitkulturdebatte* regarding immigration and integration ensues. It is a debate that, while focused primarily on the Turkish population, is very applicable to the situation of Black Germans. Hartwig Pautz describes the role of *Leitkultur* in this conflation, a theme of an inevitable "clash of civilizations" that

resembles theories asserted by political scientist Samuel P. Huntington:²

The *Leitkultur's* concept of culture was forged on the belief that different, sequestered cultures should remain separate in order to retain their identities and avoid otherwise inevitable cultural conflicts. The notion of 'race' was replaced by that of culture, as cultural belonging was essentialised. Culture, as a vague and broadly interpretable changing cluster of meanings, was able to perform the same exclusionary function as race. (Pautz 40)

The practices of essentializing Africanness and culturally excluding Blacks by identifying them as African create a discourse structure that is problematic for Blacks born and culturally located in Germany. Despite being German, they continue to be erased from the conception of Germany and forced to respond to a discourse that does not directly address them.³

In practice, these newer approaches tend to move race and its biological association from the center of the discourse only to replace them with terms that obfuscate the continuities of past racist ideologies and structures in contemporary political and social struggles. Not only that, these terms are frequently applied in a manner that belies that they share the same essence and social consequences as racism. The historically constituted compulsion to disregard race as a category based on the

² In his 1993 article "The Clash of Civilizations?" in *Foreign Affairs* and subsequent book, Huntington posits that modern conflict is a cultural phenomenon, shaped fundamentally by the conflict between civilizations and not by ideological or economic concerns. He states that outside of Germany, civilization is conceived of as a cultural entity, and understands civilizations as non-political entities. He divides the contemporary world into the following major civilizations: Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Western and Latin America and posits African as a "possible" civilization, noting that that most scholars "do not recognize a distinct African civilization." North Africa is considered to belong primarily to Islamic civilization, while southern African countries are described as possessing "multifragmented European culture" (47). For more details, see ch. 2 in: Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Touchstone, 1997.

³ See Wright, "Others-from-Within."

fallacy of its biological justification ignores perhaps the most essential aspect of racist ideology: that scientific "evidence" did not provide the *basis* for racism, but the *justification* for the exploitation, oppression and enslavement of nonwhites that were already in practice prior to the full development of a phenotypic classification system.

While cultural and ethnic approaches attempt to deal more complexly with cultural and ethnic differences and their significance in ideologies of hierarchy, they do not and cannot attend to differences that are not ones of culture and ethnicity, but in fact of biology, namely, epidermal difference. As Paul Gilroy observes:

Accepting that skin 'colour', however meaningless we know it to be, has a strictly limited basis in biology, open up the possibility of engaging with theories of signification which can highlight the elasticity and the emptiness of 'racial' signifiers as well as the ideological work which has to be done in order to turn them into signifiers in the first place. This perspective underscores the definition of 'race' as an open political category, for it is struggle that determines which definition of 'race' will prevail and the conditions under which they will endure or wither away. (*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* 36)

For this reason among others, there must be room for variation and contextualization in any universal movement against racist violence and discriminatory practices. While we are undoubtedly in desperate need of theoretical tools that force us think critically about the intersections and intricacies of difference, we are also in need of practices that attend to the realities of the powerful metaphors and symbolism assigned to biologically determined phenotypic traits such as skin color and hair type and the repercussions of those metaphors for individuals and communities, regardless of their lived and expressed cultural and ethnic identities. This is not at all to suggest that we retreat from multiculturalism and related theories and practices and return to a discourse framed

primarily in terms of race; instead, it is a question about how particular positions of inquiry condition our perspectives, determine our blind spots and limit the tools we design.

As we have been learning from the Black Feminist movement, to affect discourses of difference, we must work from multiple positions, listen to multiple voices and utilize tools developed by multiple approaches to build upon common concepts that currently create many of the same elisions as the concept of race. That is, indeed, the great challenge of the work of diasporic community building and solidarity movements. Theories of diaspora continue to be a contentious debate within cultural studies. As noted previously, the concept of a unified global community can ignore or erase differences that are determined by cultural, experiential, national and historical circumstances, while focusing on history and postulating "proper" diasporic identities can trap diaspora within modern logical structures that found the modern power formations that Lawrence Grossberg writes against (Grossberg).⁴ But constituted as an identification based in structures of affiliation and political solidarity, and as a community of protection and positive identification, diaspora has the potential to transcend modern logical structures and serve a "politics of ethnicity" that does not merely tolerate, but is based in, difference

⁴ According to Grossberg, the power structures of the modern world are founded by three modern logical structures: difference, individuality and temporality. These structures allow the assumption of a necessary relationship between culture and identification, which Grossberg contends is a false assumption. He asserts that these modern logical structures must be transcended to disrupt the dominant power structure and proposes an alternative logical structure framed by otherness, productivity and spatiality. According to Grossberg, the category of otherness allows for more effective theorizing of multiple differences. He further suggests that the concept of diaspora avoids many problems of the modern logical structure because it is a political identity that is based in structures of affiliation rather than focused primarily on concepts of fragmentation and hybridity.

(Hall).

While it may seem natural that members of the African Diaspora see a link between them beyond one based on the African continent, issues of culture that have been raised call this assumption into question. Camp emphasizes the importance of the Black German history within the larger considerations of African Diaspora:

[W]hat marks this group 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. As a result, black Germans have never regarded a sense of relation and belonging among themselves or to other black communities as self-evident. ("Diaspora Space" 95)

There is a sense that all Blacks live under circumstances in which dark skin color and its associations result in discrimination, persecution, exploitation or oppression of some kind. To a group of people who had been living without a sense of community for some time, solidarity with an international community has much to offer. As Audre Lorde commented in her preface to both the English and German editions of *Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte*, it is productive for members of the African Diaspora to take the time to understand how their struggles are similar, to learn from one another, and to assist each other in their struggles worldwide. Leroy Hopkins, whose research includes work on Afro-Germans and the teaching of multicultural literature in the German classroom, proposes that internationality has offered a means for Afro-Germans "to redefine German identity not in terms of a specific national setting of cultural traditions but as a feature of a development that has occurred on a global scale" (188).

It is this internationality that has provided a body of resources for a group that

only recently has begun establishing a collective history. These resources have developed to foster a culture with which Black Germans may not identify in the same way that some other diaspora groups may. Similarities in social circumstances, or political ideology should not be so easily translated as cultural, and the cultural connotations that are often attached to the "Afro-" prefix could be largely irrelevant for many Black Germans. Black Germans must still do the work of defining Blackness in a manner that is *culturally* relevant to their particular experiences context in Germany. Books like *Farbe Bekennen*, *Daheim Unterwegs: Ein deutsches Leben* (the autobiography of the Afro-German artist, counselor and activist Ika Hügel-Marshall) and poetry collections from May Ayim, and host of other essays on the history of Blacks in Germany are attempting to establish the shared cultural history that can continue to provide a cultural resource pool for other Black Germans.

Refashioning Black German and Diasporic Identities: Community, Self-determination and Self-narration

In November 1985, the first organized national meeting of Black Germans was held in Wiesbaden. The meeting, organized by the newly formed *Initiative Schwarze Deutsche* (ISD – Initiative of Black Germans), was intended to provide an opportunity for attendees to move out of the isolation that had long characterized their experiences. Over the years, it has become an annual tradition for many Black Germans and Blacks living in Germany. The first *Bundestreffen* enabled the forging of new personal connections and was a major impetus for the growth of the movement and the establishment of networks and communities at the national, regional and local levels. A number of new publications

emerged, such as the Berlin based quarterly *afro look* and the magazine *Afrekete*,⁵ published by ADEFRA. The organization ADEFRA developed parallel to ISD as a forum specifically for Black women, and its name is an acronym for "Afro-deutsche Frauen" (Afro-German women). Its founders sought to establish a collective space in which they could continue discussions motivated by Audre Lorde about racism, sexism and homophobia, and where they could exchange ideas and opinions about the 1986 publication *Farbe bekennen*. These various initiatives fueled the growth of the New Black German Movement, whose collective endeavor is reflected in ISD's expressed mission to represent the interests of Black people in Germany; foster Black consciousness; oppose racism and organize and support the networking of Black people, organizations and projects.

More than that, this term served as a declaration of solidarity with other Blacks on an international scale.

Adopting in the mid-1980s the term "Afro-German," modeled obviously on "Afro-American," which has not only racial but also ethnic, that is, cultural and social, political, and historical connotations, those Black Germans were simultaneously connecting themselves with the rest of the "Afro-" world, the African diaspora. (Adams 213)

Adams sees the Afro-German / African American alliance as one that functions beyond the reach of the social and the political. As an identity that draws on cultural and historical exchange and narrative, the international positioning of the Afro-German identification can have meaningful implications for both the Black Diaspora and the image of Blackness in Germany.

⁵ "Afrekete" is ...

The ISD eventually changed its name to the more inclusive *Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland* (Initiative of Black People in Germany); however, the movement has from its inception understood itself as part of an international struggle. ISD changed its name to express the practiced solidarity among Black Germans – those with German citizenship – and Black non-citizens residing in Germany. The international make up of the Black community and the connection that many Black Germans feel with their non-German heritages have situated the movement within the "Black Atlantic" and the broader struggles of Black people worldwide. Accordingly, the movement, which is founded in Black feminist politics, has remained involved in causes international in nature, including championing rights for asylum seekers and building political and social coalitions with Black communities in other European countries. The book *Farbe bekennen*, for example, encouraged the building of international bridges and included a piece on the Afro-Dutch group Sister Outsider and also listed the group's contact information. As noted previously, the diasporic aspects of the movement present challenges, but they have also created opportunities for Black Germans, Black Europeans and the Black diaspora more broadly to amplify their political voices and participate in a wider exchange of ideas regarding strategies of resistance and self-determination.

In 2010, the ISD celebrated twenty-five years of continuous political and social activism. The year also marked the twenty-fifth consecutive *Bundestreffen*. Held in Helmarshausen, Hessen, the weekend offered attendees a variety of workshops, seminars, performances, film screenings, readings and parties. Moreover, it offered them a space within which to debate issues and exchange ideas and experiences, to network, to nurture

relationships and simply to be in a self-determined space. Today, the movement continues its struggle, taking on legal rights issues like racial profiling and restrictions on migration; compiling and distributing information about Black German and diaspora history and culture; combating racist representations in news and entertainment media; challenging the repression of German colonial history; and aiding networking efforts in the African diaspora. It has also expanded by building alliances with other marginalized groups in Germany, including Turkish-Germans, Roma and Sinti and Asian-Germans. The increasingly common use of the English language term "People of Color" within German communities, introduced by way of critical engagement with U.S., British and French cultural studies, is intended to reflect this more broadly conceived anti-racist coalition.⁶ This multicultural collaboration is exemplified in recent scholarship on racism

⁶ Jasmin Dean describes People of Color in the German context as follows: "In den Bereich der Politischen Bildung wurde der Ausdruck People of Color von der Projektinitiative *HAKRA* eingeführt, die Empowerment-Workshops für Menschen mit Rassismuserfahrungen anbietet. Die Beziehung People of Color etablierte sich nach und nach in ihrer Zielgruppendefinition, weil sich herausstellte, dass andere Formulierungen wie ›Menschen nicht-deutscher Herkunft‹ oder ›Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund‹ nicht ausreichten. Insbesondere Menschen ohne direkte Migrationserfahrung und/oder mit einem deutschen Elternteil hatten sich dadurch häufig nicht angesprochen gefühlt.... Der Begriff wird hier nicht in Konkurrenz, sondern ergänzend zur politischen Kategorie Schwarz verwendet, um diese auszudifferenzieren und »Myriaden von

in Germany in a number of works, including *Ethnische Minderheiten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Ein Lexikon* (1995), *Entfernte Verbindungen: Rassismus, Antisemitismus, Klassenunterdrückung* (1999), *re/visionen: Postkoloniale Perspektiven von People of Color auf Rassismus, Kulturpolitik und Widerstand in Deutschland* (2007), *After the Nazi Racial State: Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe* (2009) and *Wie Rassismus aus Wörtern spricht: (K)Erben des Kolonialismus im Wissensarchiv deutsche Sprache: Ein kritisches Nachschlagwerk* (2011).

Farbe bekennen and Black German Consciousness

A vital impetus and for the early efforts of the New Black German Movement was the book project *Farbe bekennen: afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte*. Published in 1986, *Farbe bekennen* was a groundbreaking manifesto and marked the beginning of Afro-German literature. Edited by Katharina Oguntoye, May Ayim, and Dagmar Schultz, the collection explores the history, political and social concerns and personal experiences of Blacks in Germany through poetry, autobiographical narratives, conversations, interviews, historical documents and academic essays. The collection of text and images was the first book published in Germany that dealt with Afro-Germans not as individual anomalies, but as a collective and constitutive part of the nation. The continuous history and contemporary stories it tells filled a significant void in the record

Zwischenpositionen« innerhalb der Konstruktion von Schwarz-Sein gleichberechtigt einbeziehen zu können." (605)

of German history and experience at the time and served two functions that were essential to the broader struggle against the invisibility of Black Europe and against white supremacy and the general (willful) European ignorance that created and reinforced that invisibility: publishing and grounding, to which I will return in a moment.

The idea for the book grew out of interactions among Audre Lorde and a group of Black German women she met in Berlin. Their active exchanges, elements of which Lorde recounts in her introduction to the book, led to discussions about their experiences as "the hyphenated people of the Diaspora" (Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz introduction) and the problem of self-identification within the confines of the German language. Together, this community of women fashioned a new identification and coined the term *Afro-deutsche* (Afro-German). In their introduction to the English translation of *Farbe bekennen* (*Showing our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*), Katharina Oguntoye and May Opitz (Ayim) explicate the choice of the term:

With Audre Lorde we created the term "Afro-German," borrowing from Afro-American, as the term of our cultural heritage... In using this term, our point is not to emphasize that we have a black and a white parent. Our essential commonality is that we are black and have experienced a major part of our socialization and life in confrontation with West German society – a society that is not 99 percent white but that always has behaved as though it were, or should be... More important, we want to propose "Afro-German" in opposition to more commonly used names like "half-breed," "mulatto," or "colored," as an attempt to define ourselves instead of being defined by others. (Oguntoye, Opitz, and Schultz xxii–xxiii)

The publication of *Farbe bekennen* was thus the official coming out of the term as a new identification for Blacks living in Germany and a defining moment in the work of self-naming and self-making that are central of the work of the movement.

During this time, many other European nations were also struggling to understand

their new identities in a shifting continental and global landscape. *Farbe bekennen* is part of a nascent European tradition, and its format of political criticism can be found in European predecessor texts. In the foreword to *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*, Philomena Essed situates *Farbe bekennen* within the chronology of British anthologies that accompanied the birth of the Black Europe movement. Essed considers *Farbe bekennen* and the 1982 book *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in '70s Britain* two seminal publications from the 1980s that initiated the project of "Black European resistance." The two works mark three crucial practices "in the conceptual making of 'black Europe': *publishing* from black perspective, *institutionalizing* race critical research and teaching, and *grounding* black experiences and redefinitions of the social" (Essed x). She further describes the German collection as "unique, but as a political statement reminiscent of the black British publication *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (1985)" (xiii). Though the two British publications are not explicitly mentioned in *Farbe bekennen* nor in other early Black German writing, the timing of their publication and Afro-German women's affinity for the Black American tradition point to the significance of the connection between nationally specific Black identities and transnational African diasporic identity.

It should be noted that while *Farbe bekennen* was the first "Afro-German" publication, two years earlier in 1984 (the same year the term *Afro-Deutsch* was developed), another group of Black women shared their views on issues of racism and sexism in Germany in a book titled *Und wenn du dazu noch schwarz bist: Berichte schwarzer Frauen in der Bundesrepublik*. Authored by Gisela Fremgen, the book utilizes

a similar application of critical reading methods from culture, race and postcolonial studies to historical documents and cultural products and juxtaposes them with images and autobiographical narratives collected in interviews. The book's documentation of racist language and practices in everyday German culture – from schools and children's literature to popular media – is an effort to expose the myth of German "post-racism." In her introductory text, Fremgen calls for exchange among Blacks in Germany when she quotes a Black South African woman's response to her question about her relationship to white South Africans:

*Sie wollen nicht
daß wir
miteinander reden*

*Denn
dann könnten wir uns ja
verstehen (8)*

A citation for Fremgen's book appears in the short list of literature recommendations in the first edition and the English translation of *Farbe bekennen*.

Farbe bekennen is a documentation of just the kind of exchange that Fremgen sees as necessary for building Black community and combating racism. While Fremgen's book contains interviews she held with Black women, she is the sole author. *Farbe bekennen*, on the other hand, was conceived and completed as a collective undertaking. The editorial meetings organized for the book led to the founding of ISD and ADEFRA. The poetic and autobiographical contributions, which include the work of fourteen women from four different generations and various backgrounds, recount unique experiences and perspectives. In their compilation and juxtaposition alongside historical

essays and other documents, the women's stories interact in a way that conveys the varied and intertwined aspects of their discussions throughout the process of creating the book. It also gives the book a varied texture that echoes the multiple identity positions that the Afro-German women construct and perform within the texts.

Tina Campt refers to this heterogeneous and multiple positionality as "textured identities" ("Afro-German Cultural Identity" 117), and Carolyn Hodges relates it to Françoise Lionnet's similar conception of *métissage* (221–2). The efforts of these women to convey their multiple positions in society are determined by the logical structures that position them, i.e. the racialized ethnic definition of German cultural and national identity. I would broaden this interpretation slightly and suggest that these strategies rely on a practice of intertextual reference, whereby the juxtaposition of the texts creates immediate intertextuality among the diverse personal texts and the other essays and documents. The references illuminate the commonality of experiences of discrimination while also revealing the various forms that discrimination can take. By portraying experiences of discrimination in the everyday lives of visible minorities, the book refutes assertions that German racism is a rare phenomenon practiced only by extremists. The intertexts create a documentation of the connections between personal experience and public, national history and establish a literary tradition that many future Afro-German publications emulate or reference.

Because the categories into which Afro-German women are expected to fit themselves are defined in binary and mutually exclusive terms, themes of dual consciousness, exclusion and placelessness are one common thread in their narratives.

The expectations and restrictions are often expressed as feelings of having no identity, of being unable or unwilling to take on identities that are externally applied, of wanting to be inconspicuous as well as feelings of fear. For these women, the fear of inescapable oppression from multiple sides and an internalized fear of self, and of one's Blackness in particular, commonly turn into feelings of guilt and self-hatred. Helga Emde, daughter of a Black American GI and a white German woman describes the difficulty she found in identifying with her Blackness, writing:

Diese Furcht [vor schwarzen Soldaten in meiner Kindheit] zeigt deutlich, daß ich schon sehr früh die Vorteile und den Rassismus meiner Umgebung verinnerlicht haben muß. Schwarz gleich beängstigend, fremd, unheimlich und animalisch ... Natürlich durfte ich mit Schwarz nichts zu tun haben. Aber die Ahnung, die vernichtende Ahnung des Dazugehörens war da!

Schwarz gleich nicht existenzberechtigt. Und genauso fühlte ich mich.
(Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz 104)

Emde later explains her intense desire to emulate white beauty ideals. "Der weiße Mensch ist schön, edel und perfekt," she writes. "Der schwarze Mensch ist minderwertig. Also versuchte ich, so weiß wie möglich zu sein" (105). She recounts attempting to be less Black by pressing her lips together to make them appear less full and avoiding contact with other Blacks, because she would most have preferred to deny her Blackness completely. But her denials only amplified her isolation (105–7). "Ich war zerrissen, orientierungslos, ohne eigene Identität," she writes, and the statement poignantly captures the feelings brought out by the experiences of her youth.

The feelings of placelessness and guilt expressed by Emde are similar to those Katharina Birkenwald illustrates in her untitled poem:

wo aber soll ich sterben mutter

in des zufalls heimen dunkel
 irrenden pfa den des tam tams

 wo aber soll ich sterben mutter
 ob berlin etwa paris nirgends

 wo aber soll ich sterben mutter
 wie judas irr ich umher und starb
 tausendmal in farbigen lüften
 des einen stroms der liebe speit
 und ich wurd verlacht in meiner
 ohnmacht die spiegel auch ward
 ihrer menschengeschwister
 versteckte tränen in einsamen nächten (Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz 230)

Birkenwald invokes images of aimless wandering and homelessness, and she associates the pain of belonging nowhere, of being unable to choose her place, both to the erring of Judas and to a tragic unconsciousness. She depicts her double consciousness as leading to an impossible decision between options, a decision that, regardless of its outcome, will be a traitorous denial of the other side of her being.

Birkenwald uses poetic writing as a means to give expression to feelings that she and other Afro-Germans are constantly denied the right to have. As the editors of *Farbe bekennen* note, they had difficulty discussing their struggles and their thoughts about discriminatory experiences with friends for fear of alienating them or being accused of over sensitivity (Introduction). Katharina Oguntoye describes the negative impact of avoiding racism as a topic of discussion with her feminist friends:

Ich akzeptierte stillschweigend das tabu, das zwischen mir und meinen freundinnen bestand.... aber diese unausgesprochenen gedanken hinterlassen ihre wirkung und die kann der freundinnenschaft ganz schön zusetzen.... das ist wie mitten in einer oase verdursten, weil wir sie für eine fatamorgana halten. (Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz 216)

Likewise, Birkenwald found her mother incapable of understanding her connection with

the literature of Blacks in Africa and the United States. Her mother found the identification inappropriate, and often told Birkenwald, "Das kannst du nicht machen. Die... haben andere Probleme. Die werden wirklich diskriminiert" (Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz 218).

When asked if she had considered herself to have a talent for writing, Birkenwald responds that though she hadn't considered herself particularly talented, writing was the only way she could express herself. She felt that she was misunderstood and had no one to talk to. For her, as for many of the women who contributed poems to the book, writing was "lebensnotwendig" (Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz 217, 218). Their meetings and the writing project that framed them were a space within which they could be understood, and it offered the freedom to construct self-images that reflected both their unspeakable truths and their unacceptable multiplicity. The work of these Black women authors in Germany is the work of self-naming, and, as the subtitle of *Farbe bekennen* suggests, self-discovery. It was a strategy of promoting "Black German self -assertion modelled on African-American identity politics [that] also informs Black German autobiographies published in the wake of *Farbe bekennen*..." (Göttsche 90–1). In the nearly two decades since the publication of *Farbe bekennen*, the voices and perspectives of Blacks in Germany have become more visible in the body of German literature and film. Their perspectives bring new questions to the discourse about German culture and society, and about race and representation in media.

Farbe bekennen made a significant contribution to the discourse about the ethnic differences within Germany, particularly the Black presence in Germany. As Michel

Foucault brings to our attention, "it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (318). The concept of discourse in Foucault's hands involves the production of knowledge through language. Discourse functions to establish political and ideological hegemony; it regulates not only what can be said under determinate social, political and cultural conditions, but also who can speak, when and where. As Foucault further observes, the domination of the oppressed by the oppressor produces counter-discourses to the dominant "regimes of truth." These counter-discourses are not subservient to the dominant ideology of the oppressors. Rather, Foucault notes,

We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it...(318)

The following sections explicate the counter-discursive strategies in cinema after the rise of Black German consciousness. The strategies highlight the confluence of ideas from African American intellectual culture to Afro-German feminist resistance to Black German film.

W.E.B. Du Bois in the Afro-German Context

The tradition of African American identity politics that influenced the shape of the Black German Movement spans a wide field: African American slave narratives from the 18th century, the theoretical writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, the poetry of Phyllis Wheatley and Audre Lorde, the novels of Richard Wright and Toni Morrison and the ardent calls to revolution in the autobiographies of Angela Davis and Malcolm X. For the

purposes of my film analysis, I have focused on the influences of Lorde and Du Bois, two figures with historically significant ties to Germany and whose ideas find direct correlation in the German movement. What I do not address are the exchanges among different groups of Black Europeans and Black Africans, though this is important genealogical work that is being taken up by (predominantly) Black European women scholars and activists who are descendants and keepers of the Global Black Consciousness Movement.

Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folks* offers some insight into the ongoing Black European struggle for recognition. In the opening scene of *Souls*, Du Bois, similar to Hegel in his *Phenomenology*, discusses the moment when self-consciousness discovers its own self behind the world of appearance. Both Hegel and Du Bois describe this process as the lifting of the curtain or veil. When Du Bois as a child is rejected by a white playmate, he observes,

Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down the veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. (10)

The emotional elements of Du Bois narrative are echoed in writing throughout the African diaspora and have clear correlations in the self-narratives of Black Germans. Stephanie Kron's analysis of autobiographical texts from Afro-German women literary figures employs an expanded interpretation of a three-stage model for positive bi-ethnic identity development. The model was first described by George Kitahara Kich and was transferred to the German context by Thomas Teo. Kron notes that the authors all narrate

childhood encounters with racism – veneration of mastery of one's native German, exposure to racist ideology and teaching, "subtle racist attributions" and verbal and physical violence – that led to a consciousness of difference (*Verschiedenheit*). While this consciousness can be emotionally neutral or even positive, ambiguous feelings of difference are eventually joined by a negatively cast feeling of discrepancy (*Diskrepanz*). Together, the childhood experiences of difference and discrepancy, which are the first step in the development model, initiate an awareness of the connection between the individual, her difference (e.g., skin color, hair type), and the social valuation of her ethnic identities (119–23), much like the recognition of the color-line, or veil, in Du Bois' account.

Later, Du Bois recounts how the 'color-line' provides the social context for the emergence of double-consciousness:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. (11)

Du Bois defines that double-consciousness as a condition in which one's self-consciousness is fractured, and one is persistently aware of "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (11). In the context of Kron's reading, the irreconcilable split Du Bois describes can be read as both the genesis and part of the dialectical process of the second stage in personality development, namely, the search for recognition and approval that results from the ambivalence that these Afro-German authors experience regarding their ethnic affiliation. Kron provides narrative excerpts dominated by the

conflicts that result from this ambivalence and links them by way of Albert Memmi's definition of racism to the bi-ethnic "choice." The bi-ethnic choice is specifically limited to a position as either victim or persecutor according to the Black- or white-signified ethnic identity. Not surprisingly, such a weighted positioning often leads to attempts to suppress the ethnic identity that is assigned less value according to social norms, expressed in these narratives as a desire to be white, to be "normal," to be inconspicuous (Kron 125). It is also found in these women's descriptions of a lack of belonging and feelings of having neither place nor affiliation, as captured in the oft cited phrase from Corinna N. in *Farbe bekennen*, "das Gefühl, zwischen zwei Stühlen zu sitzen"(Oguntoye, Ayim, and Schultz 183).

Du Bois comes to argue that double-consciousness can only be overcome when Black people become co-workers in the "kingdom of culture," which mirrors what Hegel calls *Sittlichkeit* or the ethical state. In other words, the proper (or dialectical) resolution of this divided self is achieved in the freedom promised by national culture. Comparatively, the developmental model posits that an individual can only advance beyond the experience of ambivalent identity by accepting and performing a confident bi-ethnic identity. To be successful, this constituted self-conception must persistently be able to surmount external social conceptions and imposing ethnic stereotypes and judgments (Kron 130–1). Accordingly, in Germany and in other predominantly white societies marred by white supremacy, accomplishing such a positive identity can pose an especially difficult and daunting process for Black/white bi-ethnic individuals, who struggle against a contradictorily conspicuous invisibility. Conspicuous invisibility refers

to the contradiction by which Blacks living in dominant white societies are excluded from the national body and full rights of citizenship (i.e., invisible) by way of their conspicuous difference, and how that difference is used to target them with state-sanctioned racism (e.g. racial profiling, stop and frisk, school segregation, biased conviction and sentencing in the justice system, etc.). In the U.S., where the bi-ethnic identity development model originated, the dialectic relationship between white and Black has historically manifested itself as one in which the Black Other is perceived as a direct threat to the white subject from within the white nation's borders, a position Michelle M. Wright has notably defined as the "Other from Within." In contrast, the Black Other in Germany is instead an "Other from Without," meaning that the (Black) African Other is regarded not only as the antithesis of the white German subject, but as one external to Germany's geographic borders – the Black Other is both physically and symbolically externalized from and antithetical to Germany (Wright, "Others-from-Within from Without" 297). This oppositional exclusion can be traced back through the history of German philosophical thought to the color relativism and relative aesthetics of Herder and is most famously crystalized in Hegel's *Philosophie der Geschichte*, in which Blacks (and Asians) are equated with the *Kindernation* in opposition to white Germans of the *Kulturnation* (Gilman).

The dominant language used to name Black Germans is a reflection of this dialectic organization: *Mulattin*, *Mischlinge*, *Farbige*, *Neger* and *Besatzungskind* are all terms that not only are negatively connoted, but that also correlate to the contradistinction and externalizing of the Black body from the German collective. The mixing of races is

characterized as a symptom of a biological (and cultural) invasion or confusion of the collective white body (*Mulattin, Mischlinge, Farbige, Neger*), similar to the anti-interracial discourse in the U.S. Unlike in the U.S., however, where the arguments were predominantly framed in terms of the domestic, the German discourse is framed in terms of international relations and with more dominant geographic, cultural and political intonations (*Neger, Besatzungskind*). Accordingly, the Black Other, defined as African or perhaps African American, remains an outsider to the nation, despite her physical or cultural location within it. For Afro-Germans, this paradox of existence as "Others-from-Within from Without" – members of the nation-state, but misidentified as foreign (Wright, "Others-from-Within from Without" 297) – presents a substantial obstacle to the development of a positive, bi-ethnic identification practice.

Karin Obermeier observes the following about the narratives in *Farbe bekennen*:

The most commonly shared experience of Afro-German women is the isolation that results from socialization in a predominantly all-white environment with virtually no affirmation of a "double-identity." An identity of "feeling neither Black nor White" (FB 155) is often accompanied by consciousness of having the (only) "outsider" position. (175)

Wright provides an explanation for this lack of affirmation by reading it within the Hegelian dialectic and summarizes succinctly: "In short, the Afro-German identity is not the *antithesis* in the dialectic of (white) German subjectivity: *it is simply non-existent*" ("Others-from-Within from Without" 298). How then, does one establish, accept and perform a positive identity that is non-existent in one's own culture? How does one overcome double-consciousness when one is defined as external to the ethical state and her contributions to the "kingdom of culture" are accordingly relegated to "foreign"

discourses? And with regard to the resistance against anti-Black racism, how does one respond from the position as an Other-from-Within "to a discourse that posits one as an Other-from-Without" (Wright, "Others-from-Within from Without" 298)?

Scholarship on Afro-German literature and history has been guided by questions such as these. Many of the tools that have been fundamental to the political strategies of the Black Diaspora are unable to address or account for important particularities in the German context. We see with Du Bois' "double-consciousness"; definitions of diaspora that rely on communities forged under slavery, segregation and colonialism (Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*); or, as Wright points out, Franz Fanon's "white mask" ("Others-from-Within from Without" 299). The majority of scholarship is focused on autobiographical writing, as it comprises the greatest portion of contemporary Afro-German literature and cultural production. Perhaps because of the interrelatedness of the political practice of self-narration and the political and social resistance movement in the Black community in Germany, we can find within the majority of the perspectives one key concept that is observed to play a central role in Black German self-determination and counter-discourse: "unified plurality" that is based not only in the consolidation of the self through narration, but also in the writing of the self into history and into communities. There are, indeed, differences to be found among the various manifestations and interpretations of this concept, but whether conceived as *métissage*, diaspora, the Black Atlantic, multiethnic community or hybridity, diversity

and synthesis appear to be essential strategies in Black German practice and politics.⁷

The Influences of Audre Lorde in Afro-German Feminism

In 1984, Audre Lorde made the first of what became regular visits to Germany. In the spring of that year, Lorde held a three month lecture series on Black American women poets at the Free University in Berlin. Her teaching appointment was the result of the efforts of Dagmar Schulz, an active Berlin anti-racist and feminist and co-founder of the Orlanda Frauenverlag. The women's press, which embodied the anti-racist feminist politics of its founders, had published a German language collection of poetry and prose by Lorde and Adrienne Rich in 1983. Schultz's early encounters with Lorde's work and her first meeting with her at the 1980 UN World Women's Conference in Copenhagen were the beginnings of what would develop into a life-long friendship and a relationship of political, social and intellectual cooperation and collaboration. During her time in Berlin, Lorde met several Black German women with whom she built lasting relationships. It was within this context that students and poets began to share their experiences and to discuss the place of race in their personal and political lives. Audre Lorde was not reserved in expressing the pleasure she found by being a part of the new self-awareness and community-focused mindset she saw developing. It was also within this context that the term *Afro-deutsch* was coined and began to resonate with members of Berlin's Black community.

In 2012, the twenty year anniversary of Lorde's death, Dagmar Schultz and Ika

⁷ Carolyn Hodges defines the autobiographical politics in *Farbe bekennen* as a practice of métissage, while Wright prefers to use diaspora, which she sees as a more specific form of métissage, to describe the strategies she observes in Afro-German literature.

Hügel-Marshall, a scholar-artist-activist and a dear friend of Schultz's, began screening a film that documents the relationship between Lorde and the Afro-German community. *Audre Lorde – The Berlin Years 1984 to 1992*, directed by Schultz in cooperation with Hügel-Marshall and Rita Cheatom, reveals the long neglected legacy of Lorde's politics and the personal relationships she built and nurtured with and among Afro-German women. A synopsis of the film provided by the filmmakers is worth quoting at length:

Audre Lorde's incisive, often-angry, but always brilliant writings and speeches defined and inspired the US-American feminist, lesbian, African-American, and Women-of-Color movements of the 1970s and 1980s. *Audre Lorde - the Berlin Years 1984 to 1992* documents an untold chapter of Lorde's life: her influence on the German political and cultural scene during a decade of profound social change. The film explores the importance of Lorde's legacy, as she encouraged Afro-Germans—who, at that time, had no name or space for themselves—to make themselves visible within a culture that until then had kept them isolated and silent. It chronicles Lorde's empowerment of Afro-German women to write and to publish, as she challenged white women to acknowledge the significance of their white privilege and to deal with difference in constructive ways. Previously unreleased archive material as well as present-day interviews explore the lasting influence of Lorde's ideas on Germany and the impact of her work and personality. For the first time, Dagmar Schultz's personal archival video- and audio-recordings reveal a significant part of the private Audre Lorde as well as her agenda—to rouse Afro-Germans to recognize each other. (Press Release Kit)

For most students and scholars of women's studies, Lorde is well known for her influential role in the development of a critical consideration of race and sexuality in US-American feminist politics and women's solidarity movements. One of her central contributions has been the exploration of hyphenated and multiple identities and her insistence on their importance. Because of her pivotal role in the practical and strategic development of the Black German Movement, I would like to detail some of the central ideas in Afro-German literature and film that can be traced back to her.

Lorde continually stresses that the ability and freedom to possess and express an integrated and comprehensive identity are essential to a complete self and the power to incite individual and social change. This is the main theme that serves to connect many of the other positions in her thought. The study of one's own histories is a genealogical project and an essential part of self-definition and -discovery. This includes the many circles – sometimes concentric, other times eccentric – of the various parts that define us: our individual stories; the stories of our immediate and distant relatives; the histories of our cultural, national, racial and ethnic communities; of our political and social communities and so on. It is through and between these histories and the sharing, producing and receiving of experiences communal and individual that we progress in our creation of self and of heterogeneous communities in which the recognition of difference does not necessitate the hierarchization of those differences (Lorde 122). The communication of feeling and experience is thus a central practice to the creation and maintenance both of the self and of community. As Lorde explains:

For those of us who write, it is necessary to scrutinize not only the truth of what we speak, but the truth of that language by which we speak it. For others, it is to share and spread also those words that are meaningful to us. But primarily for us all, it is necessary to teach by living and speaking those truths which we believe and know beyond understanding. Because in this way alone we can survive, by taking part in a process of life that is creating and continuing, that is growth... And where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives. (43)

Nearly all of Lorde's work – her poetry, prose, teaching, activism and collaboration – reflects the centrality of her belief in the power of practices of language as part of action.

The act of "speaking one's truth" was a means for Lorde to relate to other women, to

battle in "the war against the tyrannies of silence" that serve to divide and to fashion new linguistic possibilities for expressing our feelings and our truths (Lorde 41, 37).

Lorde's position on language as practice is born from her belief in the power of poetry to disrupt hegemonic and exclusionary language practice and the discourse it determines. Its essence is captured by the widely cited maxim, "*For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*" (Lorde 112), by which Lorde insists that a thorough understanding and reimagining of dominant structures is necessary to overcome the restrictions created by them. In her famous essay "Poetry is not a Luxury," Lorde outlines her principle of poetic opportunity.

For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. (37)

The formal and structural openness of poetry allows for the creative freedom to alter words, phrases and grammatical structures so that one can create language that communicates ideas that are not effectively represented by common language. That freedom also allows one to more effectively shift the contexts of ideas, for example, by fashioning metaphors and imagery that dynamize and reimagine static conceptions. Poetry helps to make feelings communicable and helps fashion language when no language exists that effectively communicates feelings and ideas (37–8). Language fashioning is a strategy that aims to reclaim language and actively participate in the "culture of knowledge" of Du Bois' vision.

Lorde's poetic politics exemplifies the definition of linguistic and identity

métissage posited by Lionnet. In an etymological analysis of the term, Lionnet reflects on the Greek word *metis*, which is the aesthetic employment of "duplicitous means" of dominant power structures by the weak to escape the confines of those structures (18). This strategy of duplicity is part of the "braiding" of identities from multiple perspectives that aims to create a "plural self" capable of reflecting and utilizing its "plurality of potentialities" (Lionnet). Fittingly, Lorde poetizes this with the image of the woman poet as the bi-racial, hybrid offspring of the body/spirit dichotomy: "The white father told us: I think, therefore, I am. The Black mother within each of us – the poet – whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore, I can be free" (38).

A number of themes that appear in the organizing and writing of Afro-German women over the last three decades reflects the legacy of Lorde's thematics for the pioneers of the Black consciousness and civil rights movement in Germany, largely because of *Farbe bekennen's* influential role in the movement and Lorde's pivotal role in the intellectual and ideological evolution of the text's authors.⁸ Though they have grown from different experiences and in specific temporal, geographic and cultural circumstances, the Black autobiographical tradition attempts to give a voice to the private and political practices of marginalized people of color. The history of Black European writing prior to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries – and even including them – is

⁸ The influence of a number of other African American and African (occasionally by way of African American) cultural products and motifs can be observed in Afro-German writing since the 1980s. Aija Poikâne-Daumke explores and analyzes a number of connections in the Afro-German and African American literature, including in perceptions of Africa, in her book *African Diasporas: Afro-German Literature in the Context of the African American Experience* (2006). The contributors to *Callaloo's* 2001 volume *Reading the Black German Experience* offer insightful analyses of the relation of Black German experience to transnational Black experience that build on the growing scholarship on Black Germany in recent decades.

not yet well documented. It is in large part for this reason that women like those noted here have undertaken the work of tracing and recording their own histories and the longer histories of which they see themselves part. Importantly, they have also sought to add their unheard voices to the public sphere through written word, theater, music and the influential medium of film.

A New Black German Cinema

In the next sections of this chapter, I will demonstrate how Black German autobiography has inflected German film and its strategies for affecting German race discourse. The tactic of fashioning, or re-fashioning language employed in these narratives are similarly performed in a number of films in the era of new Black German consciousness. To my knowledge, prior to the publication of *Farbe bekennen*, no films of note feature "integrated" Black German characters. It is not until after *Farbe bekennen* and the start of the movement that Afro-Germans begin to appear in roles as Germans on the big and small screens. Black Germans were gaining new visibility, not simply as darker-skinned "foreigners," but also now as Germans, Germans who face marginalization and discrimination from their fellow citizens. This is a major shift from depictions of Blacks discussed up to this point in that these characters are not foreigners. Nor are they necessarily depicted as "misplaced" persons in need of a home outside of Germany, where they "truly" belong. Black German films – with this term, I refer to films in which Black Germans have significant roles as directors, actors, writers or producers – begin to reflect many of the themes and motifs of Black German literature. While there are films that to some degree continue to present stereotypes of Blacks

similar to those of previous eras, a new generation of filmmakers begin in the 1990s to offer more variety in the presentation of Blacks, including presenting more nuanced and dynamic Black figures, and Afro-German figures in particular, who challenge static and stereotyped conceptions of Blacks.

Alles wird gut (1998) and the New Pleasures of Performance

One such film is Angelina Maccarone's *Alles wird gut* (1998). This film, written by Maccarone and Fatima El-Tayeb, immediately jumps into the deep end of so-called identity politics by presenting a story that depicts the complexity of identity and the influence of race, class, sexuality, community and heritage. It depicts the development of the relationship between two Afro-German women whose differences and similarities, over the course of the film, offer one another an opportunity for personal growth by reflecting on their personal and social behavior.

Nabou is an immature, working class, Afro-German lesbian consumed by a single goal: winning back the affections of Katja, her white ex-girlfriend. Nabou's stubborn and persistent stalking of Katja leads her to take a job working as a cleaning lady for the woman living in the apartment below Katja, Kim Berger. Kim is a pedantic, middle class, Afro-German heterosexual career woman driven only by her goal to become partner at the advertising agent where her lover, Dieter Lauer, is also her boss. Her highly structured, yet messy life is complicated when Nabou's presence begins to disrupt her routine.

Taking up Deniz Göktürk's linear categories of the "cinema of duty" and the "pleasures of hybridity," Barbara Mennel reads Maccarone and El-Tayeb's film as one

"more complex and ambivalent" in its reflection of these categories, and I agree with her assessment that *Alles wird gut*'s "duties and functions of minority representation might also be shifting to include a performance of pleasure of hybridity for the mainstream" (57). The mixed character of German cinema today suggests that the pleasures of hybridity are not necessarily a progression in a linear development from a cinema of duty, but that these categories now exist as simultaneous possibilities. Both Mennel and Göktürk insightfully address the material link between funding mechanisms and practices and the thematics, representations and distribution of film in Germany and of minority (including women's) film in particular. And I concur with Mennel that the use of space and movement in the film both reflects and exceeds the funding structures she discusses, both in that they transgress geographic boundaries, as well as boundaries of identity through narrative, symbolism and character construction (59–60).

While the funding structures and the intended forum for the film, namely, the TV film series *Wilde Herzen*, indicate a targeting of a mainstream audience by public funders – a production ideology I addressed briefly in chapter 2 – *Alles wird gut* reflects more than the producers' and filmmakers' desires to attract and engage a mainstream (e.g. white, heterosexual) audience. My analysis demonstrates how the film quite clearly aims to engage a diverse audience and to do so on a deeper than superficial level. Maccarone and El-Tayeb's script and cast make skillful and witty use of the screwball comedy genre to achieve their goal of creating a film that is broad in its appeal, and yet still thoughtful, critical, thought-provoking and empowering for viewers. Moreover, their interpretation of the genre may have enabled them to circumvent some of the problematics of overly

simplistic forms of hybridity as a social and political prescription.

As Mennel astutely observes, "performing the pleasures of hybridity might just have become the new duty" (53). The concept of hybridity has indeed become a politically and socially compelling, and in many ways effective and productive concept for identity since the latter part of the twenty-first century, as can be seen, for example, in its dominance in cultural studies. As an alternative to polarized and polarizing binaries of fixed and narrow identities, hybridity offers the possibility of including difference and fluidity within identifications.⁹ The figure of the hybrid has come to discursively function as a symbol of the possibility for successful multiculturalism in communities of ever increasing diversity. However, in the German context, its closely related function as a reflection of the nature of culture is generally overlooked. As a result, culture is not in itself perceived as a dynamic product of diverse interactions and continual shifts, but instead as a homogenous and statically maintained Germanic tradition.

Hybridity and hyphenated identities are thus integral to political and social discourses of multiculturalism and in cultural productions that influence and are influenced by those discourses. Katherine Pratt Ewing points out how this plays out in depictions and discussions of Turkish-German youth.

In German public discourse, the trope of hybridity operates as a mediator between the irreconcilable opposition of Turkish and Islamic traditional values with modern democratic values. A prime figure of mediation is the

⁹ See, for example, Bhabha, Homi. *Nation and Narration*. New York: Routledge, 1990 and *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

modern Turkish youth who manages to succeed in German society as a cultural hybrid... For Germans, secular Turkish youth who are participants in cosmopolitan youth culture are the intermediaries between traditional Turks on the one hand and German society on the other hand – some are a sign of the success of integration, whereas those who drop out of school or get caught up in violence and crime are a sign of failure. (274)

In this sense, the cultural hybrid trope that is publically celebrated reflects neither the heterogeneity of German and diasporic cultures nor their perpetual evolution. Instead, it reflects the contradiction between real and apparent multiculturalism. When considered within the discourse of multiculturalism, the good hybrid-German often reifies cultural homogeneity and the ostensible, contradictory dichotomies of German and "other," which can result in the valorization of forms hybridity that necessitate the exclusion and even condemnation of aspects of cultural identity deemed incompatible with German cultural values (Ewing).

Ewing argues that even more recent, innovative Turkish-German films continue to work within the restriction of a burdensome and difficult to escape liminal space structured by cultural dichotomies (275); however, cultural productions, including film, have begun more effectively to challenge these characterizations and binary thinking, though. In the case of *Alles wird gut*, the filmmakers present a story that challenges reductionist depictions of Black women and lesbians while thoroughly complicating homogenous conceptions of cultures that undergird the good hybrid trope. They present marginalized protagonists whose identities are not overly determined by any one identification, and whose complexity posits not only the possibility of non-conventional German-ness, but also reflects its actuality. The film enthusiastically participates in "the pleasures of hybridity" while still rejecting the "dutiful prescriptions" of marginalizing

and restrictive forms of cultural hybridity. The key to the film's successful resistance lies in the careful construction of its major characters, and thus necessarily in the use and modification of the conventions of the screwball comedy genre. The next section will offer an interpretation of the major characters, cultural signification and the depiction of character relations, and compare this with the filmmakers' expressed conception of the characters and their intentions for the production.

Depicting Heterogeneous Community

The film opens with the dramatic ending of Nabou and Katja's relationship appropriately accompanied by the aggressive melancholy of Skunk Anansie's 1997 break-up hit "Hedonism." Katja tosses Nabou's belongings from the window of her apartment while Nabou pleads and insists that they can work it out. She is promptly established as a melodramatic and romantic idealist, which the film more firmly emphasizes in the follow-up "faux suicide" scene. Her close friend Guiseppa enters the bathroom, which is bathed in red light accented by red-painted walls and framed by soft glows of light that simulate a candlelit atmosphere. She finds Nabou's naked body sunk in a tub of red-tinted water, the black bracelets on both of Nabou's wrists further visually connoting suicidal wrist slashes.



Figure 21: Nabou's faux suicide.

When Guiseppa rushes to pull her friend's head above the water, she knocks over Nabou's piles of chocolate, inciting the lovelorn protagonist's concern for the well-being of her chosen edible consolation. "Schokolade ist ungesund," Guiseppa states flatly, relieved that her friend is alive. "Das ganze Leben ist ungesund. Höre ich deswegen damit auf?" retorts Nabou. "Sah jedenfalls so aus, ja," says Guiseppa, eying Nabou with both concern and irritation. Nabou, however, expresses no gratitude for her friend's concern when she sarcastically points out that one reads every day of chocolate overdose in the bathtub. The bathroom conversation continues over an indeterminable span of time (suggested by a montage that includes changes in costume, lighting, water color and chocolate) and is edited into a seamless dialog that continues over breakfast in the blue-toned kitchen and ends off camera as Nabou stalks her ex at her apartment building.

Over the course of Nabou and Guiseppa's dialog, the film reveals the most

essential aspects of Nabou's character. First, Nabou's indulgent and passionate, or rather, obsessive melodrama is marked by a certain cynicism, but it is not despondent at its core. Here and throughout the film, she gives in to the whims of her emotion without regard to rationality, sensibility or convention. The freedom she enjoys in this regard is facilitated by her membership in an urban subculture and also by her class status, a point I will return to later. Second, she is generally outspoken, and is habitually vocal about racially, culturally and ethnically problematic language and behavior. In the aforementioned sequence, Guiseppa tries to console Nabou with the Swahili phrase "Hakuna matata." Without missing a beat or shifting her calm tone and demeanor, Nabou calls out her friend's "cultural imperialism" and describes what she observes is an all too common German malpractice.

Guiseppa, du bist eine richtige Kulturimperialistin... Na, Kulturklau, wie dicke deutsche Touris, die in Saris rum rennen und zu Hause in Wuppertal Afro-Dance tanzen und ihr Sauerkraut mit Kreuzkümmel und Palmöl abschmecken.

The free spirited Nabou is persistent and direct in her challenging of practices of cultural theft and racist language, and as such, is positioned in stark contrast to her counterpart, who prefers more subtle tactics.

When Nabou awaits an opportunity to get into Katja's apartment building to spy on her, the film seamlessly transitions to Kim's introduction using a casual and irritating passing encounter between the two women, captured by a shaky handheld camera. The shot then cuts to the interior of Kim's apartment and shows her carrying a single bag of groceries through a slovenly chaos heavily stylized in blue tones. The music also shifts drastically from the steady, urban dance beat of Todd Terry's house remix of "Missing"

by Everything but the Girl to the slow, rural twang of a blues guitar. Scenes of Kim trying to find a place to wash a dirty pan with a lit cigarette in her mouth are crosscut with shots of Nabou trying to discover Katja's doings. When her boyfriend calls from the office to cancel their dinner plans, the audience gets a taste of Kim's defensive reliance on sarcasm. She expresses anger over having gone through so much trouble to prepare a "Pilz Soufflé" for dinner ("[es] war für die Katz" – a play on the fact that her current work project is a campaign for cat food) moments before putting out her cigarette in a mold-encrusted pan. To recover from her disappointment and prepare for an evening of work, she repeats a self-affirming mantra that reappears in varied form at other key moments in the plot: "Ich bin stark. Ich bin stark und kreativ. Ich bin –" she pauses and puts out her cigarette and whispers exasperatedly – "Scheiße."

Who is Kim Berger?

As an answer to the question "Wer sind Sie?" the beginning words of Kim's "ich-bin-mantra" can be read to symbolize that, to some degree, she is on a search for clarity in her identity. For example, in the next scene, Kim is sitting her on her apartment floor, hanging cat sketches and eating cold ravioli from the can. She repeats "Ich bin eine Katze" several times and then begins the phrase again, but leaves it incomplete. "Ich bin –," she states, as if her self-declaration once again can find no fitting predicate. This possibly unsettled self-conception is revealed by way of her work-related mantra, further connecting her identity inextricably to her professional life. "Ich bin ein Auto," "Ich bin hetero/keine Lesbe," "Ich bin stark und kreativ."

This interpretation is supported by a number of aspects of Kim's narrative, both

overt and subtle. For example, despite her pedantic displays of superiority, Kim is uncomfortable with the idea of having someone else clean her house. When her Afro-German confidant Kofi suggests she lessen her stress and improve her living situation by hiring help, she finds the idea absurd, calling it exploitative (*ausbeuterisch*) and declaring that she would prefer to simply find a new, clean apartment every two weeks. Even after hiring Nabou, Kim struggles to navigate the awkward work relationship and find a comfortable balance in which she can be a non-exploitative boss and have her particular requests met. She also deflects her boyfriend Dieter's gentle prodding about her family life, and she doesn't correct him when he unquestioningly and eagerly accepts as truth the mentally unstable and violent, racist-biting sister she invents to toy with her co-workers at the ad agency. Crosscut with scenes of the tale of Kim's sister passing through the office is a scene in which Nabou finds Kim's passport while snooping through her things. The passport reveals new information about Kim: born Erika Berger, 1967 in Pilzhausen.

In an interview with Barbara Kosta, El-Tayeb provides the detailed backstory for Kim Berger that she and Maccarone created to found the character's actions.

Kim stands for those [African Germans] born in the 1950s and 1960s; she's an "occupation child." Her father was a GI whom she never met. She grew up alone among whites in a village in southern Germany. There was no place for people like her, so she basically had to reinvent herself. She moves to the city, broke off all contacts with her family, and renamed herself. She dropped her old-fashioned German name "Erika" and took on the more cosmopolitan name "Kim." (Kosta and El-Tayeb 35–6)

Kim's self-directed reinvention implies that her relationship to her past and to her origins is perhaps marred by insecurities and by negative experiences in her rural hometown. Her new urban identity, characterized by her dedication to her hip career and cosmopolitan

name and contrasted with her understated rural past (which is only briefly hinted at throughout the film), casts the identity into which she was born in a negative light and demonstrates her intentional distancing from her old self. In choosing to so thoroughly abandon "Erika," Kim severs herself from an identification that is commonly characterized as one of victimhood and outsider status. Consequently, she fashions a self that on the surface appears to be void of emotional personal attachments and shaped only by professional talents and ambitions. Beyond role of career woman, Kim has no identity, and because she works in advertising, even her profession is characterized by superficiality and the selling of products by way of catchphrases and creating marketable (i.e., digestible) associations for the mainstream. "Kim" is the most important product that Kim has worked to package and market.

But Kim's self-design and the ambiguity of her ich-bin-mantra can also be read alternatively to symbolize a more positive and secure identification practice. In the context of the Lorde-inflected Black German movement, Kim's biography shows that she has quite literally taken up the call by naming herself, taking greater control of her identity and rejecting one "imposed" upon her, namely, that of one of the victimized "occupation children" of Germany's southern rural towns. In so doing, Kim challenges assumptions about her that are overly determined by her skin color and its associations. The various forms she adopts through the metaphors of her work mantra indicate a freedom she finds in the malleability and variability of identity. Her talent for "stepping into" the position of the objects of her advertisement campaigns is the result of the creativity that is responsible for her professional success. She is strong and creative. She

is a cat, she is a car, she is Kim.

The contextual shifting of identity in which Kim participates is one way the film reflects bi-racial identity in a manner that may avoid some problems of hybridity and challenge the valorized trope of the "good hybrid." A major failing of the hybridity concept as it is commonly employed is that it "is not a good model for analyzing how people caught between cultures actually negotiate identity, because it does not explain how individuals manage inconsistency through a variety of cultural and psychological strategies that generate multiple, contextualized identities" (Ewing 266). In the figure of Kim, the film is able to demonstrate such strategies of identification that perhaps more honestly reflect those employed by multicultural individuals. The mantra is a metaphor for the generating, or wearing of identities in specific contexts. The film offers supporting evidence for this metaphor by depicting Kim exercising the freedom to choose which identities and pieces of herself she reveals to different communities.

At work, and even privately with Dieter, Kim does not discuss her past, her family, or any part of her identity that relates too closely to her Blackness. She doesn't chastise her co-workers when they use racist language or perpetuate racist stereotypes. She thus manages to avoid being stereotyped as hypersensitive, a common defense tactic used by liberal racists. It is apparent that she has kept her family history from Dieter, who doesn't understand why he has yet to meet the family of the woman he intends to marry. In the presence of her superficial white German colleagues, Kim chooses to present herself only as the branded product she has created, and maintains her identity as a young, creative, urban professional separate from the complexities of her family history and her

experiences and position as a Black German. Interestingly, she maintains this same distanced separation with Nabou, an indication that she considers this separation vital to others' perception of her as a professional.

With Kofi, however, Kim more openly presents herself in a way that includes her conscious Black identity, discussing her "hidden" background and referencing experiences and cultural symbols that are explicitly tied to her Black identity. At the laundromat, she makes a sarcastic, passing reference to Michael Jackson's then most recent operation. She also references *Toxi* when she explains to Kofi that she has given up what she considers a childish expectation that she will find her Black American father and an accepting family, a reference that points to the cultural significance of that film for Black Germans. Later, when practicing Tai Chi at the harbor with both Kofi and Nabou, Kim feigns anger as Kofi tells Nabou about Kim's militant days in the *Arbeitsgruppe Revolution* reading Angela Davis. And in a key scene of realization, Kim confesses to Kofi her deep affection for Nabou, and when he excitedly congratulates her, she sarcastically replies, "Zu was denn? Als schwarze Lesbe in Deutschland? Na, Prost, Mahlzeit!"

The changes in Michael Jackson's physical appearance over the course of his career – particularly the reduction of his nose and the lightening of his skin color – was much speculated upon and created a great deal of conversation about racial identity, especially in Black communities. As we've seen, *Toxi* is a film that offered a romanticized depiction of a marginalized Afro-German child who is eventually "taken home" by her Black GI father. Kim's participation in a revolutionary student group, of

which Kofi was also a member, implies that she actively sought out community. The community she found was engaged with feminist, antiracist writing, and both the community, and the texts it discussed connect Kim to a multi- and international Black diaspora. The film implies that Kim is no longer actively involved in political revolution, but through Kofi and the community he represents, she maintains a connectedness to a multinational resistance movement.

Regarding the relationship between Kofi and Kim, El-Tayeb explains that

the circle of friends that each protagonist has is represented through one person. That Kim's friend is a black man is no coincidence. He is the one person she trusts completely and, of course, that is a reference to the sense of community that exists between black Germans, men and women, straight and queer. (Kosta and El-Tayeb 36)

The central role of the friendship between Kofi and Kim (and Nabou and Guiseppa) in the film not only creates room for the minority characters to be depicted more complexly; it also reflects the development of communities of color in Germany in the 1980s and 90s and the impact those communities have had on their members. By offering the audience a close community of characters who not only have different values and lifestyles, but who also come from different classes and backgrounds, *Alles wird gut* shows the power that a shared sense of identity can have to unite marginalized individuals and offer a safe space for the expression and acknowledgement of identities in their full complexity. The four figures who make up that community in the film, namely, the two Afro-German women protagonists and their two best friends, a Ghanaian-German single father and an Italian-German lesbian, are intended to better reflect the heterogeneity of community. The relationships between these characters work against the perpetuation of "homogenous

collective identities" that are characteristic of popular and political discourse (Ewing 267) and present instead a community in a more honest, multicultural and multiethnic form.

Beyond achieving the reality of diversity, this narrative shows the importance of community in the journey of self-acceptance and self-determination. It is within these communal relationships – as represented by the characters' interactions in various constellations – that Kim and Nabou are able to work through their respective identity quandaries and to come to appreciate the complex fullness of their identities. But the comic portrayal of a community made up of absurd, marginalized individuals presents another important opportunity, namely, the possibility to challenge dominant narratives of victimization and marginalization.

The reasoning behind the decision to write the story of Kim and Nabou as a screwball comedy connects the film to a long tradition of subversive identity politics in comedic genres. El-Tayeb and Maccarone were attracted to the stylishness of the genre and to the freedom that its structure allows for presenting figures and narratives that fall outside of convention (Kosta and El-Tayeb 37). In light of the oppositional binaries and restrictive forms of hybridity that Germany's multicultural framing commonly reinforces, the more serious "cinema of duty" described by Deniz Göktürk often fails to effectively challenge the dominant rhetoric of Germanness and foreignness. When employed intelligently and thoughtfully, comedy may be an effective, alternative strategy in the cultural fight against ideologies of hierarchy and cultural, ethnic and racial supremacy. In a study of anarchic ethnic film comedy, Göktürk posits that "strategies of humor and irony" might "open up possibilities of transgressing these symbolic regimes of

victimization and marginalization," mainly because of the catharsis of laughter and the potential subversive power of humor to dismantle fixed notions of identity and social structures (Göktürk 103). The filmmakers explicitly sought to tap into this subversive potential and attempted to create minority characters with whom a broad audience can identify.

Alles wird gut avoids presenting characters in a way that offers the explanations typically demanded of German minorities. Instead of provoking pity by way of documentary-like realism, the story instead focuses on connecting the audience to its characters' universal experiences. First, the film does not present race as an overly determining factor in how others perceive their identities. As previously noted, portrayals of minority experiences in German film are often characterized by oppression, victimization and isolation, even when they are not defined by predation and criminality. Everyday confrontations with racism become cast as either separate from the rest of the characters' lives or as the most meaningful experiences for people of color. This is tied to the problem of representing community, multiculturalism and hybridity in film, which in turn can be related to W. E. B. Du Bois concept of the "color-line." Du Bois understands as international in character. As he maps out, the everyday lived experiences of non-whites under the veil of the 'color-line' are not seen as insignificant from the standpoint of whites. This is one part of the problem of the "cinema of duty," in that while it may effectively arouse pity in a white audience, it reduces minority experience and rarely serves to empower the minorities depicted. El-Tayeb and Maccarone perceived comedy as an "opportunity to show the influence of racism in a way that was convincing (and

empowering) for people of color, while it forced a white public to confront the issue without guilt-tripping them" (Kosta and El-Tayeb 34).

Another feature of the screwball comedy genre that is key to the film's challenge to convention is its reliance on sharp, verbal wit and a "constant play with absurdity," as opposed to the more common humor of slapstick (Kosta and El-Tayeb 37). El-Tayeb's specific interest in this verbal element ties the project to the previously mentioned linguistic practices addressed in Lorde's work and in the work of the Afro-German women who name her as inspiration, especially in the writing of May (Opitz) Ayim and Ika Hügel-Marshall. When they find themselves confronted with racism, both Nabou and Kim employ turns of phrase or subtle reflection of racist language to counter the words of white Germans.

This verbal wordplay is depicted in two key dialog scenes. In the first scene, Nabou has once again shown up late for her job at a subway station kiosk when a customer orders a *Negerkuss*. Nabou refuses unless the woman agrees instead to ask for a *Schokokuss*, and this leads to a comical heated exchange. Nabou's white female boss joins in the argument, and both she and the customer appear to be confused by Nabou's anger at the situation. Frustrated, but not surprised that the two women refuse to take seriously her offense at the term, Nabou takes off her work apron and walks out. When her baffled boss shouts after her, "Gib der Dame ein Negerkuss!" Nabou simply shouts back, "Küsst euch doch selber!" The literal interpretation of the common term for the chocolate snack removes the distance that has enabled Germans to hold on to racist language and ignore its connection to historical abuses. Nabou insists on connecting the abstracted half of the

compound (*Neger*) to her as an individual and challenges any defense that uses intention and metaphor as justification.

Kim uses a similar tactic in response to a thoughtless remark made by Dieter. The two are walking along the evening street after leaving a movie theater, and Dieter defends his appreciation of sentimental movie that Kim deems "kitschig." He is particularly moved by a scene he describes when the male lead goes to the "rough" part of town to find the female lead. When Kim criticizes the hegemonic heroism, Dieter defends his opinion by pointing out that the male lead is a "halb-Indier." When he stops short and sees that his car is gone, Kim says to him coolly, "Das war doch wohl die halb-Russen Mafia," before walking away, leaving him perplexed as he searches for the connection she has made to herself as a so-called "halb-Deutsche."

As in Nabou's reaction to the *Negerkuss* order, Kim's response reveals the absurdity of language that uses racial and ethnic signifiers, in this case, as an indicator of an oversimplified conception of cultural and social position and thinking. With her curt statement, Kim causes Dieter to pause, and the audience is given a moment to reflect on the ridiculousness of his reasoning about the significance of the character being a "half-breed."

Nabou and Kim represent the largest difference between characters within the community of minorities. That extreme difference may be more acceptable to an audience socialized to see Afro-Germans as a homogenous group with a unified history, culture and world view. Within the frame of a screwball comedy, the audience expects to see extreme differences between the main characters. Masquerade, role-play and "mutual

mimicry" are among the elements that Deniz Göktürk identifies as useful strategies of humor (103), and they have an important place in the relationship between the protagonists in *Alles wird gut*. After Kim has allowed the fictional story of her sister to take hold in the office and be accepted by her boyfriend, Nabou is unknowingly and unintentionally cast in the role of this mysterious sister. To appease Dieter and avoid having to tell the truth, Nabou then willingly plays the part, for which she takes on the name Erika, the birth name Kim abandoned when creating her new, urban self. This is the key moment that symbolizes the coming together of the two oppositional Afro-German women. Nabou becomes the "old" Kim.

Over the course of the film, Kim's story echoes many of the stories Afro-Germans of her generation tell in their autobiographical narratives. A number of narratives from Afro-German women, like Helga Emde, trace an often difficult path from isolation to community, "from self-hatred to a feeling of having no identity and eventually to self-acceptance and the building of a circle of multinational friends" (Hodges 227). Having lived a childhood in what we would assume to be isolated circumstances in the rural south, Kim sheds a hated identity and remakes herself "without ethnicity" for a cosmopolitan environment. The process of self-acceptance and the mending together of separated identities occur through her interaction with a community of color, represented by Kofi as well as Nabou.

Of course, communities are also characterized by differences that can lead to internal tension, but El-Tayeb defends an idealized sense of community in hopes that "there is enough common ground to overcome them, at least temporarily," not only

among Black Germans, but also in Germany's queer urban culture (Kosta and El-Tayeb 36). Nabou and Guiseppa's argument about cultural imperialism is one example of how differences internal to community can manifest themselves. Another example appears in the conversations between Kofi and Kim, when Kofi repeatedly attempts to convince Kim to move to Ghana with him or to seek out her African American father, both of which could possibly connect Kim to her "roots" and provide her with a sense of belonging. Through this exchange in particular, the audience can see that the two Afro-German friends approach quite differently the place of ethnic heritage in their present lives, with Kofi identifying more fully with his Ghanaian family and lineage and Kim preferring to continue building on her urban German identity.

Recovering History and Mending the Splintered Self in *Tal der Ahnungslosen* (2003)

Branwen Okpako's 2003 made for television detective film *Tal der Ahnungslosen* is another film in which the influence of the Black German autobiographical movement can be observed, but one that is more in line with the "cinema of duty." *Tal der Ahnungslosen* does not fit within the detective story genre in the strictest sense; rather, the death of the film's opening character serves as the impetus for bringing a complicated and estranged family together. To provide some context for the design of the film's plot and main character, a few main biographical elements are shared between Okpako's Afro-German protagonist and Sam Meffire, the subject of her first full-length documentary *Dreckfresser* (2000): both are from Saxony, both are police officers and both are the offspring of a white German mother and a Black African father who was a student in the

German Democratic Republic. Though the film is not autobiographical for her, Okpako has stated that she is very close to *Tal der Ahnungslosen* and that she herself feels especially vulnerable having put such a personal film out for public consumption, understandable when one considers that her first film was a documentary about her own family's search for roots in England, where her grandfather was a policeman.

The protagonist of *Tal der Ahnungslosen* is Eva Meyer, an Afro-German police commissioner who, just before her birthday, has been transferred from her department in Frankfurt to the homicide division in Dresden. Back in the city of her birth, Eva, who never knew her birth parents and grew up in a children's home, begins her search to learn about the circumstances of her birth and placement in the home. Her efforts lead her to the secret police files on Professor Hans Einzig and his wife Helga, who conceived Eva in an illicit affair with a visiting Kenyan scholar named Shepard. Disappointed after a failed attempt to meet her birth mother, Eva sends the files to Helga, an act which sets in motion the murder investigation that parallels and is intertwined with Eva's investigation of her personal history.

Okpako uses this biographical mystery to stage Eva's difficult search for identity and tie it in with the strategies of early Afro-German identity politics and counter-discourse. Just before the title screen, a credit appears for May Ayim's poems, which are recited during emotional moments throughout the film. Okpako has shown sustained interest in integrating poetry into her work in some fashion; Meffire is a poet, and a project she was working on in 2008 documented the life of Nigerian poet Christopher Okigbo. Regarding how she relates her work to the work of poets, Okpako states, "For

me, poetry and film are very, very close. They have to do the same kind of job. Just like film condenses something visually, poetry condenses with words, brings everything into the most condense form, the essence" (Ani 46). Okpako vocalized precisely the connection that I see between the efforts in all of the films discussed in this study and the problem of language addressed by poetic politics.

Tal der Ahnungslosen indeed attempts to condense a great number of historical and social concerns into the television movie format, separate stories that are connected by way of the investigative mode of the police drama genre. The film ties each of its storylines together with central themes of nostalgia, excavation and coming to terms with one's history. Eva seeks to come to terms with her past by finding the truth about her parents; Helga is forced to confront her infidelity, her husband's betrayal and the child she gave up; and all of this is directly related to the conditions of life under the oppressive espial of the East German regime and its citizens.

A vital contribution from this production is its situation of the anti-Black discourse in the East German context, both past and contemporary, a perspective that has appeared in literary narratives, but has been notably absent in film. The opening flashback scene of Hans Einzig being coerced into serving as an *Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter* suggest the social and political opposition to interaction between white Germans and Black Africans, bringing into focus the limits of the socialist state's rhetoric of solidarity and equality and the contradictions of its condemnation of racist practices by foreign, capitalist regimes. Eva's East German and African origin is also a departure from the dominant perception of Afro-Germans from her generation as *Besatzungskinder* from

Black American occupation soldiers. In the contemporary narrative, the film repeatedly shows Eva encountering subtle and more overt racism from her fellow citizens. It also does this by employing visual signals of extreme right racism, for example, by opening on the high-laced, black boots of her movers, who also sport shaved heads, and by lingering on the scarred over swastika on the back of her co-worker, Löwenherz, during their awkward and impassioned sex scene.

Eva Meyer's experiences are defined by isolation and by feelings of difference and discrepancy, as described in the earlier discussion of the identification model. In adulthood, Eva still struggles to reconcile the binary sides of her self, unable to overcome feelings of incongruity and solitude. The film depicts Eva's adult isolation as a mirror of her childhood experience and the result of trauma and continuity. Seeking information about her parents, Eva visits the home where she grew up, only to find that it is no longer a children's home. Standing in the doorway of her old bedroom, she relives a painful moment in a flashback to her childhood. She looks at the younger Eva, who kneels on the corner of a bed with a troubled expression. Young Eva is wearing a light blue night dress, repeating the long, light blue dress worn by her older self. A voice in the off explains to Eva that she has to learn more than the others, because she will have it especially hard, and then cruelly tells her that she is the outcome of violence, not of love: "Dein Vater war ein böser Mann, der deiner Mutter sehr weh getan hat."¹⁰ The last words spoken by the

¹⁰ The inclusion of this statement alludes to the perpetuation of the image of the Black man as rapist.

childhood caretaker overlap with the voice of a nurse in the present asking Eva what she is doing in the room. "Entschuldigung Schwester," the adult Eva answers mechanically, still living in the painful time period of her flashback. "Ich wollte nur mein Bett machen. Ich gehe sofort nach unten, Schwester. Bitte, Schwester," she says weakly. Confused and concerned, the nurse reaches after Eva in a gesture of comfort as the disoriented investigator hurries away and runs down the stairs.



Figure 22: Nicht rennen! Eva hears a voice from her traumatic childhood and stands paralyzed for a brief moment on the stairs of her former home.

A cut to a high angle long shot shows Eva running down a sunlit stairway, her back to the camera, separated from the viewer by dark wood railing. The composition of the shot visualizes Eva's minuteness and creates a visual metaphor for her experience as one of physical imprisonment and exclusion. The rattled protagonist fearfully straightens herself to attention when she once again hears the harsh echo of her former caretaker's voice: "Eva, ge-hen, nicht rennen!" The scene ends moments later with Eva in voice over

reciting lines from May Ayim's "kaspar"¹¹ as her silent character cowers to the ground, unable to unlock her car door with shaky hands. Through the paralleled pains from Eva's experiences as a child and as an adult, and her ability to so fully be pulled back into the trauma of her childhood, the film discloses the incompleteness of Eva's progress to positive self-conception.

As an adult, Eva still carries the traumatic pain and fractured self-conception of her childhood with her, as the flashback scenes so manifestly reveal. As a means to compensate for these feelings, she shields herself with the professional self she has fashioned, much like Kim Berger in *Alles wird gut*. In vulnerable interactions with white characters, Eva wisely presents herself as "the police," the state-sanctioned power that is to be obeyed, that is less vulnerable to the insult and injury that threatens her as an Afro-German perceived as a foreigner. In an early scene, one of the movers explicitly questions her presence in her new apartment. "Was sind das für eine?" he asks the landlord while exiting. The movers, who have been spoken to kindly and appropriately tipped by Eva Meyer, are unable to make sense of a German-speaking Black woman with professional demeanor – she cannot simply be a German. This sentiment reappears more aggressively when Eva and Löwenherz go to Maria Einzig's home to question her about her parents. In her typical fashion, Eva asserts control of the conversation, and she begins to question Maria without offering her any information. Maria angrily insists on an explanation – from Löwenherz. "Ich will nicht mit der reden" she exclaims. "Seit wann gibt's überhaupt Ausländer bei der Polizei?"

¹¹ The text of all recitations of May Ayim's poetry in Okpako's film appear in Appendix B.

Moments such as these reiterate what Wright observes in German discourse and in Afro-German narratives when she writes,

The refusal to understand Afro-Germans as German, much less as equals, is an oft-recurring theme in the German discourse on the white German subject and the African Other. . . . As many of the authors in *Farbe bekennen* complain, too many white Germans are either resistant or incapable of imagining someone who is both Black *and* German. (“Others-from-Within from Without” 298)

Eva's status as a police commissioner enables her to some degree to circumvent this ever-present complication, and she often knowingly employs it to this end. The film continually recalls the viewer's attention to Eva's tactic after establishing it in that first scene at the apartment. In response to the mover's question, the landlord defines Eva as "Polizei" before turning to look back at her. Her existence is justified by way of her state-sanctioned power, but her figurative uniform only offers a degree of protection, as the interrogation scene with Maria reveals. Unlike the other white Germans Eva has encountered, Maria is family, which opens Eva up to a deeper level of vulnerability.

That unmasked vulnerability, which Maria embodies symbolically, is depicted earlier when Eva goes, not as a police investigator, but as a daughter, to meet her mother Helga Einzig. Nervous and carrying flowers, Eva is standing outside the front gate of the Einzig home when Helga walks out into the yard. After watching her mother's face from beyond the gate, Eva cowers behind a parked car when Helga is joined by her daughter Maria, and the two erupt into a heated confrontation. When mother and daughter reconcile in an emotional and affectionate embrace, Eva loses her resolution and runs away. Her mother has the affection of the daughter whom she chose to keep, and as the chosen child, Maria is for Eva the obstacle to a relationship with her mother, a symbol of

all that she was not allowed to be and the cause for the intense pain of her relived rejection. But sitting with Maria, who does not share Eva's knowledge of their relation, Eva cannot protect herself or get what she wants with her tough cop performance. "Jetzt reicht's!" she shouts as she stands, retaking control. But she quickly softens, and the film moves into a sisterly scene of the two women in a finely timed dance of tea preparation in the intimate kitchen. The end of the sequence highlights the potency of that familial vulnerability when Maria, in tears after learning of her father's death, reaches out to hug Eva. The moment is demarcated by a slow motion repeat shot of the embrace and highlighted with the quiet voice over of Maria reciting lines from May Ayim's poem "schwester." The scene ends panning out from a medium shot of the two women embracing, to a full shot of them framed by a doorway, capturing these two alienated family members in an intimate moment of connection. Maria mourns the death of her father and the absence of her missing mother, just as Eva has long mourned the absence of her parents.

Later in the film, another flashback connects the sisters by creating a parallel of their searches for family and by using the mirror motif to establish a sense of their shared, yet delineated identities. The scene shows Eva as the only Black girl in the attic of the children's home, and even though she is around other children, she does not interact with them. The children are running around playing and picking out clothes to dress up in, and the young Eva finds a yellow crochet cap with long braids that extend from its earflaps. She walks over to a mirror, places the cap over her hair, strokes her new coiffure of yellow yarn and whirls around in delight. When she is later asked by a strict caretaker to

remove the cap, a determined Eva responds, "Das sind meine Haare und keine Mütze," causing the other girls to break out in laughter before the caretaker pulls the cap from Eva's head. The scene, in which an oft repeated mirror motif appears, symbolizes not only Eva's isolation, but her desire to fit in – to have hair like the other girls, to not be her contradictory self, to be white –, and it also references an earlier scene in which another Black woman, Julia, hands Eva a mirror after having straightened her hair.



Figure 23: That's my hair, not a cap. Young Eva marvels at her new blonde pigtails in the attic mirror.

The blond cap flashback is a powerfully condensed and visually direct narration of stories relating the "trying on" of different identities and the wish to be inconspicuous, to have lighter skin and lighter, less kinky hair, to possess a compatible multiple identity. It ends with a close up of young Eva's face as her cap is removed, and is followed by a cut to Maria in her bedroom. The identity that Eva was trying on is the one her sister occupies – the white daughter who was not abandoned by her parents, who grew up knowing family and has not lived a life marked by a fractured sense of self that is caused

by and reflected in the color of her skin.

Notably, this scene is positioned between two key moments in Eva's confrontation with her Black identity and its impact on her intimate relationships. In the previous scene, she stands together with Officer Löwenherz high above the valley and argues the absurdity of their affair. "Was will ein Ex-Nazi mit 'ner Afro-Frau? Das ist doch abartig, oder?" she exclaims. "Ich find's gut. Ich wollte immer schon mal wissen, wie es ist mit –" he jokes stupidly. She pretends to pull a pistol on him, pointing angrily at his chest with her hands clasped tightly in the form of a gun. "Witze haben witzig zu sein," she says. Ironically, it is in a private moment with Löwenherz that she herself laughs at a self-deprecating joke she makes about her skin color, a joke that Löwenherz fails to find amusing. There above the valley, Eva's partner tells her that he simply found her strong, and suggests that it is she who needs to contemplate what she is doing with him. She dissolves the relationship, saying that she is too old for him. The conversation, which takes place outside of the so-called "valley of the innocent," is the first in which we hear Eva refer to herself with the "Afro-" hyphenation. Above all of the fog that blocks clarity in the city below, Eva begins to come to terms with herself in a new way before the cut to the attic flashback.

At the end of the flashback, a cut from a close-up of Young Eva's face takes us to Maria Einzig getting out of bed while Eva waits outside. In this scene, the two women communicate only in glances before Maria gets on her motorcycle and leads Eva to meet their mother at the lake home where she is hiding. A wide overhead shot captures the three women walking silently and slowly toward one another on the beach, creating three

distant points of a triangle. It is Eva's first meeting with the family she missed out on, and her family is almost complete.

It is in the final scenes of the film that Eva's journey to positive identity is recapped for the viewer before she finally finds resolution. Shepard, Helga's former lover and Eva's biological father, has come for Hans Einzig's funeral. Attendees are scattered throughout the pews, and Maria and Helga sit together in the front pew as Shepard reads an open letter from Hans. The letter begins in a voice over from Hans, whose voice fades out as Shepard's voice takes over at a podium at the front of the church. The letter begins to relay the many condemnations Hans had included in his original testament, but then takes on quite a different tone. "Ich schrieb," Shepard reads aloud to the mourners, "über Helga mit so viel Wut und Hass, wie sie mich betrog und mir und meinem Familiennamen Schande antat." At that precise moment, as if called by name, the camera cuts to the back of the church and lingers as Eva steps quietly in through the double doors. She is the proof of the family's shame. Shepard continues, "Jetzt, da das Ende naht, weiß ich, was ich eigentlich schreiben will." He looks up and notices that Eva has arrived, and the two's eyes meet. A chorus of women singing quietly in an African language fades in as the camera zooms in on Eva, and then falls silent when the camera cuts back to capture the reaction on her father's face in a close-up. His eyes are still set firmly on Eva's face as he reads Hans' words: "Ich möchte mich entschuldigen. Ganz einfach." Those words he clearly speaks not only for Hans, but also for himself.

Shepard's voice fades into the background, and the shot establishes Eva as the true center of this culminating ensemble scene. In slow motion, she is key lit and shot in

medium from alternating sides as she walks down the aisle. She looks into the pews on each side of her, and from within the pews, each of her glances is met by the smiling face of a character we have met along her journey. In the following order, each character appears, and a voice over of his or her key lines reminds us of their role:

HINZE (the Stasi archive employee who helps Eva gain access to files on her mother). Möchten Sie sich umschauen? Ich hab' Zeit.

THE NEO-NAZI MOVER. Polizei, echt?

JULIA (the Black woman who does Eva's hair). Eva. Okay, Eva. Ruf mich an, ja?

The NURSE (who works at the home where Eva grew up). Das ist hier kein Kinderheim mehr. Wissen Sie das nicht?

LÖWENHERZ: Wie kann man dich vergessen?

Each chosen line and the encounter it references represent a particular moment in Eva's reflection on her place and self-conception. Hinze alludes to her inquiry into her origins and the uncovering of her family secrets. The mover references her manner of donning the police "uniform" to protect herself. Julia represents her encounter with the Black German community and the possibility of a Black and German identity. The nurse points to both Eva's past trauma and the overcoming of it. Officer Löwenherz draws attention to her forced attempt to deal with lingering racism and a relationship that presents her with the possibility to reconcile her feelings of self-hatred.

Finally, the sound of Eva's footsteps are acoustically accentuated as she nears the front of the church and then sits in the front pew at her mother's side. When Shepard finishes reading Hans' letter, he joins the Einzig family, sitting next to Eva, and a side angle shot captures Maria, Helga, Eva and Shepard all in a row along the pew (the family row). A smiling Eva leans forward to see young Eva seated alone on the other front pew, swinging her legs, a smile brightening her face. Young Eva waves happily, and adult Eva

returns the gesture before leaning back into her spot in the pew. Eva Meyer's resolution, the mending of her fractured identity, comes in the end by way of the reunion of her family. Situated between her Black African father and white German mother, alongside her white German sister, Eva has finally found her place, one that includes all parts of her, and that visually affirms her as both Afro- and German.

The film closes with an extreme long aerial shot of the city of Dresden (the valley of the innocent) as Eva sings the lyrics to the title song. The lyrics are reminiscent of the words that the character Toxi sings in the famous "Toxi Lied" (Appendix A).

Nicht weit von hier,
versteckt zwischen Hügeln,
dort liegt eine Stadt
mit sehr schönen Ziegeln.
Dort gibt es noch Glück,
selbst in großen Dosen.
Mann nennt's auch das Tal,
das Tal der Ahnungslosen.

Irgendwann werde ich zurückkehren,
denn dort war ich glücklich.
Ich werde nicht rasten,
weder rasten noch ruhen.
Ich bin ein kleiner Talbewohner.
Und ist der Weg auch noch so schmal,
irgendwann werde ich zurückkehren,
zurückkehren in das Tal. (Jaksch, "Kleine Matrosen")

While Toxi longs to be taken to her "home" in the United States, Eva sings nostalgically of the valley of ignorance she has been able to escape by returning to it.

Concluding Remarks

The differences in the stories of Eva and Toxi are not limited by geography, age and era, but there are indeed similarities between these two characters' journeys. For both,

the problem of belonging is resolved by the return of the Black father and the accompanying implication of diasporic connection. However, while *Toxi*'s culture is posited as African American and her true home the United States, Eva's culture is a Black German one, and Germany is her true home. If we position *Toxi* as the starting point in filmic representations of Black German experiences, *Tal der Ahnungslosen* reveals that some progress has been made toward re-shaping the discourse of Black experience in Germany. *Tal der Ahnungslosen*'s explicit reference to the Black German literary movement further suggests that the filmmakers consider those literary contributions essential to the project of developing Black German self-consciousness and disrupting the structures that restrict it.

Both of these films are TV-movie dramas, and both are connected to a "cinema of duty." But *Tal der Ahnungslosen* is also a product reflecting the "pleasures of hybridity," a quality absent in *Toxi*. May Ayim and Lorde emphasize the importance of self-naming and transforming silence into language, and Lorde continually reiterates each individual's responsibility to recognize her role in that transformation. This returns us to the problem of language taboos and "the language and manners of the oppressor" that individuals internalize and that have to be understood and reconfigured if they are to be used as tools of resistance.

Through my research on Afro-Germans and Black experiences in Germany, I have found that the concepts *race* and *racism* in Germany are indeed doublybound in a number of ways. Not only are they inextricably and ideologically bound to biological, social and economic reproduction, and to sexuality and gender, social and cultural roles;

they continue to restrain German social and political discussions within a double bind situation, a *Teufelskreis*, or vicious circle, in which attempts to overcome practices of racially motivated discrimination and violence are, unfortunately, greatly impeded. In its ongoing project to rehabilitate national identity the films throughout this study attempt to transcend such double binds and create social discourse through creative media. By contextualizing these various attempts and considering their relation to one another, I am attempting to contribute to the important genealogical project of unpacking German identity discourse's dependence on bound and binding concepts of race.

The strategies discussed in these films are in conversation with one another, continuing and expanding on their predecessors and contemporaries. Tracing the chronology I've laid out through this study, there is evidence that counter-discourses that resist the confinements of German's national myth have a history that reaches back to the middle of the twentieth century. The progression and development of these strategies over the last several decades clearly reflect the influence of political, social and economic histories that have shaped the national narratives against which these counter-discourses attempt to work. These counter-discourses play a vital role in the making of Afro-European identity, and by bringing light to the specific challenges and possibilities of Black German identity, they also present an opportunity for us to rethink the structures and the functions of the African diaspora as a community more broadly and complexly conceived.

Appendix A

"Ich möcht' so gern nach Hause gehen" (Das Toxi-Lied)

Ich möcht' so gern nach Hause geh'n, ay-ay-ay.
Die Heimat möcht' ich wiederseh'n, ay-ay-ay-ay.
Ich find' allein nicht einen Schritt, ay-ay-ay.
Wer hat mich lieb und nimmt mich mit? Ay-ay-ay.

Ich bin so verlassen und hör' kein liebes Wort,
so fremd sind die Gassen. Warum kann ich nicht fort?
Kann niemand denn mein Herz versteh'n, ay-ay-ay?
Ich möcht' so gern nach Hause geh'n, ay-ay-ay.

Text: Bruno Balz

Music: Michael Jary

Appendix B

Excerpts from Poems by May Ayim (as recited in Okpako's *Tal der Ahnungslosen*)

kehrtwende

ein böses geheimnis
frißt löcher
in mein gesicht
stellt fragen
in frage
verweigert
sich
meinem blick

ich fürchte
plötzlich
das wiedersehen
in deiner kälte
mehr als die reise
zurück zu mir
in die leere.... (1–15)

berührung

ich ahnte immer daß es dich gibt
[ich ahnte immer daß es dich gibt]
auch wenn ich auf ästen der einsamkeit
tränen rollte
und gerade dann – (1–4)

kaspar

.....
ich esse brav den teller leer
den löffel hab ich noch
aus kindheitstagen

ein happen
für die sonne
zwei für den mond
drei für die unvernunft
vier gegen die einsamkeit
fünf gegen die feigheit
sechs für die liebe
sieben gegen die schläge
acht für den regenbogen
neune gegen erniedrigungen
zehn für die freiheit

ich esse deine suppe nicht
nein
deine suppe schmeckt mir nicht....
(2–18)

schwester

warum durchbohrst du mich
mit deinen blicken
warum willst du alles verstehen

den schmerz
hinter meinem lachen
anfassen

die müdigkeit
in meinen augen
befühlen

.....
die narben
unter meiner haut
betrachten

warum willst du deine kalten hände
um mein zitterndes herz falten

wir sind schwestern
du und ich

wir sind schwestern (1–9, 13–20)

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Biography

Michelle René Eley was born in Durham, NC and earned her B.A. in German with a minor in Philosophy from the University of North Carolina at Asheville. She began her regular travels to German-speaking countries in 1999, and discovered her passion for German language, literature and culture. In 2005, she became one of the founding members of a bi-lingual rock band established in the riot-grrrl tradition. In the fall of 2012, she will begin a position as Assistant Professor of German at NC State University where she currently lectures.