

# **Periodizing and Historicizing German Afro-Americanophilia: From Antebellum to Postwar (1850–1967)**

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In this essay, which builds on the methodological considerations and the definitions we sketched in the introduction to the special edition on what we are calling twentieth-century German Afro-Americanophilia, we delve into the history of Afro-Americanophilia in Germany and of its precursors. Afro-Americanophilia denotes the affirmative, enthusiastic, even loving approaches to African American culture, politics, and people. These, in turn, are heterogeneous acts that encompass imaginations, practices and social relationships. Such acts have been theorized with concepts such as mimesis, identification, desire, translation, misunderstanding, appropriation, expropriation, fetishism, hybridisation, or becoming-minor. Our aim here, however, is not to theorize Afro-Americanophilia, but to establish a preliminary, mostly descriptive periodization and to draw out some of the particularly significant moments, ruptures, and continuities within it. In the process, we also identify some of the salient ways scholars have interpreted Afro-Americanophilia during those periods. The timeframe we cover in this first review essay stretches from the nineteenth century until the mid–1960s, from which point the second essay continues. Focusing on a variety of appropriative practices, communicative media, actors and forms of agency, power differentials, and sociocultural contexts, we discuss positive images of and affirmative

*PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, July 2015.  
Afro-Americanophilia in Germany Special Issue, guest edited by Moritz Ege and Andrew Wright Hurley.

© 2015 [Moritz Ege and Andrew Wright Hurley]. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/portal.v12i2.4359>

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*PORTAL* is published under the auspices of UTSePress, Sydney, Australia.  
ISSN: 1449-2490; <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/portal>

approaches to black people in German culture and its imaginary prior to the colonial era, and then during the colonial, Weimar, Nazi and postwar eras.<sup>1</sup>

As we argue in the introduction to this special issue, our main term's juxtaposition of the term 'Afro-American'—which gained prominence in the 1960s in US Civil Rights discourse—with a Greek suffix that may have clinical connotations to some readers is intended to indicate the internal contradictions and occasional self-reflexivity of the phenomenon. The term thus resembles the earlier Negrophilia, which we take up as a more historically specific concept later in this essay when discussing the 1920s. We use the term Afro-Americanophilia for pragmatic reasons to refer to diverse occurrences at different points in time and in distinct contexts. We maintain that the phenomenon's political meanings cannot be exhaustively evaluated on a transhistorical level. Instead, those meanings must be analyzed in regard to specific historical situations, which nevertheless take place under unequal, pre-structured conditions.

Our interest in Afro-Americanophilia should not be read as an attempt to downplay racism. The German engagement with African-American culture has by no means only been one of love. Many Germans actively fought against the influence and presence of black people, including African-Americans, and some continue to do so. Describing and analyzing in precise and open-minded ways recurring acts of Afro-Americanophilia is important, but should not be taken to suggest that Afro-Americanophilia is socially dominant. Continuing everyday racism against people of colour, and violence against refugees (immediate and structural), make that abundantly clear.

In a similar but analytically distinct sense, we also do not wish to view the 'love' for African-American culture monochromatically. Racism can come in many forms, including some that profess love but are based on misrecognition and the more or less subtle exertion of dominance. It is also clear from the work on stereotyping and from psychoanalytic approaches to racism that a -philia can rapidly switch into a -phobia (Gilman 2013). Again, we do not delve into the psychological, cultural, sociostructural

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<sup>1</sup> The culturally constructed yet crucial categories 'black' and 'white' will not be put in quotation marks or begin with a capital letter on the following pages (unless there is a context of identity politics and emphatic cultural pride among protagonists), but they should nonetheless be read as highly debated, unstable signifiers (with real-world references and effects in experiences, identities and politics), not as 'neutral,' sociological denominations.

and economic explanations of such ambiguities here.<sup>2</sup> It should be kept in mind, however, that racism and Afro-Americanophilia are closely interdependent, and they are often hard to separate.

In surveying Afro-Americanophilia we give snapshots of the published research that touches on black presences, real and imagined, in Germany and in German-speaking lands and cultures.<sup>3</sup> It should be clear that in selecting the literature we draw from, our decisions on inclusion and exclusion are contingent and debatable. We have been guided both by our perception of the field, which takes up different areas of social, cultural and intellectual history, and by our own joint research interests that are—as the second survey essay makes clear—particularly strong in the area of popular music. The article thus takes up prominent examples of Afro-Americanophilia from the areas of everyday aesthetics, popular music, political organizations, and to some extent literature and advertising, but pays relatively little attention to classical music, painting, theology, sports, theatre, film, and reportage. Those areas must be covered in future work.

Still, in drawing these many strains together in the following sections, we attempt to sketch the outlines of a more complete picture. While our main interest is in *practices* of Afro-Americanophilia, focussing on the actors is equally important. This immediately poses questions of agency and about the beneficiaries of Afro-Americanophilia. Who is active in Afro-Americanophilia, and in what ways, and what are the effects of that agency? The main focus of this survey will be on the ‘lover’ side of the equation, the white Afro-Americanophiles, but—without attempting to write a history of African Americans, black people in Germany, or Black Germans—we also inquire into the ways in which some of the people who are the objects of that love have reacted to (and sometimes suffered under) the expectations levied upon them, or have been able to engage with the demand for ‘black cultural traffic.’ In the first sections of this paper, we stress a few salient aspects of real and imagined presences in pre-modern times, so as to identify some potentially long-lasting themes and discontinuities, before approaching the late nineteenth century where a modern dispositif of racial meanings takes shape.

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<sup>2</sup> Theoretical approaches are treated more extensively in Ege (2007).

<sup>3</sup> ‘German speaking lands and cultures’ refers both to the time before the German nation-state (1871), as well as to Austria and Switzerland (a few sources relate to these German-speaking countries). We do not refer to the history of these latter countries in their entirety, however.

### A pre-history

A pre-history of 20th century Afro-Americanophilia can be found in ambivalently 'positive' figures that arose among Germans in representations of the Crusades, and of the lives of certain Christian saints and so-called *Hofmohren* [court Moors, that is subjects from North Africa and Islamicized Spain], as well as other exceptional individuals such as the philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo (Gilman 1982; Martin 2001; van der Heyden 2008; Honeck, Klimke & Kuhlmann 2013).<sup>4</sup> A few basic points about the changing attitudes to black people and the idea of blackness before the 19<sup>th</sup> century are pertinent to later forms of Afro-Americanophilia in Germany. For instance, the historian Peter Martin discerns in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries an 'afrophile' tendency within the aristocracy, for whom the figure of the Moor represented an advanced and wealthy 'oriental' culture (2001: 12). Black people were sought out as servants who could give their masters the opportunity to associate themselves with a signifier of luxury and to create an 'oriental' *mise-en-scène* in their everyday life. As a mode of appropriating and exhibiting otherness, these orientalist forms shared some features with 18<sup>th</sup> century elite tastes for Chinoiserie or Japonerie: Black people figured as exotic and as signs of luxury. At the same time, of course, white aristocrats exerted their dominance over people of colour, both practically and symbolically.<sup>5</sup>

The history of European preconceptions of black people devolved from the figure of the in-some-ways-sophisticated *Mohr* to that of the radically inferior '*Neger*' (Negro). 'Enlightened' anthropological speculations in the late-18<sup>th</sup> century and the scientific racial theories of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were more unambiguously negative than earlier ways of thinking.<sup>6</sup> As Peter Martin puts it,

by approximately 1830—that is, by the time the bourgeois society ceased to be simply a theoretical concept—... all of the central elements had emerged that continue to determine the image of Africans amongst many Germans to this day. Blacks were largely regarded as being incontrovertibly foreign and demonic, as being creatures of their drives and vices, as being without

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<sup>4</sup> According to historians, black people who lived in Germany before the late 19<sup>th</sup> century can be numbered in the thousands only. It should be noted that the late 17th century was the time when the Kur-Brandenburg (later Prussia) established a Brandenburg Gold Coast colony in today's Ghana. This colony remained in Brandenburg hands until the 1720s. Partly with this era of European colonialism in mind, the German anthropologist Karl-Heinz Kohl (1987) has written about white European 'cultural defectors' who attempted to leave behind their home cultures. Before the 18th century, Kohl argues, such 'defectors' were mostly members of the underclasses.

<sup>5</sup> In a slightly different sense, gypsy masquerades, popular in courts and the theatre, allowed the masqueraders to mimic a supposedly more free (but, in reality, harshly oppressed) group and at the same time condemn its way of life as inferior and dangerous (Bogdal 2011).

<sup>6</sup> On scientific racism in Germany, see Pyenson (1985) and especially Smith (1991).

culture, reason and history, as being people with an animalistic embodiment and childlike behaviour. (2001: 13, our translation)

As historians of racism have pointed out, such ideas served an important function in the context of slavery and modern colonialism of legitimizing exploitation and dehumanization. Within this context of the intellectual systematization of racism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, modern ‘Black cultural traffic’ begins.

For German-speaking audiences, the first large-scale exposure to Africans in North American slavery was mediated through Harriet Beecher Stowe’s sentimental-romantic abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which was published in German translation in 1852. The book was widely read, and as various sources suggest it precipitated a pattern of emotional identification and imagination among thousands of white German readers. Numerous imitative songs, poetry, and plays soon followed, creating a veritable *Onkel-Tom-Industrie* [Uncle Tom Industry] (Paul 2002, 2005; Broeck 2011). However, there is little to suggest a deeper interest in, let alone fascination or love for, the American ‘Negro’ or her/his culture at that time.<sup>7</sup> Rather, the German reception of Beecher Stowe’s book demonstrates how new world slavery primarily figured as a metaphor for old world, class- and sometimes gender-based social injustices, and as a stage for white hero or saviour figures, in a discourse that would prove to be long-lasting.<sup>8</sup>

### Colonial and Jim-Crow era

Subsequent German demand for (US) ‘Black cultural traffic’ arose during the post-reconstruction, Jim Crow era in the USA, at the same time that Germany became a colonial power.<sup>9</sup> This phase roughly coincides with Kennell Jackson’s periodization in

<sup>7</sup> There was a significant enough faction among German-Americans in the 1840s and 1850s that was strongly opposed to slavery and white supremacy for Fredrick Douglass to claim that ‘a German has only to be a German to be utterly opposed to slavery. In feeling, as well as in conviction and principle, they are antislavery’ (Levine 1998: 56. See also Honeck 2011; Strickland 2011). This was, of course, a huge exaggeration, but the left-wing German-American anti-slavery faction was strong. Indeed numerous failed 1848 revolutionaries emigrated to the USA and became vocal abolitionists. Many German émigrés volunteered for Lincoln’s Civil War army. Particularly significant abolitionist activists included Otilie Assing, who was Fredrick Douglass’s collaborator, lover and translator (Diederich 1999). However, the overall tendency among German-American authors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be described as an increasing allegiance to whiteness, as literary scholar Heike Paul (2005) argues. This attitude is largely analogous to that of other Western and Central European immigrant groups in the USA.

<sup>8</sup> From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Germans employed a discursive rhetoric to contrast their own fate (as ‘free’ white people) with that of slaves. Like other Europeans, they often referred to their birthright as white people to be free from slavery, as opposed to black people of African descent, whom God had supposedly placed in a lower position (Paul 2002: 29).

<sup>9</sup> From the mid-1880s until the mid 1910s—WWI and the end of the *Kaiserreich* [German Empire]—Germany held territories on the African continent including large areas around what are now Togo,

which the time between the 1890s and the 1920s is characterized by ‘intense [Black] cultural traffic’ (2005: 20).<sup>10</sup> Many aspects of later racial iconography, semantics and thought, as well as a structural coloniality of knowledge and power are rooted in 19<sup>th</sup> century (and earlier) colonialism.<sup>11</sup> It was also during this era of intense urbanization and industrialization that modern mass culture began to emerge and would evolve to have a key role in the mediation of Afro-Americanophilia, as David Ciarlo (2011) has shown in his work on racial iconography in German advertising culture.

In this context, *Schaulust* [Freud’s scopophilia] became an increasingly important mode of relating to the world (Gilman 1985; Hall 2013). The exhibition of colonial ‘others,’ which displayed the spectacle of race and difference as a discourse of ‘civilizational’ hierarchy, infused with curiosity and desire, developed into mainstays of mass culture and advertising (McClintock 1995; Bechhaus-Gerst & Klein-Arendt 2003, 2004; Poignant 2004; Dreesbach 2005; Wolter 2005; Langbehn 2010; Ciarlo 2011; Aitken & Rosenhaft 2013). German entertainment entrepreneurs, sometimes aided by anthropologists, created *Völkerschauen* [shows of peoples] or *Völkerausstellungen* [exhibitions of peoples] that featured scenes of life in far-away lands, including African and Asian colonies. This fulfilled an apparent mass desire for ‘foreign,’ especially black bodies that were put on display in order to be observed and, sometimes, touched.<sup>12</sup> Concurrently, older European folk culture like carnival also became infused with colonial themes and with performances of racial difference and domination, including re-enactments of colonial wars (Bausinger 2005: 77; Kramer 2012: 193ff). Such grass-roots instantiations of German imperialism illustrate that even genocidal colonial war could be turned into participatory entertainment ‘at home,’ and folded into the traditional carnivalesque pleasure of transgression via costumes, masks, and paint. This was not Afro-Americanophilia, of course, as neither *Schaulust* nor carnival

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Cameroon, Rwanda, Burundi, as well as Deutsch-Ostafrika (German East Africa, now Tanzania) and Deutsch-Südwestafrika (German Southwest Africa, now Namibia).

<sup>10</sup> Jackson (2005) also stresses that in comparison with the period between the 1840s and 1880s there was a growing emancipation from the ‘plantation show formula’ among African American artists, including traveling singing groups.

<sup>11</sup> There is an extensive literature on German colonialism, and its prehistory and legacies: Zantop (1997); Berman (1998); Lennox, Friedrichsmeyer & Zantop (1998); El-Tayeb (2001); Grosse (2000); Wildenthal (2001); Bechhaus-Gerst & Klein-Arendt (2003); Kundrus (2003); Ames, Klotz & Wildenthal (2005); Walgenbach (2005); Baranowski (2010); Langbehn (2010); Langbehn & Salama (2011); Perraudin & Zimmerer (2011).

<sup>12</sup> About 400 *Völkerausstellungen* troupes toured Germany between 1875 and 1930; some performers self-confidently fought for their own interests; a few also had liaisons with white Germans (Dreesbach 2005: 240). On attempts to reconstruct their lives see Poignant (2004).

performances document anything reminiscent of love. That said, scopophilic events such as the *Völkerausstellungen* did become enmeshed in erotic and fetishistic desires, and discourses about those events form another important German prehistory of more recent Afro-Americanophilia.<sup>13</sup>

In a more general sense, sexualized fears of boundary crossing, contagion and degeneration—also crucial for 19<sup>th</sup>-century anti-Semitism—shaped colonial-era racial discourse from the beginning. The idea of transformation, of cultural defection, of ‘becoming black,’ loomed large within the white German colonial cultural imaginary. Questions of interracial desire and miscegenation were intertwined in colonial discourse with the motif of *Verkafferung* [Kaffirization] and later *Vernegerung* [Negroization], racist terms that were used, in the beginning, to express disdain for less respectable, lower-class (white) German settlers who appeared to escape the discipline of European colonial life and succumb to the purported lure of native life (Wildenthal 1997; Axster 2005; O’Donell 2005).<sup>14</sup> Still, German racial iconography tended not to sexualize the African female Other, as much as, say, the French counterpart (Ciarlo 2011: 99–101). Intimate personal relations between colonizers and colonized persons confronted the German colonial administration and the parliament at home with practical, legal and intellectual challenges: how to manage marriage rights and, most pressingly, the citizenship of spouses and interracial children? Could there be black Germans? In order to deny the existence of the latter, the empire instituted *ius sanguinis* laws of citizenship that cast a long shadow beyond the actual demise of the colonies (Reich 1998; Grosse 2000; El-Tayeb 2001; Campt 2004; Walgenbach 2005; Nagl 2007). From the 1890s on, a few hundred colonial migrants—mostly from today’s Cameroon—posed similar questions within Germany (Aitken & Rosenhaft 2013).<sup>15</sup> Some socialists (notably Rosa Luxemburg) and Christian groups opposed colonialism on political and humanitarian grounds, but anti-colonialism did not become a popular movement before Germany lost its colonies. On the contrary, its support grew over time. In its later phase, even within the political (Social Democrat) opposition to the imperial government, most Germans supported colonialism as a benign civilizing mission.

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<sup>13</sup> On racial fetishism see Mercer (2013).

<sup>14</sup> On these biopolitical resonances see the classic study by Stoler (1995).

<sup>15</sup> The ‘loss’ of the German colonies in the period 1914–1918 did not stop colonial subjects from the erstwhile colonies coming to Germany.

Concurrently, Jim-Crow-era popular culture from the USA—especially post-bellum minstrelsy—also began to reach continental Europe.<sup>16</sup> Numerous African American musicians toured western and central Europe around the turn of the century, performing mostly in Variété theatres in cities and towns, and enjoying a certain amount of freedom in the process, as the discographer and historian Rainer Lotz has shown.<sup>17</sup> The social and cultural meanings of minstrelsy in the USA are hotly debated, especially since Eric Lott (1996) argued that its performative dimensions of masking and play involved not only ridicule and disdain, but also a carnevalesque combination of ‘love and theft.’ In Germany, literary scholar Jonathan Wipplinger argues that *fin-de-siècle* blackface performances—acted by whites and blacks—marked an important and long-lasting ‘point of discursive confluence, by which popular culture was constructed as both black and American’ (2011: 459). This image reworked Germany’s new colonial status, which meant that the presence of black people had to be acknowledged in a new way, as did the contemporary geopolitical rise of the USA and the high phase of urban, capitalist modernity. The blackface image created ‘a unique situation in which significant spillage could (and did) occur between the discourse of Africa and blackness and that of America and African Americans’ (2011: 460). This Americanized the pre-existing racial stereotype of the ‘Neger.’ Because blackface could pose questions of racial difference, American modernity, and the grotesque, it ‘function[ed] as a nodal point of societal uncertainty in late-nineteenth century Germany’ (Wipplinger 2011: 458). Within commercial culture the influence of minstrelsy was decisive, overwriting earlier colonial iconography with more evidently racialized images, an effect that was to be long lasting (Ciarlo 2011).

Continuing this pattern, the turn of the nineteenth century saw a global craze for the ‘Cakewalk,’ an African American dance that, in its original context, mimicked and parodied the formal dances of upper-class Southern whites. Black and white blackface minstrels danced the Cakewalk and early film, visual representations and sheet music facilitated the spread of the craze too. In Germany, as historian Astrid Kusser (2012) points out in her important monograph, the Cakewalk was seen as a humorous, contemporary, and modern cultural form. The ‘primitive,’ which we explore below in

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<sup>16</sup> Antebellum minstrelsy, from the 1830s on, may have been the ‘first Atlantic popular culture’ (Lhamon 2003), but it hardly reached continental Europe. On Great Britain, see Pickering (2008).

<sup>17</sup> For example, approximately one hundred black people performed in Germany in 1896, alongside a large number of white ‘blackface’ performers (Lotz 1997; Ciarlo 2011: Ch. 5; Wipplinger 2011).

our treatment of the Weimar era, was not the master signifier here. Racial stereotypes about the ‘Neger’ and binary oppositions about white and black certainly played a role, but the cultural practice of reception had other aspects, Kusser argues. Most importantly, people *danced* the Cakewalk with many also having their pictures taken in ‘grotesque’ Cakewalk poses. For a history of Afro-Americanophilia and its practical forms, its subjects, and its media, it is important to note the shift in prevalent modes of engagement. The Cakewalk was the first of many such dance fashions or ‘crazes’ that were a matter of mimetic bodily experiences, of physical movements and a different way of experiencing the dancing Self. In contrast to older phenomena, this was not solely a matter of visual or aural spectacle, or of imaginary ‘identification’ (Kusser 2008, 2012).

Such turn-of-the century engagements with blackness and with African American cultural forms in Germany have for a long time been overlooked in the writing of cultural history, and recent interdisciplinary scholarship has done important work in reconstructing them. There is a strong case for considering blackness a crucial component of turn-of-the-19<sup>th</sup>-century German popular culture, and the case strengthens once other types of images and texts are taken into account, such as anthropological and travel writings or philosophical texts in which ideas of the so-called primitive figured prominently, providing the contrast for European ideas of culture and civilization. The reach of racialized advertisements and depictions in illustrated newspapers was also significant. At the same time, it must be noted that blackface represented only one of several popular culture novelties at the same time, and was not the dominant one for ‘society as such,’ or even for definable subcultures or age groups.<sup>18</sup> German nationalism and identity were defined at the time to a large extent through anti-Semitism, and the attempt to better understand the relationship between these forms of racism should not downplay the importance of anti-Semitism. We must then be careful not to overstate the case. At the time, most Germans’ exposure to actual Black Diasporic culture was very limited, and personal contact even more so, as temporary guests like W. E. B. Du Bois, who studied in Berlin in the early 1890s, noted.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> One could also cite, for example, the enthusiasm for the Wild West and for ‘Red Indians,’ as demonstrated by the popularity of Wild West shows and Karl May’s novels (Kocks 2004; Kort & Hollein 2006; Penny 2013), or the revival of late-18th-century ‘Indomania’ in Buddhist-inspired theosophy and the fin-de-siècle *Lebensreform* (life reform) movement, a more up-scale preoccupation (McGetchin 2009).

<sup>19</sup> See Beck (1996); Hopkins (1998); Bechhaus-Gerst (2005); Edwards (2006). See also the standard biography of Du Bois by Levering Lewis (1993).

In summary, on a semantic, discursive level, racial differences were primarily construed as categorical and absolute at this time. Racial ideologies were cemented in ways that seemed to justify colonialism and colonial wars (Gilman 1982; Camp, Grosse & Lemke Muniz de Faria 1998; Grosse 2000). Still, in a way that presaged the future, there were some moments where abstract questions of white-Germanness and American blackness became confused, particularly in the register of the grotesque and via corporeal experience, as in the Cakewalk craze.

### **Weimar: ‘*Nérophilie*’ [negrophilia] and transnational migrancy**

The Weimar Republic, a somewhat out-of-joint era between 1919 and 1933, saw dramatic political and cultural conflict and transformation. It coincided with a high phase of artistic modernism in Europe and the USA, early blues and jazz in the USA, the Harlem and other Renaissances, and the cultural theme of *nérophilie* in France, as well as a larger interest in what Europeans continued to regard as the ‘primitive.’ Afro-Americanophilia (using the term retrospectively) was quite pronounced during the Weimar era as well, in terms of its extent and the novel forms it took.<sup>20</sup>

During World War I, Germany lost its colonies (which were taken over by other European powers), and after the defeat in the European War, the country became an unstable parliamentary democracy. In the process, one durable German myth of blackness emerged. In German East Africa, the German Reich was able, with assistance from colonial troops, to hold out until 1918 against the Allies. The assistance of those troops gave rise to the trope of the ‘loyal Askari,’ which remained in place during the Weimar era and thereafter and came into contact with other portrayals of blackness (Mass 2006; Michels 2009; Lewerenz 2011). In 1919 and 1920, other racist anti-black representations flooded German visual culture as conservatives became scandalized by the presence of French African colonial soldiers in the Rhineland. This discourse was often braided with mourning over Germany’s loss of its colonies. Yet it was also set against a backdrop of broader white European anxieties about the ‘decline of the west,’ fed by contemporaneous socialist and communist revolutions, and by colonial uprisings (Martin 1996, 2004a, 2004b). The Rhineland occupation seemed to have reversed the

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<sup>20</sup> On Negrophilia during this period, see, for example: Gilman (1982); Hopkins (1998); Nenno (1997); Naumann (1998); Partsch (2000); Martin (2001); Martin and Alonzo (2004); Nagl (2009; Lewerenz (2011); Aitken & Rosenhaft (2014). On other Black renaissances beyond the well-known Harlem example, see Jackson (2005).

colonial racial hierarchies; in a part of Germany, black foreigners now seemed to hold the upper hand over white Germans. Campaigners used crassly racist images of black people as hardly human savages or apes in their appeal to white European solidarity against what they termed *die schwarze Schmach* [‘the Black Disgrace’ or ‘the Black Horror’]. In particular, they foregrounded the spectre of black soldiers raping white German women, or of women having sexual relations of any sort with colonial soldiers, insinuating both symbolic national ‘disgrace’ and racial degradation, since their ‘mixed-race’ children would ‘pollute’ German blood (Camp 2005: 100).<sup>21</sup> In a twist, anti-Semitic, racist German nationalists regarded Jewish conspirators to be the real forces behind the presence of black soldiers.<sup>22</sup> The sexualization of race is critical. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Germans, particularly though not exclusively those on the political right, regarded any black presence that was not deferential and asexual as a threat to national culture and to the collective body of the Volk.<sup>23</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum—but by no means disarticulated from the conservative discourse—‘blackness’ became an important, positively connoted signifier within an urban, hedonistic, and cosmopolitan-oriented culture. So-called *Negrophilie* [negrophilia] manifested itself in music, literature, visual culture, dress and dance. The German phenomenon was a transposition, to some degree, of the (larger) French *négrophilie* phenomenon. In Paris, African American intellectuals and artists mingled with migrants from French colonies in Africa and the Caribbean, where other Black modern ‘renaissances’ were taking place, creating a highly productive crucible not only for modernist art and anti-colonial political thought, but also for an urban entertainment culture.<sup>24</sup> Practices such as going out to listen and dance to jazz, putting on ‘African’ jewelry and clothing, adorning the home with masks and other ‘racial’ items, or going to themed parties, bars, and cabarets, provided access to what people considered black or generically African culture.<sup>25</sup> What started as the prerogative of a few, upper-class or bohemian city-dwellers soon ‘trickled down’ to the popular world and to more provincial regions via advertising, visual culture, recorded music (a novelty) and touring

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<sup>21</sup> See also Pommerin (1979); Koller (2001); Mass (2006); Wigger (2007); Lewerenz (2011).

<sup>22</sup> On the confluence of anti-Black and anti-Semitic racism, see Haehnel (2010).

<sup>23</sup> On conservative German anti-black racism in debates about mass and/or popular culture, see Maase (1997: 175ff).

<sup>24</sup> Berlin’s *Negrophilie* came somewhat later and never matched Paris (Lotz 2004: 256). On German *Negrophilie* see Hopkins (2011); on French *négrophilie* see Archer-Straw (2000) and Shack (2001).

<sup>25</sup> As before African and African American imagery were semiotically conflated, partly due to a lack of adequate musical and sociocultural knowledge (Lotz 2004: 259).

musicians, and film.<sup>26</sup> Smaller Variété routines developed into larger-scale revues like the ‘Chocolate Kiddies,’ the ‘Revue Nègre,’ and ‘Black People.’ Some performers—most famously Josephine Baker—even became household names (Nenno 1997; Archer-Straw 2000). Musically, ragtime gave way to jazz, which was the soundtrack to fashionable new dances like the Charleston, Shimmy and Foxtrot, and became a symbol of Weimar era culture in the course of the 1920s (Lotz 1997; 2004; Nagl 2009: 692). Jazz became an embodiment of newness, urbanity and Americanness (Weiner 1991; Lange 1996; Partsch 2000; Budds 2002). Americanness and ‘mongrel’ American culture had themselves become themes for German cultural criticism from the 1910s (Jelavich 1993: 174–175; Ciarlo 2011: 312–314; Mattl 2008).

Straightforward anti-black racism and Negrophilia did not exclude each other here. They might have been contradictory, but at the same time they were mutually constitutive. For example, a backlash of racist opposition and legal battles over supposedly ‘un-German’ performances made Negrophilia more risqué, perhaps even oppositional. A 1929 performance in Munich by Josephine Baker was, for instance, banned by local police because of the supposed threat to public decency posed by the ‘negro-naked-dancer.’ Sexuality was at the core of such sentiments. For Negrophiles and opponents alike there was a chain of equivalence where transgressing sexual propriety articulated with transgressing racial boundaries.<sup>27</sup> Hence, in some crucial ways, Negrophilia itself retained the racial dichotomy of black physicality and white intellectuality (Weiner 1991; Nagl 2009: 636–761).

The influential notion of ‘primitivism’—a major cultural theme of the 1920s—underscored this dichotomy. Many artists and psychoanalysts (among others) believed that ‘civilized’ Westerners might find less repressed ways of life within their own inner

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<sup>26</sup> For example, entertainment venues like *Haus Vaterland* in Berlin, famously dissected by Siegfried Kracauer, provided popular forms of ‘formatted exoticism’ for the new, white-collar class (Nagl 2009: 732). As Siegfried Mattl notes, according to a survey from 1920s Vienna, young blue and white collar workers were the main audience for jazz on the radio, and the Catholic church was its most vocal opponent (2008: 86).

<sup>27</sup> See for example Klaus Mann’s *Mephisto*, and other literary texts to which Marc Weiner (1991) refers in his study of jazz in Weimar era literature. This is also a theme in the 1922 entertainment novel *Das blaue Mal* [The Blue Mark] by Viennese author Hugo Brettauer, which was influenced by W. E. B. DuBois’s writings, and features a Viennese dandy of African heritage who emigrates to the USA and foresees an inevitable ‘racial war.’ Siegfried Mattl ultimately interprets this *Afroamerikanismus* [Afro-Americanism] as an example of ‘popular modernism’ and, more concretely, of a ‘new utopia of a liberal Viennese Jew in the context of virulent anti-Semitism and aborted Jewish emancipation in Central Europe’ (2008: 87).

desires and drives, *but also* within ‘primitive’ societies or ‘races.’ Some sought access to such layers through cultural forms like jazz, or via avant-garde art practice, and in some cases through ethnography.<sup>28</sup> Generally, Negrophilia sat within this wider pre-occupation with primitivism in its many hues. Nonetheless, the engagement of artists with it could be comparatively self-reflexive, and open to irony.<sup>29</sup> As an example, Josephine Baker famously played to the expectation of ‘primitiveness’ and with racializing images. In some of her German performances she would dance before a grotesquely caricatured image of her body. She would attempt to replicate the pose, with intentionally humorous effects that could only challenge the racializing expectations of her audiences (Ciarlo 2011: 322). Primitivism was not the only way of approaching African-American culture. Other ways of thinking about jazz used it as a catalyst for thinking about political struggles in the USA and elsewhere.<sup>30</sup> And as the francophone Négritude movement showed, primitivist discourse *could* also be re-worked into a means of empowerment by anti-colonial Black intellectuals.

A few thousand black people (mostly from the former colonies) are known to have lived in Germany in the 1920s, most of them under precarious conditions, and their history is now being researched extensively (Oguntoye 1997; Aitken & Rosenhaft 2013; Rosenhaft & Aitken 2013).<sup>31</sup> In the inter-war era, European cities became nodes in the transatlantic, transnational network of diasporic travel, trade and communication: A ‘transnational dialectics between colonial migrants, blacks born in Germany and black U.S. Americans’ was set in motion (Nagl 2009: 639). Indeed, between the late nineteenth century and the 1930s, a Black German community began to form. We

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Carl Einstein’s engagement with sub-Saharan African sculpture during the 1910s (Gilman 1982; Fleckner 2006). On jazz and primitivism, especially in the French context, see Gioia (1988). The history of ethnographic surrealism is a slightly different, but related phenomenon (on this, see Clifford 1981; Nettelbeck 2004: 110–114). On ‘primitivism’ directed at rural German farmers, ‘deviant’ groups and the ‘lower’ levels of the psyche, see Warneken (2006: 17–89). Jackson’s periodization (2005) of global Black cultural traffic mainly situates primitivism before the 1920s, but it certainly was an important feature of German Negrophilia at that time.

<sup>29</sup> An element of self-reflexivity, but also, possibly, condescension, was evident, for example in the neologism ‘negern’ [to Negro-ise], which was coined to refer to fashion, art collection, and carnivalesque transgression practices (see Martin & Alonzo 2004: 352). On how the Weimar era image of the ‘funny savage’ could allow a ‘theatre of irony,’ see Ciarlo (2011: 321–322).

<sup>30</sup> Tobias Nagl observes that in some cases, such as Viktor Klages and Viktor Trivas, jazz was seen as a medium through which various political and cultural emancipatory movements could be communicated to German audiences (2009: 667). Marc Weiner (1991) also attributes a more nuanced reading and portrayal of jazz culture to Herman Hesse in his novel *Steppenwolf*.

<sup>31</sup> Some sojourners’ biographies—Josephine Baker, Louis Douglas, Sidney Bechet—are well known; others, like those of Mohamed Husen and Louis Brody, have been reconstructed as well (Nagl 2002, 2012; Bechhaus-Gerst 2007).

cannot delve into this important social history here, however crucial questions arise about the relationship between black people in Germany and Negrophilia. How did it have an impact on their lives? And how did they influence the cultural formation?

These people worked in a variety of jobs, including as language assistants, small business owners, merchants, servants, manual laborers and craftspeople. However performing in show business was particularly important and, for many, it became a survival strategy. Various factors were at play including the economics of German colonial nostalgia.<sup>32</sup> However, Negrophilia created an increased demand for black American culture and quite a few Africans toured as ‘American’ musicians. (Here the term Afro-Americanophilia seems better than the more diffuse Negrophilia.) Some were able to make careers that even spanned decades (Aitken & Rosenhaft 2013).

Employment and relatively good pay were available in the film industry, but most individuals had little or no artistic control over their typecasting. Others were waiters in themed *Negerbars* [Negro Bars]. They too performed to a demand for blackness and black culture, that is to the collective expectations of (white) patrons, and to micro-level demands from managers, directors, and others. Stars like Josephine Baker enjoyed more individual and artistic autonomy.

Among black people in Germany, however, there were also attempts at political self-organization. Although some colonial migrants accommodated themselves to the mood of colonial nostalgia and the image of the ‘loyal Askari,’ many demanded recognition as *Black Germans*. Black entrepreneurs founded associations to protect their interests, for example. In Hamburg, a short-lived *Afrikanischer Hilfsverein* [African Assistance Association] emerged. Some became involved in the Communist International’s attempt to unite its own struggles with those of the colonized, by way of Hamburg’s *Internationales Gewerkschaftskomitee der Negerarbeiter* [International Union Committee of Negro Workers] (Aitken & Rosenhaft 2013).<sup>33</sup> These histories indicate that despite the precarity of citizenship Black German agency was far from hamstrung. There were also ‘hidden transcripts’—anthropologist James Scott’s term for lived experience and the collective knowledge it produces (1990)—behind performances to

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<sup>32</sup> On colonial nostalgia in Weimar Germany, see: Schmokel (1964), Ames, Klotz & Wildenthal (2005), and Mass (2006).

<sup>33</sup> Under the auspices of this organization, Willi Münzenberg and George Padmore published the *Negro Worker* magazine between 1928 and 1933, using Hamburg’s port as a base for international distribution (Martin 2004; Aitken & Rosenhaft 2013).

Negrophile expectations. For instance, Tobias Nagl argues that whilst *Negerbars* were ‘establishments, where [white patrons] could consume race in a danger-free setting, [they] simultaneously also represented important crystallization points in the Black German *Alltag*’ (2009: 733; our translation) Contesting audience expectations, and devising practical strategies for survival, dignity and recognition—in short, a degree of agency—are very much part of the story of Afro-Americanophilia, even though they are hard to reconstruct.

The Weimar era was marked by a Negrophile tendency, of which Afro-Americanophilia was a significant part, and by the extreme racism that surfaced in the Rhineland occupation discourse and the rising Nazi movement. Negrophilia enabled and constrained employment strategies and subjectivities of Black Germans and other black people in Germany. The process involved people and the power relations between them, not just discourses and cultural forms. Conservative opposition to Negrophilia stemmed from both *völkisch* [racial] German nationalism, as well as from anxieties about the fate of Europe and from fixed gender ideas. Negrophilia, in practical terms, took the form of cultural reception, mimetic practices and consumption. Black cultural forms were made accessible and consumable through the new media of film and recorded music. As with the earlier Cakewalk craze, they could take the carnivalesque form of corporeal, physical experiences of dancing, dressing up and feeling immersed. These tended to be momentary entertainments for white Germans, rather than longer-standing engagements and forms of self-fashioning in milieus or subcultures. Advertising and visual culture further meant that Negrophile images had a large reach.

In its content, 1920s Negrophilia was ambiguous. It could accommodate both primitivism and an image of futuristic American modernity, and sometimes self-reflective irony. Despite some exceptions, most cultural texts regarded black and white as polar opposites. Blackness was understood as a ‘racial’ essence that was radically different and, at best, *complementary* to the ethos of contemporary white Europe: It was taken to embody what white Europe had repressed and overcome. In that regard, the basic semiotic structure of much 1920s primitivism was actually more radically binary than some earlier versions of the imagined black/white relation. In leftist politics, the Weimar era saw a new, transnational paradigm of strategic communist worker solidarity, but on a rather small scale. Here, too, black people were often sought out *as blacks*,

although not for the cultural reasons we have examined here, but rather in the context of a global geopolitical strategy and anti-capitalist politics.

The categorical exclusion of black people from German society continued both legally and discursively during the Weimar era, and pre-empted what was to come. Indeed, the forced sterilization of Black Germans—particularly of the 600–800 children of French African colonial soldiers—was mooted as early as 1927, although it was only carried out in the subsequent Nazi era (Campt 2005: 84; Pommerin 1979). As early as 1931, the conservative (yet pre-Nazi) national government announced that there were to be no more stage performances by African Americans (Nagl 2009: 670; Partsch 2000: 218). Similar piecemeal bans (of jazz music, for instance) soon followed on different levels, even though they were not always followed and the situation on the ground was more complicated than those bans might suggest (Schröder 1988; Nagl 2009: 744).

### **The Nazi era**

The Nazi era saw the sharpening of racist discourse, with, for instance, racial science beginning to be taught in schools. There were also very practical consequences, with legal and administrative action taken in relation to African-Americans and black people more broadly. This era transformed the *völkisch* nationalist rhetoric into state policy and state-promulgated violence, which would have dire effects for the group of colonial migrants, black people born in Germany and visiting African-Americans (Samples 1996; Massaquoi 1999; Lusane 2002; Bechhaus-Gerst & Klein-Arendt 2004; Campt 2004; Martin & Alonzo 2004; Dreesbach 2005; Bechhaus-Gerst 2007).<sup>34</sup> Black performers and individuals were subjected to restrictions of various kinds, with most being denied entry or being deported after 1933 (Lewerenz 2006; Nagl 2009: 744; Aitken & Rosenhaft 2013). Black communists and their supporters were forced into migration, or were interned (Martin 2004), as were others, without political reasons. The forced sterilization of the Afro-German children born during the occupation of the Rhineland has already been mentioned. While there was no consistent policy of killing *all* black people in Germany during the Nazi era, some black people were murdered in concentration camps. Furthermore, the government criminalized interracial relationships by forbidding marriages and it tried to force people out of the country. A few hundred Black Germans lived through the Nazi years and the war, but the community that had

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<sup>34</sup> On the Nazi racial state generally, see Burleigh and Wippermann (1991).

begun to form before the Nazi era disappeared. A few black entrepreneurs and performers resorted to forming the *Deutsche Afrika-Schau* [German Africa Show], a travelling troupe that functioned in the tradition of colonial exhibitions (Lewerenz 2006; Aitken & Rosenhaft 2013). The government supported the *Afrika-Schau* for some time and forced a number of black people in Germany to join it as a means of keeping them under surveillance and control. Here, performance really was a last resort for survival.

Discursively, a brief curtailment of overt racism occurred during the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, where the African American track runner Jesse Owen was welcomed enthusiastically by the crowd and the regime attempted to show a friendly façade to the international audience. However, this episode had no long-term impact (Gassert 1997: 193). Building on the earlier tradition of Anti-Americanism, Nazi-era ideological writings about the USA at once scandalized ‘race-mixing’ and predicted the downfall of the USA because of its ethnic heterogeneity. Some authors also appealed to white solidarity in the Global North (Gassert 1997: 240). But there were odd contradictions. It is striking that the Nazi press, despite its conspicuous anti-black racism, used segregation and lynchings in the USA to accuse that country of hypocrisy. In the view of these authors, integrated, multiracial societies simply could not function; black people had to be oppressed and any professed liberal values were a sham.

Nazi ideologues continued to rail against African-American art forms, and jazz was again a particular focus now deemed to be a dangerously sexual music. That is, it could undermine the gender-sex order and thus the nation and particularly the morality of ‘Aryan’ women. They also revived the anti-Semitic Nationalist idea of *Neger-Juden-Jazz* [Negro-Jew-Jazz] as part of a Jewish-propagated plot. Jazz even became an aural equivalent of miscegenation: Indeed some ideologues, here the National Socialist ideologue Richard Litterscheid, regarded jazz as pernicious precisely because it was a *Mischprodukt* [hybrid product] (quoted in Hoffmann 1996: 99). Rhetorical parries were met with administrative action, as media outlets and performance venues were subjected to piecemeal restrictions on the broadcast and performance of swing and jazz (see Schröder 1988; Jost 1997; Lotz & Bergmeier 1997; Zwerin 2000; Budds 2002; Kater 2003). However, as Michael Kater (2003) has shown, the situation on the ground was more complex. Ideological battles were fought out between the reactionary *völkisch* wing and more pragmatic voices within the Nazi Party; but it was recognized that there

was a need for modern, light entertainment dance music. In this context, swing-like music was rebadged as ‘German Dance and Entertainment music.’

What, then, of Negrophilia and Afro-Americanophilia during the Nazi era? The fad did not suddenly dissipate by decree. Afro-Americanophile jazz culture even existed in the concentration camps. Some internees performed for their own entertainment or, at other times, at the beck and call of camp staff (Schumann 1998; Fackler 2000; Peitzmeier 2013). In less extreme circumstances, some young people continued to savour jazz and swing dancing in German cities, their interest sustained by foreign broadcasting, the inherent unpoliceability of music, as well as by privately owned and circulated recordings. The so-called *Swing-Jugend* [swing youth] informal groups comprised largely of middle-class young people, resisted the regime’s attempts to co-opt youth within the banner of the *Hitler-Jugend* [Hitler Youth] and the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* [Association of German Girls].<sup>35</sup> Many young Germans thus found themselves at loggerheads with the regime (Kater 1994, 2003; Barber-Kersovan & Uhlmann 2002). Many individuals were subjected to chicanery in the process; some were incarcerated in concentration camps for failing to toe the line. However, Kater (2003) is somewhat sceptical about the extent to which such subcultural practices with their musical and stylistic Afro-Americanophilia articulated with pre-existing resistance to the regime. He also points out that there were Swing and jazz enthusiasts who could accommodate an interest in African-American culture with right-wing ideological convictions.

### **Proximity and moral Afro-Americanophilia in Postwar West Germany**

After the 1945 defeat (or liberation) of Germany and the consequent occupation by the Allied powers, most Germans’ ideological and cultural allegiances seemed to shift rapidly, at least among the younger generation. In that process, blackness figured in complicated ways and Afro-Americanophilia—now clearly dominant over a more general Negrophilia toward black people—became an important, one could argue foundational, cultural theme in both East and West Germany. The post-Nazi era in West Germany provided its citizens with the liberties of a (somewhat) liberal democracy, strategically tied to the US. Globally, newly founded supranational organizations

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<sup>35</sup> The importance of African American references is documented anecdotally in autobiographical narratives. In one source, a group of jazz fans in Essen in 1938 recorded a song called ‘Harlem,’ which one protagonist retrospectively describes as a ‘holy’ artefact among his high school classmates and as expressive of ‘a worldview’ (*eine Weltanschauung*). See NS-Dokumentationszentrum (n.d.).

including the UN and UNESCO sought to counter racism and the category of ‘race’ as such (Broeck 2011: 129). Discussions of blackness in 1950s and 1960s Germany were increasingly attentive to the changing fate of African Americans and the US Civil Rights Movement. But interest in blackness, black people and black culture also related to a broader ‘historical optimism’ (Jackson 2005: 22) about decolonization, spurred on by such events as the Afro-Asian Bandung conference in 1955, and the independence of numerous African states in the 1950s and early 1960s. This surge of interest was embedded in wider developments and cannot be regarded as a German phenomenon alone: Jackson (2005) sees the time between the mid-1940s and the mid-1960s as the first of two globally resonant postwar phases that were qualitatively and quantitatively significantly more ‘crowded’ with ‘Black cultural traffic’ than earlier decades.

In the West of Germany, occupation by the USA, France and the UK meant that real and mediated engagement with African Americans greatly increased. African Americans were crucial to the great cultural-political topic of the time, Americanization, which, as historian Kaspar Maase (1992) points out, primarily meant African-Americanization for many young German people. The images and sounds of African America were mediated via newly accessible film and popular broadcast media, including the American Forces Network, and the US cultural industries played a pivotal role throughout. The US administration promoted *Amerikahäuser* [American Cultural Institutes] as well as American Studies programs in some German universities, within which African American Studies began to play a significant role (Haselstein & Ostendorf 2005; Boesenberg 2011). For many who lived in the Western zones, the experience of liberation and occupation was connected with a new and unexpected experience of proximity with African Americans (and, in a lesser way, with black French and British soldiers). In today’s popular iconography, images of friendly African American soldiers passing out chewing gum to children stand as metonyms for the entire era, but what is less often said is that such images implicitly gained their meaning and heft from the stark contrast with Nazi propaganda of ‘savage’ black rapists. Returned POWs held in the USA between 1942 and 1946 often also had their own positive experiences of African Americans (Reiss 2002). Despite some conflicts between US soldiers and German civilians in garrison communities, there was considerable sociability and intimacy (Höhn 2002; Goedde 2003; Schroer 2007; Partridge 2008). Many relationships, mostly between German women and American

men, became a topic of local and national discussions. Prostitution was a part of the story, but there were many more reasons why German women sought American servicemen as partners—including African Americans who were often seen as more approachable and interested than many white American soldiers (Schroer 2007).<sup>36</sup>

Again, under the circumstances of occupation and liberation, race, nation and sexuality function as interdependent categories. Damani Partridge argues that in this context the ‘transformative force of inofficial wishes and longings’ was as powerful as more materialistic forces for change in postwar Germany (2008: 97). It is difficult and controversial to ponder how important *sexual* Afro-Americanophilia—the fetishization of black bodies and collective positive expectations of what black men (and, to a lesser extent, women) were like in bed—might have been in individual relationships, but it is unlikely that those relationships were untouched by racial discourses. In any event, African American men began to figure as players in an amorous adventure in a much more concrete sense than before. Sexual relationships no longer needed to take place in fantasy alone. On the African American side, although black GIs did encounter racism in Germany, lower levels of race-based restrictions for occupation soldiers stationed there impelled many of them to favourably compare their German experiences with the racial order at home, especially in the South. Some black servicemen stayed in Germany. Others used their German experiences to fight for equality at home (Schroer 2007; Höhn & Klimke 2010a).<sup>37</sup>

There were, of course, other strands of Afro-Americanophilia, other ways in which Germans called upon African-America. Some people in the Western part of the country who felt they were under the yoke of their American occupiers claimed to identify—in a more rhetorical sense than anything else—with the oppressed station of African Americans (Höhn 2002; Poiger 2000). Colonial history—and a perceived distance from it—was also important. (West) Germans, having lost ‘their’ colonies during World War

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<sup>36</sup> There were black women who worked in nightclubs catering to a predominantly (white) male crowd (Herb 2009). However, this is not well illuminated in the research on what Kevin Mumford (1997) in another national setting calls ‘interzones.’ On similar issues from the 1990s onwards, see Partridge (2012).

<sup>37</sup> For an early, fictionalized account, see also William Gardner Smith’s 1948 novel, *Last of the Conquerors*. The sexual interest in black men (African American and Afro-German) and a sense of feeling ‘used’ as ‘forbidden fruit’ is mentioned also in the well-known memoir by Hans-Jürgen Massaquoi, the son of a white German mother and a black Liberian father, who later emigrated to the USA and worked as an editor for *Ebony* magazine (Massaquoi 1999: 288; Partridge 2008).

I, watched decolonization with detachment or, in some cases, self-righteousness, as their European neighbour, France, fought its own brutal war in Algeria.<sup>38</sup>

Afro-Americanophilia was also prevalent with music enthusiasts, among whom new modes of mass-scale appropriation and subcultural connoisseurship began to form and would provide new social forms for the engagement with African American aesthetics and culture. In the era of early television and mass-mediated pop music, which most historians date as beginning in the mid-1950s, youth subcultures represented a new social form to display Afro-Americanophilia. As Dick Hebdige (1978) explored in his classic study of postwar subcultures in Britain, the appropriation of black US and Jamaican styles—musical, sartorial, and bodily—was vital in the formation of many of the fashions that teddy boys, mods, skinheads and rockers displayed. Whilst German subcultural life-worlds were far from being as diversified or iconic as their British counterparts in the postwar era, German Afro-Americanophile musical enthusiasts of the 1950s and 1960s comprised distinct groups. These groups included rock 'n' roll fans—often defamed as *Halbstarke* [literally 'half strong,' but designating something like juvenile delinquent]—who enjoyed, among other things, the physical release of dancing to rock 'n' roll. There were also self-described true jazz devotees who associated music that had been brought to Europe, in part with support of the US State Department and its Cold War cultural programs, with earnest artistic endeavour, and sometimes twinned it with an interest in French existentialism.<sup>39</sup> The jazz enthusiasts mostly came from a bourgeois student and bohemian milieu, and the rock fans from the working class, at least initially. At the same time, new attitudes to popular culture and tendencies of cultural dehierarchisation began to put such divides in question (Maase 1992; Lange 1996; Poiger 2000; Budds 2002; Siegfried 2006; Hurley 2009).

Outside of such aesthetically committed subcultural circles, the 1950s saw new waves of popular exoticism and a symbolic internationalization of burgeoning consumer culture, including in the worlds of popular *Schlager* [hit] music, film, cooking, and interior design. There were some African American-derived elements here, including pop jazz or a 'black collectible' (Goings 1994) fad for stylized female negro figures

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<sup>38</sup> Sabine Broeck (2011), for instance, speaks of a widespread postwar German desire to finally be on the 'right side of history.'

<sup>39</sup> On the Jazz Ambassadors and State Department programs, see von Eschen (2005).

(Bausinger 1961; Kramer 2012).<sup>40</sup> However, the Black Atlantic was clearly not the *primary* source of popular exoticism at the time; it was not yet a mainstream place of longing across the generations—a *Sehnsuchtsort*—like, say, Mediterranean Southern Europe or the Pacific islands.<sup>41</sup> The spread or ‘democratization’ of commodity exoticism, facilitated by an expanding postwar economy and by the *embourgeoisement* of the lower middle class, made such foreign commodities—which had formerly been a privilege of the few, or, perversely, available through wartime experience—far more accessible to everyday people. This mid-century tendency towards a democratized commodity exoticism is an important milestone in the history of cultural transfers and appropriations and of the shifting significance of alterity.

Serious political discourses about the meanings and the morality of race and racism were also part of the life-worlds of Germans, of course. In both German states, visits by Martin Luther King, Jr, and other activists brought broad attention to discrimination and to the Civil Rights Movement in the USA (Höhn & Klimke 2010a; Broeck 2011). In the literary field, some African American authors, like the Paris-based expatriate James Baldwin, were translated into German, or set as English-language texts for German high school students. These works (Baldwin 1963a, 1963b, 1963c, 1964, 1965, 1968) made Baldwin’s insights into the workings of race and racism in the USA accessible to a large German readership. His bestselling essays elaborated, among other things, a critique of the ‘White Negro’ hipster figure propagated by Norman Mailer, making that critique at least theoretically available in Germany at the time.<sup>42</sup> The methodological challenge posed by the co-presence of these different strands of African American politics and culture is to grasp the potential interrelation between these spheres, that is, their intertextual, interdiscursive and intermedial resonances, transfers and contradictions.

Whilst examples like jazz and Baldwin’s literature may make it seem as if a sudden wave of appreciation for black people and black culture swept post-Nazi society,

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<sup>40</sup> On pop jazz and its role in German *Schlager* films from the 1950s, see Hurley (2010).

<sup>41</sup> On the exoticization of West German *Schlager* during this time, see Karnik and Phillips (2007, ch. 3) and Mendivil (2008). A useful approach to the spatial-temporal hierarchies in such discourses is suggested by Alexander Weheliye’s remarks on popular ‘allochronic technologies’ (2014).

<sup>42</sup> The German translation of *The Fire Next Time* (*Hundert Jahre Freiheit ohne Gleichberechtigung*; Baldwin 1964) sold at least 35,000 copies on its first printing. The essay ‘The Black Boy Looks At the White Boy’ Baldwin’s critique of his former friend Mailer’s ‘noble savage’ stereotype of black men, his heterosexual white male ‘sexual panic’ and refusal to face realities dwelling instead in fantasies, was published in German in 1963 (Baldwin 1963a).

postwar relations with African Americans and black people should generally be read within a polarized context and a general awkwardness. Talk of race and Aryanism might have officially become taboo but the two German states still held their citizenry to be white (Linke 1999; Chin, Fehrenbach, Eley & Grossman 2006; Fehrenbach 2007; Schroer 2007). In the cultural sphere, deeply embedded racist stereotypes of the *Neger* and a belief in the inferiority of black people lived on, thereby maintaining older European traditions, which in some cases were exacerbated by the after-effects of Nazi education and propaganda. In many ways, Frantz Fanon's contemporaneous analyses (1980 [1952]) of anti-black racism in France hold true for the basic binary codes of racial meanings in postwar Germany as well. In a general sense, the relationship of blackness and whiteness was characterized by an understanding of essential difference, mutual exclusiveness (complementarity) and a civilizational hierarchy. This was similar to, but for most enthusiasts no longer as radical as, earlier modes of primitivism. It was also accompanied by the racialized desires that Baldwin and others critiqued.

Extreme forms of racism also continued. In particular, interracial sexual liaisons were an on-going concern for conservative politicians and commentators, who—as they had done decades earlier—made declarations about loose morality and the 'national disgrace' (Höhn 2002; Schroer 2007). Afro-German children of black US servicemen caused anxiety among West German lawmakers, especially when they approached school age in the early 1950s, and their schooling and future life-ways were subject to debate. While many within the West German polity deliberately used the children as an embodied site from which to demonstrate to the Western world that it had learned its lessons from Nazism, those few thousand children were, at least in dominant national discourse, categorized as not German. As a number of memoirs by (Massaquoi 1999; Nejar 2007; Michael 2013) and biographies of Afro-German authors (Achenbach 2004), vividly illustrate, discrimination against Afro-Germans and their parents occurred frequently in everyday life and led to existential crises, but many individuals nonetheless lived their lives within a new German normality (Massaquoi 1999; Achenbach 2004; Laure-al Samarai 2004; Nejar 2007; Michael 2013). It was initially assumed that these Afro-German children should be held in readiness for some future repatriation to North America or even Africa, and indeed many were taken to the USA

(Lemke Muniz de Faria 2002; Höhn 2002; Fehrenbach 2007).<sup>43</sup> The idea of a white national body politic remained thoroughly dominant. As Heide Fehrenbach notes, liberal West German society was able to advocate ‘racial tolerance but insist on maintaining racial difference’ (2005: 150).

Within left-liberal West German discourse, opposition to racism was a morally charged, even foundational conviction that was perceived as part of a larger break with Nazi ideology (Broeck 2011). In that sense, some forms of aesthetic Afro-Americanophilia took a strong *moral*, quasi-abolitionist tone. Postwar lovers of jazz, for example, perceived culturally conservative critiques of jazz to be holdovers from the indoctrination of the Nazi era. As Andrew Hurley’s article in this special issue shows, postwar German opposition to jazz had many bases and political colourings, ranging from the unreconstructed Nazi through to the leftist cultural criticism of Adorno, but it tended to be viewed by the music’s enthusiasts in monochromatic moral terms.

Anti-racist, moral and political Afro-Americanophile discourses on the political Left represented an important sea change in post-fascist society, but they were not without their limits. This holds true for the capitalist West and for the communist East, albeit in different ways. When left-liberal and socialist German discourses indicted anti-black racism, as they often did, they generally referred to American racism—to *other* people’s problems, as it were. German Leftists made important arguments, but they tended to overlook everyday forms of racism and anti-Semitism at home. It can even be argued that heightened interest in American racism could, via a series of moralistic defence mechanisms and projections, surrogate African-Americans for Jewish victims of the Third Reich. Postwar Afro-Americanophilia was often marked by a desire to rule a thick line between oneself and the National Socialist past, and rhetorically countering US racism came at little cost. But the dividend was high; in a mostly unconscious logic of moral displacement and surrogation, it could render postwar liberal Germans *ex post facto* good.<sup>44</sup> Sabine Broeck has called such moralising discourses ‘*Stellvertreter*

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<sup>43</sup> The 1952 West German film *Toxi* (dir. Robert Stemmle) illustrates compellingly the underlying postwar racial liberalism. It is critical of racial prejudice and various ways of instrumentalizing the child, but it finds its happy end when Toxi is adopted by her (respectable) Black family from the USA (Fehrenbach 2007; Fenner 2011). For some Afro-Germans, transatlantic lifeworlds are an important reality and resource, typified by the founding of The Black German Cultural Society in the USA in 1999.

<sup>44</sup> On race, ethnic drag and surrogation in postwar Germany see Sieg (2009). By virtue of the long-standing association between African Americans, Jews and jazz, it is possible to read postwar interest in

[surrogate] abolitionism,' whereby postwar German 'campaigns of political solidarity with black liberation were ... oftentimes predicated on rather vague kinds of emotional 'elective affinity' with black humanity suffering at the hands of white U.S.-American bigotry' (2011: 128). In the process, African Americans were frequently represented 'pornotropically' as passive, yet simultaneously eroticized, victims of racism in the USA.

### **African American culture and political concerns in the GDR**

In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which was under Russian occupation, actual contact with African Americans was very limited and Americanization obviously did not occur on a comparable scale with the West German experience, which is not to say that ideologues did not regard it as a considerable danger for society, especially before the Berlin wall was built in 1961. Aside from a few left-wing African American expatriates, like the Berlin-based singer and teacher Aubrey Pankey, the relatively small group of black people in East Germany consisted of African and African diasporic diplomats and students. A larger black population (though certainly not an African American one) would only emerge in the East German guest worker programs of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>45</sup>

Even though the resident population was tiny, African American culture and political concerns featured prominently in many East German discourses. There was, in a basic political sense, an elective affinity between the socialist state and some important African American intellectuals of the time, including W. E. B. DuBois, Richard Wright and Paul Robeson, who were at least sympathetic toward communist ideals and the anti-imperialist socialist camp in world politics. Building on the interwar communist tradition, the GDR saw itself as an anti-racist state above prejudice, and opposed to forms of imperialism in which racial exploitation was rooted—it attempted to 'see through race' as Loren Kruger (2003) puts it. Official whistle blowing on US racism was an important form of anti-US propaganda, although it could build on genuine desires for social justice.

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jazz as a type of surrogated philo-Semitism (Hurley 2008). On the postwar shift between locating race in Jewishness to blackness, see Fehrenbach (2005: 156).

<sup>45</sup> On Pankey and his opposition to being typecast in operas, as well as the sympathy that he generated, see Rauhut (2008: 237). On the place of ethnic and racial 'Others' in the GDR, see Behrends, Lindenberger and Poutros (2003), which shows how refugees and guest workers were exposed to quite ambivalent messages from both the local populace, and from the regime.

In the realm of aesthetics and culture, the East German state propagated readings of African American expressive forms that were primarily focussed on ‘materialist’ aesthetics and ideology, very much in tune with the ways in which the state viewed culture in general. Some African American culture was identified as a ‘second culture’ in Lenin’s terminology, that is, as the legitimate folk voice of an oppressed working-class people (Rauhut 2008: 232). In that context, African Americans were seen as the epitome of the other America in a positive sense (Rauhut 2008, n. d.; Höhn & Klimke 2010b; Grossman 2011; Gerund 2013). Music like work songs and folk-blues were considered appropriate and worthwhile cultural forms. Spirituals were also thought palatable, provided they could be interpreted in a socialist or more widely humanist frame. Indeed, official approbation was showered on African American spiritual singer and actor Paul Robeson (whose records were also distributed widely in the GDR and after whom streets and schools were named) because of his socialist-communist politics and his work-song and spiritual repertoire.<sup>46</sup> In that sense, a specific kind of Afro-Americanophilia was part of State cultural policy in the GDR.

Some of the critical arguments about the limits of anti-racism to which we referred in the paragraphs above are relevant in this context, too. It should not be forgotten, and most GDR citizens were certainly aware of it, that State anti-racism was propagated by a government that itself oppressed its population in a more straightforward way than in the West. There was, furthermore, a strict dividing line between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ culture. It is striking that East German cultural authorities (similar to conservatives and many ‘old left’ thinkers in the West) clearly wanted black music, for instance, to be appreciated in a well-mannered and rational way. Excess like that displayed in a pop cultural frame was inappropriate.

Hence, if spirituals and folk-blues were ideologically acceptable, then other forms of African-American culture were more problematic. In particular, jazz was met with alternating phases of snap and thaw, alternating ‘like a sine wave,’ as Michael Rauhut puts it (2008: 232). Prior to a relaxation in the late 1960s, the only jazz that was thought appropriate was ‘trad’ or folk-tinged jazz—as opposed to the ‘less authentic’ modern jazz (Rudorf 1964; Noglik 1996; Poiger 2000; Bratfisch 2005; Sellhorn 2005; Schmidt-

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<sup>46</sup> On Robeson, see Dyer (1986) and Duberman (2005). On his relations with the Soviet bloc, see Lewis (1998) and Caute (2003: 446–450).

Rust 2010, 2011). Rock ‘n’ roll—and especially the Beat music of the early 1960s—and its fans suffered in rather radical and violent state crackdowns on supposedly deleterious and supposedly fascist youth behaviour (Poiger 2000; Rauhut 1993, 1996). In this unruly and excessive form, and given the clear enthusiasm for US popular cultural heroes, grass roots Afro-Americanophiles were seen as subversive to the socialist order of things and detrimental to an enlightened, educated, civilized ‘socialist personality.’ For many young people, that was also partly what it was about. Many functionaries also dismissed these musics in openly racist vocabulary. Despite official denials, anti-black racism was clearly a part of East German life (Poiger 2000).

This narrative could go on. Not everything that is of relevance can be covered here; nor has it all been adequately researched. Among the lacunae in a more complete history of Afro-Americanophilia in postwar East Germany, we should mention the state reaction to the Civil Rights and Black Freedom movements (compare Höhn & Klimke 2010a), the connection between these strands and the GDR’s ‘anticolonial’ foreign policy, and, on the cultural side, GDR translations of African American literature like Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1969). A consumer culture began to develop in the GDR too, but it did so more slowly than in the West, and consumption was not supposed to form a primary mode of relating to the world. Rather, the models were international solidarity and exchange as at the World Festival of Youth and Students held in Berlin in 1951 and at events like the annual *Festival des politischen Liedes* [Festival of Political Song]. In this context, blues and blues-rock had a special history in the GDR as a niche (sub)culture, as we will elaborate further in our second survey essay. A full cultural history of what these forms *meant* for listeners and readers has yet to be written.

Clearly, *State* Afro-Americanophilia stands out when compared to other sociocultural constellations in the GDR. This had a politically rationalist form, as opposed to the hedonism of consumer- and pop- culture and their risqué qualities. Its base was in the State, rather than in oppositional groups and subcultures or amongst fan-scholars and aesthetic experts. It professed humanist, anti-racist ideals, with a high grade of abstraction. This officially promulgated type of Afo-Americanophilia also existed in a context where there was a striking difference between official pronouncements and the lived reality of a populace that was widely sceptical of and hostile towards the government it considered red and Russian.

## Conclusions

In summary, when compared not only with the Nazi era but also with the late colonial and Weimar eras, the postwar era saw a continued cultural (and, in the West, political) Americanization. In this context there was a rapid rise and diversification in forms of Afro-Americanophilia. What had primarily been an urban, and more diffusely Negrophile fashion in the 1920s, now also became more specifically African American. It also spread and became democratized amongst a larger group of people. African American culture, or, more precisely, mass-cultural representations based in African American culture, again became something to consume and dance to. We have sketched how Afro-Americanophilia connected with the emerging culture of pop music and with consumer culture more generally. In the process of reception, many young Germans incorporated African American culture into their everyday life-worlds. In the West, they also encountered African American soldiers and began personal encounters and, in some cases, liaisons. Seen from the perspective of African Americans, West Germany became a temporary—in some cases, permanent—place of residence with racial rules that differed significantly from the USA, especially the US South. New spaces of contact and interaction emerged. Official US foreign policy also promoted American culture through a number of channels. High-cultural readings of jazz, for example, propagated a more austere, modernist Afro-Americanophile sensibility.

At the same time, many forms of postwar German Afro-Americanophilia were tinged by a remarkable earnestness and moral fervour that set them apart from the ironic, ‘funny savage’ theme in much 1920s Negrophilia. We can only speculate about how this earnestness articulated with wider tendencies of postwar culture—with the legacy of the millions dead; the destruction; the felt or repressed guilt; the simultaneously felt sense of German victimhood—but it seems clear that it was closely connected with a wide-spread desire for a new, ethical position in the world. The moral fervour of some Afro-Americanophile sentiment sprang from a combative context of racism and anti-Semitism in a post-Nazi society, where opposition to African American culture was, often for good reason, equated with the legacy of National Socialism. It could also be connected to optimistic socialist-humanist sentiments of human equality

In both countries, official policy pronounced a radical break with Nazi philosophy and opposed explicit anti-black racism. In that sense state policy was Afro-Americanophile.

Yet, notably in regard to citizenship and immigration rules, there were limits to the anti-racism policies of both states. With some exceptions there also seems to have been a broad cultural continuation of categorical thinking about race. There was also no complete break with both the primitivist mode of 1920s *Negrophilie* and its implication of a ‘complementary’ separation of black and white. In this way, postwar Afro-Americanophilia, despite all its complexities and ambiguities, often reproduced racist images and patterns of thought, albeit weighted positively. In our second joint survey essay, we examine more of the implications of such projections and encounters.

The division of Germany added an extra layer of complication. Some African American-derived cultural forms were welcomed within the East German State’s cultural policy, indeed more so than by conservative Western politicians. But these forms needed to be read in socialist terms, and various unruly aspects of African American culture were subjected to crackdown when they seemed to be deleterious to the socialist project. African American culture also became a US tool in Cold War era politics, via broadcasting, so-called ‘jazz ambassadors’ and other means. A rationalist and folkloristic mode of Afro-Americanophilia, together with clear political statements against US racism and imperialism, characterized the East’s public sphere, but that did not necessarily converge with the logic of informal everyday life, where the regime had little credibility. In the West, a more consumerist version of ‘xenophilia’ gained in importance, and youth subcultures formed in various contact zones. Despite the West German government’s official anti-racism, there was a ‘cultural bloc’ of conservative politics and culture, which clearly continued to display a racialized understanding of what was and was not German. Younger Afro-Americanophiles, be they pop-cultural or of the more serious and moralistic strand, discerned the continuation of Nazi patterns. These shifting sands could render certain types of German Afro-Americanophilia political in different ways at different times.

With this as a preface, we now leave the first part of our timeline in the mid-1960s, prior to the rise of the counterculture in Germany and the emergence of the Black Power Movement in the USA. At that point Afro-Americanophilia took different forms and radicalized significantly, and its patterns afterwards also came to be directly challenged, including by a self-identifying Afro-German community. Those are matters addressed in our second survey essay.

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