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LOS ANGELES

Seeing and Disrupting:

Anti-Blackness, Public Culture, and the Place of Berlin

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

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

by

Misa Dean Dayson

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Seeing and Disrupting:

Anti-Blackness, Public Culture, and the Place of Berlin

by

Misa Dean Dayson

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Sherry B. Ortner, Chair

While it is generally accepted in Germany that migration, immigration, and integration are key social issues that must be addressed in the 21st century, the idea of adding racism to this litany is generally rejected. This omission prevents both recognition and analysis of the implicit ways the "logic" of *race* is inscribed onto conceptions and discussions of culture, nationality, and citizenship. Contemporary images of Black bodies seen in German art institutions and popular media, including the use of Blackface, most pointedly demonstrate this phenomenon. This dissertation, informed by 15 months of ethnographic research in Berlin, Germany, and Europe, intervenes into this silence about *race* by examining how Blackness is depicted in European public culture. Informed by the theoretical framings of Black Studies and Decolonial Studies, I argue that European public culture demonstrates how a normative, racialized white European subject is constructed through anti-Blackness. Understanding anti-Blackness as the fulcrum by

which Western modernity emerged, and best understanding it as a structuring grammar of Western society that depends on a racialized hierarchical ordering of human beings—here understood as coloniality— I embark on an ethnography of racial formation. In so doing, I explore the analytical benefits of conceiving of Blackness as an object of knowledge, rather than a subject of fact. I then narrow my focus to non-mainstream art spaces in Berlin arguing that, and examining why, they are places that both perpetuate and challenge hierarchical ideas and practices of race. In such spaces of culture, I forward the idea that ethnography allows us to highlight "the shadows" of coloniality. I argue that this in turn provides a needed articulation of coloniality and anti-Black racism in German and European society in and of itself, and not explicated through theories of political economy, secularism, or nationalism.

The dissertation of Misa Dean Dayson is approved.

Jessica Cattelino

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2016

This dissertation is dedicated to Christola Phoenix and Don Dayson. The two beautiful people who first modeled for me what critical thinking and speaking/writing truth to power looks and sounds like.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I do deeply thank,

All the artists, activists, scholars, arts workers, and every combination in between, who shared their time with me in conversation for this project. In particular, Mekonnen Mesghena, Wagner Carvalho, Philippa Ebéné, Yvette Mutumba, Noa Ha, Jason Merrill Benedict, Regine Rapp, Christian de Lutz, and Sharon Dodua Otoo. Your words and dedicated work were an inspiration and a pleasure to witness.

My dear friends in Berlin who generously made the city feel like home to me with open doors, lots of laughter, inspiring intellectual community, delicious food, joyful strolls through neighborhoods, parks and lakes, and helpful navigation through German bureaucracy. I am so thankful to have met you. A special thanks for your invaluable friendship and support of my project goes to Sandrine Micossé-Aikins, Aicha Diallo, and Pablo Hermann.

My parents, who are my life-long and loving cheerleading squad. Thank you for teaching me the values of persistence, faith, and loving community. Thank you also for nurturing my insatiable curiosity about the world with lots of books! I would not be where I am today without you.

My immediate and extended family for showering me with you never-ending love, support, wisdom, laughter and encouragement. I would not be where I am today without you.

My dear friends near and far in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, Toronto, Maryland, DC, and New York. Thank you for unconditionally and lovingly nourishing my soul, mind, and body. You all constantly awe and inspire me with the work that you do, and just being the people who you are. I would not be where I am today without your support of simply believing in me, even when I second-guess myself at times. A special shout out goes to the Brooklyn Harlem Writers Group for sharing your helpful feedback on early chapter drafts of my dissertation. Writing this dissertation was often a solitary exercise, but it took the loving support and encouragement of my entire community, demonstrated in so many humbling ways, to help me see this project through. I could not have completed this project without my village and there are no words available to adequately express my gratitude to you.

My partner, Jules, who is and has been my rock. I could not have completed this project without your love and support. Thank you for unfailingly supporting me as I pursue my ambitions. Thank you for holding me down during this writing journey, especially in the moments when I was in tears, near my wit's end, or just utterly consumed by the process. You somehow always found ways to make me laugh and see the other, brighter, side of the picture. I am so thankful to share this life with you.

My committee members*:* Jessica Cattelino, Fatima El-Tayeb, Todd Presner, Mariko Tamanoi, and my committee chair, Sherry B. Ortner. Thank you for your engagement, invaluable support and encouragement, and helpful critical feedback of my work. Your questions, insights, and

challenges pushed me to better articulate my ideas, and to continue my scholarly explorations. I look forward to working with you again in the future.

My larger academic community: Amy Abdou, Artwell Cain, Philomena Essed, David Theo Goldberg, Ramón Grosfoguel, Dienke Hondius, Trica Danielle Keaton, Kwamé Nimako, Stephen Small, and Gloria Wekker. Your invaluable lectures, insights, and engagement at the Summer School on Black Europe greatly aided in my growth as a scholar. Thank you also to the National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacy, for housing this program for a time. It was a pleasure being able to engage with the other students of the program, who are all producing fascinating work. To Saidiya Hartman and Neferti X.M. Tadiar for inviting me into the inspiring, challenging, and invigorating intellectual community you created in your *Genealogies of Feminism* seminar. The through line of my dissertation took shape in your course, for which I will forever be grateful. Lastly, to Deborah Willis, for telling me to "head West" and go to graduate school, and for your invaluable support while I wrote this dissertation.

The Anthropology Department Angels, Tracy Humbert and Ann Walters. Thank you for always helping me navigate the bureaucratic aspects of this PhD adventure on a day-to-day basis with lots of positive energy and humor.

Last, but definitely not least, a number of fellowships were instrumental in allowing me to complete my research and dissertation: the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation German Chancellor Fellowship, the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship under Grant No. 2011105271, the German Academic Exchange Service German Studies Research Grant, and the 2015-2016 UCLA Dissertation Year Fellowship. Thank you so much for supporting my work.

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German (good); French (fair)

Introduction

Towards the end of my interview with Philippa Ebéné, director of the Berlin-based cultural community center, Werkstatt der Kulturen, she asked, "Why are you here in Berlin? Why are African-Americans so interested in us Afro-Germans? Why do you all continue to come here and study us?" Surprised by the content and directness of her question, I was unable to fully answer Philippa in the moment. I realized then that I had never fully answered that question for myself. Instead, I was often grappling with a similar question, posed by my graduate peers and senior colleagues in various academic settings. With semi-incredulous smiles, curiosity, and high-pitched voices they would ask, "How did you end up doing research in Berlin? In Germany?" I noticed that such questions were never posed to White graduate peers who flew off to parts of Africa, South America, India, China, and the Pacific Southwest for their research. I gathered that my questioners were less interested in the substance of my work, and more concerned with the seeming incongruity of my person and the location of my work. Such questions, in Anthropology, remind me how odd it still seems for a Western Other to go out and study the West.

But I digress. To begin to answer Philippa's question, it is important to explain how the roots of my research are based in a variety of discussions I had with Afro-Germans during my second visit to Berlin in the summer of 2009. My visit at the time was purely for fun. It was during the month of August, in between my last day of work at the end of July at a film production and development company, and moving to Los Angeles at the beginning of September to begin my first year of doctoral studies in Anthropology at UCLA. I traveled with three friends from college to visit another one of our college friends, Justin, who had moved to Berlin a year and a half prior to pursue his dancing career. We were all artists in our own right:

dancers, photographers, filmmakers, and visual artists. Within a week of my arrival we had met Berlin-based artists, mostly Afro-Germans, but also African and Serbian artists. Together we created and filmed a collaborative performance piece that we performed spontaneously in three neighborhoods in Berlin: Kreuzberg, Prenzlauerberg, and Mitte via Alexanderplatz.

This international meeting of artists did not occur by chance. In between performing in various dance productions, Justin taught weekly hip-hop and Michael Jackson dance classes. Through this class he began friendships with some of his regular attendees, many of them self-described Afro-Germans. Justin's experiences, and those shared by of some of his dance students, about growing up Black in Germany, inspired him to have his visiting artist friends meet and work with his students to talk about how race and racism were experienced and felt in the age of Barack Obama as President of the United States of America.

Through spontaneous conversations in cafes or outdoor markets, and during conversations with Justin's students, three themes constantly arose in discussions with Afro-Germans living in Berlin. The first was a sentiment that on the yearly eve of the then 20th anniversary of reunification, Germany was not really a unified country. The second was the sentiment that in the year of the 20th anniversary of the Berlin Wall falling, there still existed invisible walls that shut out some German citizens from full social inclusion in German society. Often, these citizens had brown faces. The last theme was the idea that as a Black person in America I was somehow better off than my Afro-German counterparts. At some point in a discussion, my new acquaintance would say something along the lines of, "You are lucky to be a Black person in America," or "It seems better to be a Black person in American than a Black person here in Germany." In total shock at hearing this statement, I would respond, "You are lucky. It seems better to be a Black person living in Europe than in the States."

This project was set in motion by a grass-seems-greener-on-the-other-side moment, crystalized during a conversation in the middle of the Friday Turkish Markt, a weekly open-air food and clothing market held along the canals in the heavily Turkish-German and increasingly international neighborhood of Kreuzberg. It seemed clear to me that there was a significant gap in understanding between Black Americans and Black Europeans, of our histories and/or lived experiences, of the effects and affects of the ideologies and practices of race. Most significant in that moment a curiosity was born in me. What exactly were the histories and experiences of Black Germans and Europeans? The words "Black" and "European" let alone "Black" and "German," seemed oxymoronic to me.

Therefore, the first answer to Philippa's question as to why I was in Berlin, why I was so interested in studying the experiences and histories of Afro-Germans, was that I wanted to rectify my own ignorance. As someone with a background in African American Studies, who had also studied both the effects of the European Transatlantic Slave Trade, and colonialism, on African countries through an intense study-abroad program in Cape Coast, Ghana, I thought of myself as well-versed in discussions about the African Diaspora and Critical Race Theory. And yet, Black European history was not included in these discussions. Nor had it ever occurred to me, until my 2009 visit to Berlin, to consider Black Europeans as part of the African Diaspora. As a native of Harlem, New York, I grew up hearing stories about Black artists like Josephine Baker, James Baldwin, and Richard Wright, who found artistic and personal freedom and success in a seemingly more enlightened, racism-free Europe. More specifically, these stories centered around Paris, which became a signifier for Western Europe at large.

However, there was nothing to draw from in my cultural archive and education that could give me an understanding of what it was like to grow up Black and European, or Black and

German. The only history I could remotely access was that of Black Britons, which is steeped in a discourse of post-colonial, migrant relations to the United Kingdom. The only German history of ideologies and practices of race that I was familiar with was that of the rise of the National Socialist Party and its utilization of anti-Semitism to garner popularity and justify the targeting and genocide of Europe's Jewish population.

When it came to the history of the African Diaspora in Germany I encountered a total and complete void of thought and information. I wondered: Was this history common knowledge? If it was not, why was this the case? Why did some communities know about the history of Black people in Germany, while others did not? What was gained and what was lost for the general public, and us as scholars, by not knowing this history? I felt completely American in not knowing this particular history of the African Diaspora. I had unconsciously subscribed to a pervasive belief that the "problems" of race and racism were a uniquely American and South African problem, and had limited my ideas about the African Diaspora to North America, the Caribbean, South America, and the African continent. When I thought and talked about what it meant to be Black in the world, I was speaking from a conception of race and Blackness informed by a definitive American perspective.

My conception of the African Diaspora was not unique, then or now. Such histories are often framed within a monolithic, hegemonic, diasporic narrative of forced, traumatic expulsion from a longed for "homeland" (Clifford 1997). In this case, the longed for homeland is the African continent and the forced expulsion is the European Transatlantic Slave Trade of captured Africans. Jacqueline Nassy-Brown, in her ethnography of Black Liverpool, argues that such popular conceptions of the African Diaspora, which emphasize subjective identity based on the desire for connection to other diasporic peoples across space and time, "can silence and make

invisible the experiences, histories and identities of certain kinds of Black subjects" (Brown 2005:201). These conceptions also perpetuate a cataloging of Black experiences throughout the world that, in substance, do not aide in actually understanding how Black subjects make sense of themselves and their place in society.

This silencing becomes even more pronounced with regard to Afro-European histories. Afro-Dutch anthropologist, Gloria Wekker, in her essay, "Another Dream of a Common Language: Imagining Black Europe…", considers the nature of this silencing by pointing to

> "…The simultaneous desirability and impossibility of being a Black European. I do not think that the notion of Black Europe or of being a Black European has blossomed in many contexts within Europe itself yet; it is a desire…a discourse that is subjugated…and one that is unevenly spread across the continent and internally variable. It is a potential that has yet to come to fruition. In my experience…the only time when I am called a European is in an American context. This should alert us to an important aspect of the situatedness of the concept"(Wekker 2009:278).

Wekker's discussion about the challenges of locating Black Europe supports Stuart Hall's assertion that the experiences of Black people in Europe must be understood within their specific historical and cultural contexts (Rutherford 1990). In this way, I found focusing on the history of racial formation in Afro-German communities offered a unique view into how African Diasporic identities and communities form in Europe, outside of the context of American slavery. For me, Afro-German history seemed particularly nuanced because the genesis was popularly connected to dominant narratives of German war history of the 20th century. Within the history of World War II specifically, Afro-Germans did not appear to be a part of the story of the lived effects of living under a repressive, white-supremacist state. Michelle Wright furthers this discussion by examining the omission of European colonialism from public discourse in relation to how the end of World War II is often discussed in European dominant public and academic discourse as

the end of crimes against humanity and racist state practices. Wright argues that framing fascism in this way allows for a continuing construction of European identities along homogenizing racialized lines, while simultaneously denying the salience of racial formations and racism in every day European life (Wright 2009).

Additionally, scholarship has refuted the notion that Afro-German history is a result of relationships between White German women and Black American or African military men stationed in Germany during the two World Wars. Instead, Afro-Germans represent a group of people who reflect both indigenous German histories, as well as a series of individual migrations over time, with a history dating to the mid-17th century (Reed-Anderson 2000). Through the oral histories of Afro-Germans who lived and survived in Germany during the Third Reich era, Tina Campt illustrates how a Black German subjective identity formed outside of a dominant collective history about a specific moment in Germany history, and prevailing ideas about what it means to be "Black" (Campt 2005). Scholarship has also demonstrated the way Black racial identities have been instrumental in nation-building in Germany, particularly throughout the 19th and 20th centuries during German colonialism (Smith 1998; Zimmerman 2012); and even during and after the Cold War division and reunification of Germany (Borneman 1992; Partridge 2008).

Afro-German/Afro-Deutsche is a word coined by Afro-German writers, May Ayim and Katarina Oguntoye, nearly thirty years ago to frame the complexities of what it means to grow up both Black and German. The creation of the term emerged from a years-long transnational, Black feminist dialogue between Audre Lorde and Afro-German women who took classes with her at Freie University. *Afrodeutche,* then, refers to German citizens who self-identify as such. While they may be born and raised in Germany, they have a familial history in the country that is not defined solely by migration to Germany, are not religious minorities, and speak German as a

native language. Afro-German collective experiences are informed by a logic that imagines race within specific national boundaries (Kilomba 2008). In the creation of the socio-political term "Afro-German," wider public discussions about cultural citizenship and racial identity formations in Germany began, as well as the documentation of the long historical presences of Black people in Germany (Opitz 1991). Focusing on Afro-German history, I sought to understand how Black European histories, experiences, and perspectives disrupt the notion that all Afro diasporic "histories, experiences, and perspectives will map neatly on each other, or onto their American or Caribbean or African counter/parts, as well as reveal the need for more focus on the 'situated encounters between specific members of Black communities'" (Brown 2009: 209).

With this project, I initially sought to build upon scholarship that called for a deeper theoretical analysis and understanding of subjective identity formations of Black people and communities in Europe. Using ethnographic material seemed productive in answering the question, "Where is Black Europe?" and highlighting the continued under-theorization of the African Diaspora. My work thus sought to build from this question by further conceptualizing how Black German identities are understood and discussed in terms outside of dominant narratives about Black identities. My aim was for more insight into the intersection of race, culture, and nationality as expressed through interactions of various Black communities living in Berlin.

Berlin, Space and Place

At the start, this project centered itself in discussions about art scenes in general, and art and identity, in particular. In a city where "everyone is an artist," which makes them "poor, but

sexy,"[1] I situated my questions within Bourdieu's assertion that art production, exhibition, and reception is never just about the art (Bourdieu 1993). That is, art spaces are best understood as "fields of cultural production" that reflect differing social power relations, as well as social practices of domination and social stratification. Well-known works on art spaces illustrate Bourdieu's theories about the overlap of cultural, symbolic, and economic capital (Becker 2008; Thornton 2009), as well as the power imbalances within art spaces as they relate to value creation and cultural definitions through works of art (Marcus and Myers 1995). They further demonstrate that the impact and meaning of a work often has little to do with what the artists' intentions are, and more to do with the social networks that bring the works to a wider public.

While these ethnographies are useful in understanding how art spaces in Berlin fit into this discussion about the relationship of art production to the creation of cultural identities, they tend to either look at art practices from the top down, or they explore the relationship of indigenous art communities to Western art markets. This project's initial aim was instead to investigate the relationship of a specific Afro-European community (Afro-Germans) to European (Berlin) art spaces. Furthermore, I wanted to explore how these spaces were used by certain groups in fostering discussions about contemporary definitions and conceptions of European identity. I was particularly concerned with documenting the interactions that occur within grass roots and non-mainstream art spaces in Berlin. I was also doubly interested in investigating the various ways people use the cultural capital of Berlin as a place, rather than art in and of itself, for similar and differing socio-political purposes.

While not often discussed in the many blogs, Facebook posts, articles, and popular discussion about the city, Berlin is considered a productive site to witness the "playing out of the

[1] A quote made famous by Berlin's Social Democrat mayor, Klaus Wowereit

competing narratives of German identity" because it is the symbol and witness of major political and historical moments that demanded a constant renegotiation of German identity for part of the 19th, and most of the 20th century (Mandel 2008). As a reunited country, Germans continue to debate and discuss how to define a unified German identity. My initial intervention in these discussions was to ask how contemporary Afro-Germans were vocalizing their experiences and identities as such. I sought to examine how and why these constructions are manifested, contested, and navigated through art spaces, in ways that are not occurring in other parts of society. In so doing, I wanted to explore how Afro-Germans were doing this amidst popular discussions of cultural identity and assimilation that frame these issues along secular/non-secular, citizen/immigrant binaries. In this way, I planned to investigate how the language of "culture" took on the meaning and symbolism of the language of "race."

I chose to explore these questions in non-mainstream art spaces in Berlin because these were the places where conversations about race, culture, and identity seemed to occur the most. Art exhibitions I attended helped shaped this impression. The 2011 Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst [The New Society for Visual Arts/NGBK] exhibition, *Making Mirrors,* exhibited the work of visual artists who critically reflected on, and deconstructed, the normative white gaze in museums and galleries in contrast with their own perspectives and concepts of identity as Afro-German and German people of color.[2] The 2010 multi-site exhibition, *Who Knows Tomorrow,* focused on the continued legacies of colonial histories between Europe and the African continent. Furthermore, such spaces seemed best to continue the documentation of a nascent cultural shift in conceptions of cultural identity in Germany because of the various socio-political uses of such art spaces by Afro-Germans outside of mere exhibition and performance.

[2] *Making Mirrors: Von Körpern und Blicken/Of Body and Gaze* Exhibition Catalog

The reputation of the arts in the Berlin was another factor that shaped my decision to pursue my research through non-mainstream art spaces. During my research years and travel to Berlin, the city was also popularly seen as *the* place to be for innovative art production across a wide spectrum of disciplines, including music and dance in particular. The places many artists and audiences flocked to were not in the more established museums and cultural institutions of the city, like the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum, or the Berlin State Opera. They were instead found in the small store-front spaces converted into galleries, art studios, or pop-up performance spaces, often in the neighborhoods of Kreuzberg, Neukölln, and increasingly, Wedding. Or they were found in larger institutions, in those same neighborhoods, with dedicated theater and performance spaces, but smaller budgets than cultural spaces with longer and more established reputations. Such activities helped create Berlin's reputation as an arts epicenter within the global art world.

As English scholar James Smethurst has demonstrated, cultural institutions have been historically important in creating spaces to give voice to, and disseminate to a wider audience, counter-narratives to mainstream ideas and practices of culture, nation, and racial identity (Smethurst 2005). Within the realm of visual culture, especially public visual culture, it can be a site of power and remembrance (Huyssen 2003). Other scholars have demonstrated how visual representation is particularly important in defining cultural identity amongst Afro-Diasporic communities (Campt 2012; Willis 2009; Willis 2002). I thus found it useful to think of visual representation as a vehicle that best captures the dynamism and complexity of hybrid black identities (Hall1990). My initial project aim, therefore, was to work through and beyond a focus solely on the relationship between identity and visual representation (Diawara 2009; Mulvey 2009), and instead focus on building an understanding of art produced by Afro-Germans

specifically, and European people of color, in general, as a practice where both transnational community building, and the construction of new, disruptive, and paradigm shifting identities occur (El-Tayeb 2011; Wynter 1992).

New Questions

However, when I arrived to Berlin in September 2012 to start my research year, I soon realized that the scope of my research and research questions would have to change. My proposed research was predicated on the idea that there were many spaces dedicated to Afro-German art specifically. The reality demonstrated otherwise. Rather, there were many spaces, like Ballhaus Naunynstraße in Kreuzberg, and Werkstatt der Kulturen in Neukölln, or NGBK in Kreuzberg, that had progressive agendas and made themselves amenable to, or were supportive of, art produced by and about German people of color. Both Ballhaus and Werkstatt were important institutions that I regularly returned, to or talked about with friends while living in Berlin. They both also feature prominently in this dissertation. However, events happening in the city, while I was living there, made clear to me that my research questions would not be answered in physical spaces and institutions alone.

While conducting my research in Berlin, I saw that there were a lot of public conversations, activism, and art exhibitions and productions occurring in a de-centralized way, focusing on one institution would not fully answer my questions. I also found that there was a lot of slippage in the use of terms occurring in public discourse about African-descended artists in Berlin. "African-descended" increasingly seemed a more useful term than "Afro-German" or "Black people in Berlin" because many exhibitions, performances, and discussions featuring Black people, or about anti-Black racism, incorporated African, Afro-German and Afro-

diasporic artists. In addition, I found myself not focusing solely on currently or formerly Berlin-based Black artists and arts workers, even though I spoke with and interviewed many for this project, including the multimedia artist, Philip Metz, sculptor Sonia Elizabeth Barret, poet Philipp Khabo Koepsell, writer Sharon Dodua Otoo, performance artist Bibiana Arena, curator Yvette Mutumba, and editors and cultural critics Aicha Diallo and Julia Grosse. I felt like the bulk of my interviews and conversations with them required a different project that allowed for more time, space, and collaboration to properly manifest than what a dissertation could provide.

The gentrification of neighborhoods in Berlin, and the disbursement of funding for the arts were constant topics throughout my stay in Berlin. From public protests preventing evictions of families from apartments whose rents suddenly spiked, to public forums questioning who the city belonged to and for what purposes, to political organizing among independent artists and the owners of art spaces to lobby the Berlin senate for increased funding specific to their non-mainstream demographic, it seemed clear that there was a growing discontent over the fact that no one seemed to be materially supporting the people that made Berlin sexy. In everyday conversation—among a cross section of artists and arts workers in fashion, music, dance, literature, and art— people spoke about the increased difficulty of making a living in Berlin amidst rising rents and too few paid opportunities. Thus, my research focus shifted to understand Berlin, and the art spaces within, as a place generative of new ideas, visions, and practices of what it means to belong to and be from a space.

I was still interested in understanding how independent Berlin art spaces fostered socio-political community building to name and challenge contemporary forms of racism and hegemonic and racially determined notions of German culture and identity. However, a lot of the anti-racist activities I observed were occurring in de-centralized ways, such as with the work of

the anti-racist theater watch group, Bühnenwatch. Bühnenwatch started spontaneously through Facebook after someone saw a poster advertising the 2012 theater production of "I'm Not Rappaport, " which featured two white men sitting on a bench, with one of the men in Blackface to signal the Black character in the play. The group's mission is to call attention to and challenge the historically racist practice of the use of Blackface in contemporary German theater, dance, and opera productions. Through various online, written, and in-person protests and interventions, Bühnenwatch brought increased publicity to an issue that was considered a non-issue in the mainstream German public. One of the organizers, Sharon Dodua Otoo highlighted the importance of the work that Bühnenwatch did,

> "I'm so looking forward to the day when someone does a PhD or at least a masters on Bühnenwatch and on this process. Because if you read the press at the beginning on Schlosspark Theater and you read the press now, it's completely different. In the press now, they mention the word racism. They mention critical whiteness. They mention racist stereotypes and mention traditions, blackface traditions in Germany. They don't just outsource it to The States. I would say we did achieve to raise consciousness and to raise the bar on the discussions that are being heard. We're still down there in terms of our influence but we have made a change, made an impact."[3]

The activities of groups like Bühnenwatch demonstrated that art spaces, and spaces of public culture, were places conducive to both perpetuating and challenging anti-Black racism.

Taking a cue from Jacqueline Nassy-Brown, I wanted to examine Berlin in conversation with Black identities, through a lens of public space as signifier rather than as a fixed locality (Brown 2005). In this way, we can better comprehend how a space can signify different things to different groups of people who have unequal access to political, social, and economic resources. Thinking of space as a signifier disrupts a racial equation of nationality, seen in most parts of

[3] October 2013 interview with author.

Europe, and allows for further exploration into the intersection of race and nationality on local levels. However, unlike Brown, I am not interested in how race becomes a spatial issue through debates and contestations of memories about what occurred in the space. I am interested instead in how the space and place of Berlin produces spaces of dialog to talk about race, culture, and national identities in Germany from the starting point of African-descended perspectives.

This brings me to the second part of my answer to Philippa Ebéné's question, “Why are you here in Berlin? Why are African-Americans so interested in us Afro-Germans? Why do you all continue to come here and study us?” Earlier I stated that I started this project to rectify my ignorance about the histories of Afro-German and Afro-European people. The following question arose, how does one name an experience that is not framed around massive forced or historical migrations, or around a well-documented history of oppression and struggles for civil rights? How should I understand the form and substance of my ignorance which lead me to believe that racism was not an issue in Germany or Europe. What allowed for me to think this?

My understanding of experiences and conceptions of Blackness was that they were inextricably linked to histories of racial oppression. What was the experience of Blackness outside of these histories? What did it mean to live in a society that did not have legal racial segregation or slavery within its borders, and still be made to feel forever like an "insider-outsider" (Wright 2003)? When I began this project, I was often struck by what felt like a massive heavy weight of silence around these issues of race in the popular German imagination. Without relying on an articulation of racism against Black people that was historically and geographically specific to the United States in particular, and the New World, in general, how could I articulate what I observed and experienced—that Blackness was marked as other-than European, and anti-Black racism was a continuing reality?

My research year in Berlin demonstrated to me that talking in the terms of "racism" would not help me accurately articulate the structure in place that allowed for me and the Afro-German women I met in 2009 to each think that the moving through space as a Black person was easier to do on the other's side of the Atlantic. Furthermore, using the word, "racism," in a German context would easily evoke the history of Nazi Germany, especially when I articulated racism as tied to institutionalized white supremacy, here defined as “a logic of social organization that produces regimented, institutionalized, and militarized conceptions of hierarchized ‘human’ difference” (Rodríguez 2006:11). The analytical frameworks of coloniality and the ontology of Blackness more aptly capture why Blackness, in a Western context, signals "other-than" for both Black Americans and Afro-Germans.

Therefore, there are a few key texts and concepts around which my dissertation revolves, all connected to the intellectual imperative of Black Studies “…as a means of pointing to the way in which Western concepts of the subject and the nation are both responding to Black experiences in the West” (Wright 2003:4), and many connected to Franz Fanon's examinations of the nature, symbolism, processes and purposes of "becoming Black" in Western modernity. Alexander Weheliye, in *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human,* further elaborates this imperative by defining Black Studies "…as a (non)disciplinary formation that brings to the fore blackness, and racializing assemblages more generally, as one of the major political, cultural, social, and economic spaces of exception, although clearly not the only one, within modern western humanity" (Weheliye 2014). To that end, I work within Sylvia Wynter’s theoretical framework that views anti-Blackness as the fulcrum by which Western modernity emerged, and hence, our contemporary notions of what it means to be human (Wynter 2003).

When I talk about Blackness in this dissertation, I aim to focus more on the moments that highlight the symbolic and social function of Blackness, more so than the experiential description of African-descended people living in Germany. Following this train of thought, I also utilize Frank B. Wilderson's theory of the ontology of Blackness as an alienated subject used to construct a societal grammar of suffering (Wilderson III 2010). In this regard, I am thinking in particular of Talal Assad's observation about the challenges of studying secularity in that, '…because the secular is so much part of our modern life, it is not easy to grasp it directly"(Asad 2003:16). The same can be said of coloniality and anti-Black racism as the underpinnings of Western modernity, and hence, of German and European society.

I argue throughout this dissertation that spaces of culture, like art spaces, and public visual culture are one of the best lenses by which to view coloniality as part of the social construction of public space in German and European culture. Therefore, I forward the idea that ethnography allows us to highlight "the shadows" of coloniality, such as debates about racist language in a children's book. This in turn allow us to better articulate coloniality and anti-Black racism in and of itself, and not explicated through, for example, theories of political economy, secularism, or nationalism. As Wilderson notes, "semiotics and linguistics teach us that when we speak, our grammar goes unspoken. Our grammar is assumed. It is the structure through which labor of speech is possible" (Wilderson 2010: 5) In Germany, as in the rest of Europe, coloniality and Blackness as alienated and exploited subject is the assumed social grammar that structures legible/Human/White/German citizens.

While I would like to think about this project as an anthropology of coloniality, or an anthropology of the ontology of Blackness, for disciplinary legibility, we can say I also frame my project as an "Anthropology of the West" (Fernando 2014:vii), in which I study the particular

manifestation of, and challenges to, a specific world view that structures Western modern life. My arguments in this dissertation draw from 15 months of research in Berlin and Germany from July 2012 to October 2013. During this time, I interviewed, and participated in, discussions with artists, curators, and scholars on the intersection of race, nationality, visual representation, and art spaces. I also attended public discussions and art exhibitions related to similar themes, as well as themes of community engagement through art, funding for the arts, and space, place, and belonging.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1, "Blackness in the Life and Mind of Europe," contextualizes my project by exploring how visual depictions of anti-Black racism are not unique to Germany, but part and parcel of public culture throughout Western Europe. I do so to unmoor and reorient the spatial and temporal conceptions of manifest white supremacy in the contemporary moment that often are located solely within the United States. As Fatima El-Tayeb argues in her study of the social position of European people of color, "All parts of Europe are arguably invested in 'whiteness' as the norm against which ethnicization is read as a tool of differentiation between insiders and outsiders"(El-Tayeb 2011:xiv). Examining how racialized Blackness is visually depicted in European public life allows for a mapping out of the importance and need for understanding the dynamic nature and impact of race and anti-Black racism within contemporary Europe. I argue in this chapter that the various visual deployments of Blackness within the region reaffirm not just a racial equating of Europeanness with Whiteness, but also the modern Western conception of what it means to be Human.

Analyzing the visual depictions of Blackness in Europe further opens space for analysis of the avenues, outside of the history of chattel slavery and codified racial segregation, by which hierarchical ideas and practices of race are transported and maintained. I make this argument by structuring the chapter into two sections. The first begins with a story of my visiting Savannah, Georgia for the first time and hearing family members comparing life there in the 1960s to now. I do so to illustrate how racism and white supremacy are often framed within the narrative of slavery, manumission, racial apartheid, and the Civil Rights Movement. This framing prevents viewing, on a popular level, U.S. history as one of *many* manifestations of white supremacy and coloniality. I then explain why I choose to work with the term of coloniality for the purposes of this project, more than white supremacy. The second section of this chapter then turns to the public visual archive in Europe. I do so to illustrate what another manifestation of coloniality looks like outside of the U.S. context, and to further understand coloniality as societal structure, transmitted through the avenue of European colonialism.

Chapter 2, "Coloniality in Space and Place," moves to my city of analysis, Berlin, to look at how independent Berlin art institutions are grappling with the topic of race and multiculturalism in light of Germany's increasingly apparent diverse population. This chapter expands the discussion of manifestations of coloniality through an engagement with Alexander Weheliye's discussion of racializing assemblages and Blackness (Weheliye 2014), in conversation with Jodi Melamed's discussion about anti-racist neoliberal multiculturalism (Melamed 2011), and Roderick Ferguson's discussion about affirmative institutional practices of minority difference (Ferguson 2013). I do so to demonstrate the growing public awareness in Germany that "issues of race", often discussed within the framework of multiculturalism, need to be attended to in public discourse. In Berlin, these forays into a social issue long denied appeared

to occur most frequently in the public realm through art and art spaces.[4] However, I want to trouble the assumption that inclusion of discussions about race, multiculturalism, and colonialism in these spaces automatically equates to effective engagement with, and reflection on, the histories and continuing legacies of each topic.

Chapter 2 is organized in two sections. In the first, I present an experience I had traveling through Germany in a 12-hour period. On this day, I both observed a neighborhood BBQ with skinheads and neo-Nazis in the backyard of a house I was visiting, and was called a skinhead by a West African man. I present this story to frame my ensuing conversation about anti-racist neoliberal multiculturalism. I also tell this story to further emphasize the importance of understanding the process of racialization and the structure of coloniality outside of dominant narratives of slavery and racial caste systems. With this story, I seek to present an example where the fact of Blackness in a Western context shapes vastly different experiences based on one's historical and geographical positioning, while simultaneously producing the similar experience of marking one as outsider and marginal to the societal norm. The second section of Chapter 2 then moves to an analysis of an art exhibition and related public discussion in Berlin about engaging diverse communities through public art. In this section I engage Ferguson, Melamed, and Weheliye to show how Blackness functions as a grammar of alienation, and how this gets mapped onto a neighborhood, the inhabitants of whom are then excluded from discussions about and involving them.

Chapter 3, "Black Intervention: Critical Dialogs in Spaces of Performance," contrasts with the previous chapter by analyzing how a non-mainstream Berlin art institution effectively

[4] I am thinking of recent conferences, such as the 2013,"Rethinking Cosmopolitanism: Africa in Europe | Europe in Africa" at the Academy of Art; or the exhibition, *After Year Zero: Geographies of Collaboration since 1945*

used its space to publicly discuss and challenge one form of manifested coloniality. I explore the public debate that occurred when an author and his publisher decided to change racist language in a popular German children's book, *Die Kleine Hexe* [*The Little Witch*]. The first section of the chapter parses out the components of negative public reactions to the language change to illustrate how popular conceptions of German culture and identity are equated with a racialized White identity. Building from Sanders Gilman's theorization of racial stereotypes and social structures (Gilman 1985), Susan Arndt's theory of language and racial domination in Germany (Arndt 2006), and Frank B. Wilderson's theory of the ontology of Blackness as a grammar of suffering, I argue that the *Die Kleine Hexe* popular debate illustrated both the boundary-defining function of Blackness for social legibility in German society, and the ways in which this boundary was contested in independent Berlin art spaces.

These public discussions for and against the book's language change demonstrated the significance of conceptualizing Blackness as more than just an experiential fact of life within the realm of racial and cultural identities. I argue that instead, we should frame these debates within calls to think of Blackness as an object of knowledge (Weheliye 2014), which enables a better articulation of the oftentimes veiled and unequal forms of social, political, and economic power found in societies structured in dominance. I then use Wilderson's grammar as theoretical scaffolding to think through how independent art spaces in Berlin are possible sites that engender challenges to dominant conceptions of German cultural identity and Blackness. I contend that the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate highlighted the potential uses of art spaces in Berlin as zones that disrupt, if only temporarily, the performance and function of Blackness as objects for display and entertainment, and as antithetical examples of European identity.

Chapter 4, "We Create Spaces for People Who Need Spaces: Placing Berlin," I turn to and build from scholarship on space, place, and memory to situate Berlin within my larger discussion about race, coloniality, and visual culture. I do this in part to explore how and why the meaning I derived from Berlin as a place encouraging of artivism converged and/or diverged with my interview participants. I explore the history and materiality of Berlin as a city that makes it possible for Black people, and other racialized identities, to publicly discuss their experiences of racism in Berlin, Germany, as well as make connections to both with the rest of Europe. I analyze interviews I conducted with artists, art workers, and scholars who were active either in community engaged arts practices, producing and/or exhibiting work challenging white supremacy in German society, or organizing around economic sustainability issues for independent arts workers in Berlin. I do so to highlight recurring themes that emerged amongst participants in efforts to answer the question of, "Why Berlin?".

I then circle back to why I focus on the arts in Berlin by briefly exploring the process of city-making and arguing that the reputation of artistic production works as a significant vehicle of city-making. Furthermore, the robust discussion and support of cultural funding in Berlin signals a governmental recognition and acceptance of arts and art spaces as importance tools by which to gain influence as a city on a global scale. Throughout this chapter, I argue that the historical significance of Berlin, post-1945, as a physical site of both division and reunification, coupled with the funding structure of the arts in Germany, as well as with the economy of the city of Berlin, literally creates a social space that encourages its residents to actively define and shape the city and their place in it. In this regard, this chapter also builds on Chapter 3 by

including more of the artists, arts workers, and scholars I interviewed who actively create space for such challenges and dialogues to occur.[5]

The conclusion reflects on how the events in Europe the last two years, with the influx of refugees fleeing from Syria, demanded that I discuss the topics of immigration in Europe. For the majority of my research time in Europe, I steadfastly refused to discuss in-depth migration, immigration, and integration in my research. I did so because I often found that those topics were used to deflect conversations away from the issue of race and racism in contemporary Europe. Exploring contentious political and public debates about the potential cultural incompatibility of recent refugees—particularly from the Middle East and often homogenized under the religious category, “Muslim”— signals an entrenchment of racialized logics of "culture" in public European discourse. By reviewing and further exemplifying the arguments made in this dissertation about coloniality, I reflect on how and why the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II demonstrates why a critical race theory situated within European history is needed now, more than ever.

[5] There were many more interviews that I could not include in this dissertation. The interviews highlighted in this chapter, like in Chapter 3, expressed similar ideas and themes that emerged from most of my interviews regarding the history and significance of Berlin.

Chapter One

Blackness in the Life and Mind of Europe

Introduction

How are we most familiar with what the history of racism looks like? A more accurate question is, how we are most familiar with what the history of institutionalized white supremacy looks like? Are we aware of the many faces and manifestations of white supremacy? The United States' history of slavery and racial segregation are often the first things that come to mind in popular discussions in Western societies about race and racism in the United States and in Europe. Throughout the course of my research for this dissertation, I inevitably received similar questions and statements about my project: "You cannot apply an American conception of *race* to Europe"; "Why are you studying *race* in Europe?"; "Is there a significant Afro-German population in Germany?"; "*Race* is not the main issue in Europe, immigration and Islamophobia are."

The overall message received in these questions and comments hinted at a popular idea that "problems of *race*" existed only within the realm of the United States. However, over the years, conversations with both Afro-Germans and Afro-Europeans, personal observations of the ways in which Black people were depicted in popular culture in both Germany and Europe, and reading literature about race and Europe, made it clear to me that Europe was not free from the legacies of ideologies and practices of hierarchical racial thinking in the Western world. However, "to reference race as native to contemporary European thought…violates the powerful narrative of Europe as a colorblind continent, largely untouched by the devastating ideology it exported over the world" (El-Tayeb 2011:xv). That the United States history often dominates

popular and academic discussions about race and racism around the world makes it nearly impossible to disrupt contemporary and faulty discussions about European culture and nationality as "raceless." The dominance of the history of the United States in discourse about racism makes it possible for people to declare in political, social, and academic spheres that theories about race in a European context are simply a manifestation of the "Americanization of the Western world" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999). This historical and geographical configuration of race within Western history as a problem of the United States has effectively created a militant silence on contemporary ideas and practices of hierarchical racial ideologies within Europe. In popular discourse, it is common for a person to bring up the fact that Europe did not have the same history of racial slavery and segregation, as evidence of why Europe is "raceless" and free of racism. This often-cited example allows for the faulty deduction that racism only occurs in places that have histories of codified racial discrimination similar to the United States. It also allows for the dismissal or ignorance of the history of racist laws implemented in European colonies. Such popular conceptions of the cause and effect of racism, that is specific to a time and place, closes off avenues of engagement with the parts of European history that allow for continuing ideologies and practices of hierarchical racial thinking in the region.

I fully comprehended how it has become possible for popular European discourse to champion the idea of "raceless Europe," surprisingly, during a recent trip to Savannah, Georgia to attend my mother's 50th high school reunion. For a week I explored for the first time this beautiful and magical city full of palm, magnolia, pine, and heavy oak trees with moss hanging into the streets. It was disorienting to be both seduced by the beauty of this southern Old Word city, and be confronted daily with the history and continuing legacies of slavery and racial

segregation in the United States: a large oak tree near Forsyth Park that was popularly used for public lynchings of Black people; the first African Baptist Church that was part of the Underground Railroad; the Savannah River where slave ships regularly docked for the buying and trading of enslaved Africans. I was not expecting to face what living with daily racial violence and terror sounded and looked like for those who lived through the South's racial caste system. Or maybe, I was jolted into making the living connections between past and present resignations to constantly living under the threat of death.

My mother's cousin, Leroy, picked us up from the airport, excited to drive us through the city and show my mother what had changed in the 30 years since she had last visited Savannah. As he drove, he talked about the city's mayor, who was active in the Civil Rights Movement within the city during the 1960s. He told us the local news about how the city apologized to her for jailing her and other protestors during a moment of political activism in her youth. I tuned out of the conversation for a while, returning to it when I heard him end his story saying, "'Cause you know Savannah was not a beat down, violent, city like the other Southern cities were during the Civil Rights Movement."

About 20 minutes later Leroy drove us through the neighborhood of Pooler, which was once "country", with some houses here and there, when my mother was a teenager, but is now full of outlet malls and luxury pre-fabricated homes. "You don't have to ever leave here if you don't want to. Everything you might need or want is right here in this development." Leroy went on to mention how there are now four or five different roads to Pooler, but when he and my mom were teenagers, there was only one road.

Leroy: "You remember Route 80?"

My mom: "Yeah, of course."

> Leroy: “That was the only road to get to Pooler and Tybee Road.” A pause. “If you were Black, you had to be careful traveling this road.”

Later that night after dinner with Leroy, my mother and I were in our hotel room winding down from the day. I asked her to tell me again how all the different people she and Leroy talked about earlier were connected in our family, writing everything down in my journal. She clarified that the man she and Leroy refer to as her maternal grandfather was actually her step-grandfather. My grandmother’s biological father died when she was seven. What was his name? Why did he die so young? My mother shrugged saying, “I’m not sure. Probably lynched.”

Black people in Savannah were not getting beat down by the police like they were in Selma, but they were living with the daily knowledge that physical harm or death could befall them if they did not carefully observe the time of day they traveled down the main road of their city. This is what the effect of a lifetime of daily racial terrorism sounds, feels, and looks like in the United States. To acknowledge with a verbal shrug, and either an upbeat or nonchalant tone of voice, the routine threat of imminent violence a Black person in the 1960s lived with. To barely bat an eye at the intimate relationship between racial violence and Black families. It does not seem worth mentioning or investigating how an older family member died, because that void of information is a good indicator he died violently at the hands of white terrorists. And of course, this feature of Black life extends beyond and before the 1960s.

This is how we in the Western world are most familiar with what the history of racism looks like. A more accurate statement in this conversation about race would be that this is how we are most familiar with what the history of institutionalized white supremacy and the expression of its social conditions looks like. I say, “The Western world” because the history of slavery, racial segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement is not the sole historical domain of Americans. Rather, it is a history that is, and has been, transmitted around the world through

various forms of media and political discourse, in ways not reciprocal as it pertains to post-colonial and Black European life.[6] However, this face of institutionalized white supremacy in the United States is not a singular manifestation. Conceiving of the United States' history of racism as the *only* expression of this form of social control and oppression is the trap that is so easy to fall into when discussing race in Europe. This obstacle, coupled with the popular discourse of World War II ending racism by ending fascism, means that we find ourselves thinking with the false logic that race is not a problem in Europe and not worthy of discussion. The fact that we most recognize and discuss the U.S version of institutionalized white supremacy allows for its other faces and manifestations to hide in plain sight.

For clarity's sake, I define institutionalized white supremacy as "a logic of social organization that produces regimented, institutionalized, and militarized conceptions of hierarchized 'human' difference" (Rodríguez 2006:11). This belief is borne out of worldview of coloniality, here defined as the organizing of knowledge and social systems that require the negation of the social reproduction of some biological human lives in service for the social reproduction of other biological human lives. I find coloniality, as a term, more useful than institutionalized white supremacy to describe and analyze the shapes and contours of Western societies structured in dominance. I prefer to use the term coloniality for two reasons. Both the definitions of institutionalized white supremacy and coloniality point toward the social reproduction of racialized forms of dominance. Coloniality, however, in the European context trains our attention on Europe's colonial history, which is largely omitted from the cultural

[6] Examples of this are seen in how the Black Power movement was covered and discussed in the media: Archival documentary film footage shot by Swedish journalists between 1967 and 1975, and compiled into the documentary film, *The Black Power Mixtapes*; and in the numerous songs written and performed about Angela Davis and her co-defendants by popular performers such as Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, John Lennon and Yoko Ono, and less-popular (in the U.S.), performers like the Italian Singer, Virgilio Savona.

archive (although hiding in plain sight) through a non-critically engaged discourse in primary and secondary educational settings, and in public discourse. Discussing coloniality, therefore, takes our attention away from United States, and acts as a thorn in the side of European silence about its colonial history and legacies. I use the term coloniality for tactical reasons; talking about white supremacy in a German context in particular, and European context in general, is at times distracting because it evokes the history of fascism and the Nazi party. As a term, coloniality helps side-step that potential emotional, political, and semantic minefield.[7]

In defining coloniality, I utilize the theorization of literary scholar Sylvia Wynter, who argues that coloniality is inextricably linked to hierarchical racial thinking and anti-Black racism, both of which were the fulcrum by which Western modernity, and hence, our conception of a normative, liberal, Human subject emerged. I am also informed by anthropological and sociological literature focused on explicating how the social reproduction of slavery occurs (Meillassoux 1992; Patterson 1982). This literature is useful for a discussion about manifestations of institutionalized white supremacy in Europe because New World slavery is one manifestation of coloniality. Furthermore, this literature is helpful in training my focus on understanding the social reproduction of forms of racial dominance.

In this chapter, I illustrate the relevance and necessity of talking about continuing hierarchical racial ideologies and practices in Europe by exploring the visual manifestations of coloniality in contemporary European public life. Specifically, I look at how racialized Blackness is visually depicted in European public culture to unmoor and reorient the spatial and

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[7] I arrived at this conclusion after participating in international conferences and discussions where the Q&A portion of a talk is dominated by European and American scholars debating over terms. Oftentimes, these debate seemed to occur because not enough time was given at the beginning of a talk clearly defining terms, (for example, “biological race”), and instead assuming that everyone present held the same definitions.

temporal conceptions of manifest white supremacy in the contemporary moment. Doing so allows for a mapping out of the importance and need for understanding the dynamic nature and impact of race and anti-Black racism within contemporary Europe. In this regard, I follow Fatima El-Tayeb's lead in analyzing across Europe, and not just on one specific locality, due to the fact that "…when push comes to shove 'white and Christian' seems to be the smallest common denominator [between different European national contexts] to which debates on European identity ae reduced, and anyone not fitting this description remains an eternal newcomer not entitled to the rights of those who truly belong" (El-Tayeb 2011:xx). By examining the ways in which Blackness is depicted in popular visual culture in Europe, I argue that the various visual deployments of Blackness within the region reaffirms not just a racial equation of Europeanness with Whiteness, but also the modern Western conception of what it means to be Human.

Analyzing the visual depictions of Blackness in Europe further opens space for analysis of the avenues, outside of the history of chattel slavery and codified racial segregation, by which hierarchical ideas and practices of race are transported and maintained.[8] While New World slavery and the Middle Passage may not be the proper cultural archives from which to draw in order to discuss contemporary formations and experiences of race in Europe generally, colonialism is. At the 2015 Association of the Study of the African Diaspora, the Afro-German feminist and Cultural Studies scholar Peggy Piesche described the experience of being a Black European: "Black European life is like living in a hurricane. Every day is another exercise in excavating the reality and experience of Black life." Piesche's description points to the daily

[8] For further discussion about the relationship between photography, the social construction of race, and the discipline of anthropology see: (Harries 2002; Baker 1998; Poole 1997; Rony 1996).

work required of Black Europeans to make legible their social existence and realities within a wider European society that both denies their existence, and denies this denial. This paradox of being and non-being is socially allowed to occur in part due to the silence and lack of critical reflection around Europe's colonial past.

As other scholars have demonstrated, Europe still has not fully reckoned with the continuing impacts of its colonial history (El-Tayeb 2011; Wekker 2009; Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, and Zantop 1999; Zimmerman 2012). This, in turn, lends itself to the popular silence and avoidance of, or protestations against, discourse about the continuing ideas and practices of racism and institutionalized white supremacy. This is most vividly seen via the fierce vocal defense of cultural traditions that are challenged as racist, but seen as benign to a country.[9] My aim with this chapter and overall dissertation is to add to this rich body of scholarship demonstrating the need for a wide-spread, sustained, and critically-engaged discourse within Europe about its colonial history and continuing impacts. To that end, this project is informed by the intellectual tradition in Black Studies of critiquing Western modernity. Put another way, we can think of the intellectual imperative of Black studies "…as a means of pointing to the way in which Western concepts of the subject and the nation are both responding to Black experiences in the West" (Wright 2003:4).[10] For disciplinary legibility, we can say I also frame my project as

[9] For example, language change in children's books, such as Germany's *Die Kleine Hexe[The Little Witch]* (which I discuss in Chapter Three), or the practice of Blackface performance via the figure of Zwarte Piete [Black Peter] during the national Dutch celebration of St. Nicholas.

[10] Some scholars who fall within the intellectual tradition of critiquing Western modernity in Black Studies that Wright refers include: Achille Mbembe (Mbembe 2001); Aimé Césaire (Césaire 2000); and Franz Fanon (Fanon 2008; Fanon 2005).

an “Anthropology of the West”(Fernando 2014:vii), in which I study the particular manifestation of, and challenges to, a specific world view that structures Western modern life.[11]

Blackness as Object of Knowledge

Blackness as a concept is usually thought of and described in both academic and popular discourse as a racial description linked to the phenotypical traits of African-descended people.[12] Analysis of Blackness based on this concept usually falls into three categories related to the condition of Blackness: 1) Descriptive, in terms of the cultural and experiential characteristics of communities associated with this racial marker; 2) Comparative, in terms of categorizing how these communities converge and differ across space and time; and 3) Demonstrative, in terms of articulating the varied expressions of oppression and marginalization different African-descended communities face based on hierarchical racial ideologies and practices of *race* that stigmatize Blackness. In discussing the uses of Blackness in European visual culture I build from Wynter’s argument by utilizing Alexander Weheliye’s engagement with her work in his book, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (2014).

Here, Weheliye compels us to think about Blackness as an object of knowledge, rather than a real object. For Wheelie, the construction of Blackness as real object “accepts too easily that race is a given natural and/or cultural phenomenon and not an assemblage of forces that most continuously articulate nonwhite subjects as not-quite-human” (19). However, when we

[11] Fernando uses this term to explore how French Muslims incorporate notions of both secularism and religiosity to construct their identities as social citizens of France (Fernando 2014).

[12] One exception is the British context in which Blackness is often understood as a political identity where groups of people might not be African-descended, but are nonetheless racialized because of the post-colonial relationship between Britain and its former colonies that many of the UK’s citizens are descended from.

view Blackness as an object of knowledge, rather than tied only to specific people and histories, we are better able to articulate its function in societies. Viewing Blackness as an object of knowledge, instead of associated only with the lives of African-descended people, aids in better critiques and re-imaginings of our existing social, political, economic, and legal institutions that were created to uphold colonialism and slavery. Viewing Blackness as an object of knowledge ultimately requires us to attend to the continued social reproduction of forms and rules of governance that maintain societies structured in dominance long after the institutions they were borne from are formally ended. Using Blackness as an analytic does not minimize the specific histories and experiences of the condition of Black lives within the Diaspora.

Slavery in the Americas is a powerful example that illustrates the function of Blackness in both conceiving the Human and structuring Western modernity. The process of becoming a slave and maintaining the institution of slavery is one that involves the denial of the social reproduction of one group of people for the benefit of the other. This process, often referred to as natal alienation or social death both involves and creates different social relations and practices not just between slave owner and slave, but also within the communities that acquire slaves for slave owners (Meillassoux 1991; Patterson 1982). Before European slave-trading practices between the Americas, Europe, and the African continent, being Black was not the primary condition of becoming slave. However, European imperial practices, coupled with the invention of *race* as biologically determined and fixed, produced the condition of Blackness as a space of social death; a condition where to be Black/African-descended automatically meant to be a slave.[13] And, if one is Black/a slave, then their cultural practices of recognizing and valuing

[13] An important distinction to note for this chapter, however, is that I do not think we can easily apply the Blackness-as-social-death concept to a European context. I discuss this further in my conclusion, where I contend that in Germany, material structures provide a vibrant example of Blackness as social life, even if paradoxically, the

familial and other social ties were invalidated in the slave-owning Americas through institutional practices such as, for example, the selling of Black children to slave owners other than those of their mothers and fathers.

Focusing on Europe, however, we can see colonialism as another example where the function of Blackness worked in creating both the modern Western normative liberal Human subject, as well as the institutional practices intimately linking ideas and definitions of humanity and freedom to ideas of bondage and unfreedom. Even when the condition of Blackness is not phenotypically apparent amongst different racialized communities, the juridical practices that emerged to socially reproduce slavery reified a binary definition of the Human as predicated on an existing, bonded "Other." This gets projected onto a biological human body and creates specific conditions for a legibility of humanity that might not have existed before colonial rule (Prakash 2003). If we remember that our current epistemic tradition is formed on a "spectrum of the Human" where Whiteness/Anti-Blackness represents the Human, Blackness represents the Other, and different racialized groups are measured in between as to how close or far they are to either, then we can see how the space of social death gets mapped onto those who are not deemed slaves, but are deemed subjects to a foreign power (Césaire 2000; Fanon, Sartre, and Bhabha 2005). We can also see how institutional colonial practices precluded non-white racialized groups from social and juridical legibility with universalized notions of the Human (Stoler 1997).

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concept of Afro-Germans as being both Black *and* German is not socially recognized. While I think Blackness-as-social death may be particular to the United States, related arguments about the social reproduction of alienation and disposability of some groups of people are still applicable to Europe (ex: the treatment of Roma people in all parts of Europe).

Often, manumission and independence from colonial rule seem like the obvious solution to rectify the problems borne from anti-Black racism, as well as to creating a pluralistic vision of humanity that is not bound to notions of captivity. Both historical institutions are seen as the main vehicles perpetrating practice of anti-Blackness and the subjugation of non-White life; however, this is a faulty solution. Blackness has come to symbolize social death, and anti-Blackness is the fulcrum by which forms and rules of governance in the modern Western world, as well as the global economic world, were created and are currently maintained. Meaning, the existing juridical, economic, political, and social relations created to reproduce slavery and anti-Blackness still exist. They also currently maintain our Human/Other, Valid/Invalid conception of humanity that fundamentally requires us to think of some people as essentially unworthy of social inclusion, validation, and protection.

It is within this framework through which I argue that the ways in which visual culture in Europe deploys Blackness constructs a normative racialized conception of European identity as White. Specifically, by analyzing examples of how anti-Blackness is expressed in European visual culture, I demonstrate how this normative European identity construction is yet another manifestation of coloniality and the implicit racial conception of a normative, liberal, Human subject. While I acknowledge that images of other racialized identities are also used to perpetuate a racial insider/outsider definition of Europeanness, such racializations are borne out of the modern Western binary—Blackness-Other/Whiteness-Human hierarchical construction of human difference. Furthermore, when we look at how other European people of color—such as those descended from North African and Middle Eastern countries—are talked about in

mainstream popular discourse, it is often within culturally essentialist terms.[14] This cultural discourse uses language similar to that used in 18th and 19th century conversations about *race* and African-descended people,[15] which relied on pseudo-scientific experiments and discourse that purportedly proved the fundamental biological and evolutionary differences between White and Black racialized identities.[16] This history is fundamentally tied to Europe's colonial practices in Africa. While European colonial imperialism spread throughout the Americas, South Asia, East Asia, and Australia, the bulk of Europe's wealth relied heavily on the direct and indirect products borne from its trade of captured and enslaved African bodies. Put another way, the commodification of captured African bodies formed the economic base of Western nations and shaped the contours of our contemporary global economy.[17]

This is the context through which I look at how Blackness is depicted in visual culture in Europe, arguing that such depictions demonstrate the continuing influence of coloniality in structuring Western societies. The appearance of Blackness in European visual culture enacts a number of social functions. First, it valorizes European colonial history while simultaneously hiding the racialized violence that occurred during European colonialism. Second, it perpetuates a White racialized European identity by placing Blackness/Otherness as always originating outside of Europe. Third, it demonstrates how Blackness is constructed as an illegible subject

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[14] In the last five years, from Germany to the Netherlands to the United Kingdom, high ranking government officials have denounced multiculturalism as a failed project in their countries ("The Failure of Multiculturalism" 2015; State Multiculturalism Has Failed, Says David Cameron 2011; "Merkel: "Multiculturalism Has Failed" 2010).

[15] However, an important point for further study would be the impact of Orientalism in Europe on the perception and reception of Middle Easterners and how this intersects with my discussion of Blackness and race in Europe.

[16] See: Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*; G.W.F Hegel's *Reason in History*; Baron de Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*;

[17] For a fuller and more nuanced discussion about the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and Western capitalism, see: Edward Bapitst's, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism;* C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins;* Cedric Robinson's, *Black Marxism;* and Erick Williams *Slavery and Capitalism.*

within liberal, normative, Western modernity. This argument does not discredit or devalue the importance, or particularity of experiences, of Black Europeans and European people of color who face social exclusion and discrimination within European society. Rather, it rests on the premise that Blackness, as an object of knowledge, historically has shaped the form and function of Western societies—and in this case, European countries— in ways that determine how all people living within them are socially read as either valid or invalid social subjects.

Blackness in European Consumer Culture

In his collection of essays, *The Price of the Ticket,* James Baldwin, reflecting on Richard Wright's life after his death in 1960, observes that "Someone, some day, should do a study in depth of the role of the American Negro in the mind and life of Europe, and the extraordinary perils, different from those of America but no less grave, which the American Negro encounters in the Old World" (Baldwin 1985:271). While my focus on Europe and race does not explicitly engage with Black American experiences in Europe, Baldwin's declaration beautifully captures the heart of the question of this chapter: What is the function of Blackness "in the mind and life of Europe?" For it is indeed clear, when walking through various segments of life in European society, that Blackness, both the symbolic and the bodies of African-descended people, is an integral part of European society.[18] In a society that popularly sees itself as raceless, how do we illustrate the racialized construction of a normative European subject? How do we see

[18] I must acknowledge that in the Western imagination, Blackness takes on different symbolisms depending on the geo-historical context in which one finds themselves. Africans play a huge role in the European imagination as much as Black Americans, but with different social capital, symbolism, and meaning. This requires attention— which I am unable to give in this particular project, but hope to explore in a future study— the difference between diasporic Blackness and African Blackness in the Western imagination. Many thanks to Fatima El-Tayeb for prompting me to attend to this distinction.

contemporary ideas and practices of race as structuring facts of life tied to coloniality within European societies that view white supremacy as solely tied to histories of U.S. slavery and racial segregation?

I first turn to the material visual record to uncover that which is hidden in plain sight. Advertisements for consumable products reveal a dependable practice of using Blackness to appeal to the desires of an assumed White European consumer.[19] Sometimes these images are blatantly dehumanizing, as is the case with the use of Blackface in an advertisement at the Berlin Sony Center (Fig.1). I often passed this advertisement, which I called Blackface 2.0, when attending film screenings at the English-language movie center. Each time, I was amazed that the photo was still present with the words that I partially saw, "Steckt uns ein Lachen im Gesicht oder an…[Put a laugh on our face or on....]," The advertisement was a reminder and a reference to the history of vaudeville minstrel shows and films where the performer in Blackface was often the comic foil for the scenario; the outlandish character whose antics were expected to carry a comedic scene through and bring the audience to laughter. As the art historian scholar Sandrine Micossé-Aikins points out, while the use of Blackface in entertainment venues may have originated in the U.S., the practice quickly became incorporated into German culture, through advertisements and theater productions, from the mid-19th century on:

> "…The blackface used in the version of Dea Loher's *Unschuld* (*Innocence*) staged at Deutsches Theater, for instance, is quite obviously citing the American minstrel tradition: pitch black face, bright red and exaggerated lips, emphasized by the unnaturally widened eyes of the actors. The casual use of a classic minstrel blackface as a reference apparently comprehensible to a German audience testifies to the familiarity of the image in this

[19] There are a number of overlapping literatures in cultural studies and visual anthropology that encouraged my analysis of depictions of Blackness in European public space. These texts are heavily focused on the interpretation of visual media, and/or analyzing representations of race in cultural artifacts and performance. See: Deborah Pooles' *Vision, Race, and Modernity*; *The Traffic in Culture,* edited by George Marcus and Fred Myers; Kobena Mercer's *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*; and E. Patrick Johnson's *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*.

> context…With the import of goods from the US and the growing of the advertisement industry in Germany, images of Black people became common signifiers for certain products, such as ink or toothpaste.[2] One particular image though that enjoyed a special popularity…[was]the idea that Black people are after all not really black but just painted or, worse, dirty"(Sandrine Micosse-Aikins 2013).

Micossé-Aikins offers the political and social reasons that the use of Blackface became so popular in German culture:

> "The resistance against the German colonizers and the later genocide of the Herero and Nama in what is today Namibia (formerly German South-West Africa) intensely impacted the way in which Blackness was depicted in German advertisement. The internal conflicts of an imperial German government, the atrocities committed by it in the colonies, and the tremendous amount of tax money eaten up by the colonial enterprise necessitated a propaganda that would make the war seem legitimate and mandatory, and portray Africans as less than human. It is therefore hardly surprising that the genocide that was accompanied by, and executed through, the use of concentration camps and horrific "scientific experiments"—practices that would be directly transferred into national socialism—correlate with an increase of imagery suggesting that Black people needed "cleaning". While this violent history has been mostly erased from the collective memory of German contemporary society, the images, whether conceptual or literal, have survived and await us, sometimes in the most curious places"(Micossé-Aikins 2013).

Returning to the Sony Center in Berlin, the Blackface advertisement communicates to moviegoers at the entertainment complex that they can feel at ease and entertained here. This moment at the Sony Center calls to mind Fatima El-Tayeb's meditation on the constructed illegibility of European people of color: "If one's existence depends partly on being addressed by another, 'the conditions of intelligibility' become fundamental to hierarchies of power, so basic that they tend to go unnoticed, leaving minorities of color only the choice between being unintelligible or misinterpellated" (El-Tayeb 2011:168). The use of Blackface in this Sony Center advertisement unwittingly communicates, by addressing imagined patrons of the entertainment complex, that my existence, as a three dimensional Black person, is not an assumed reality or a thought.

Walking through Europe, I both unconsciously and consciously searched for my Black European parallels. I searched for images of Black Europeans, how they framed themselves and how they were framed. Instead, I encountered flattened representations of Blackness that were almost always placed outside of Europe, via depictions of Africans or Black Americans. I saw that to be Black American was highly associated with entertainment, most notably with music. This was a fact I most vividly encountered while walking by a shop in Amsterdam called, "*Te Koop/*The Blues: Diverse Jazz and Blues Records (Fig. 2). To be African, on the other hand, was highly associated with a primitive or a subservient past, lacking a critical lens to these histories or contexts. I never encountered a popular visual record that reflected images of Black European life.

Other advertisements, while not tied to a dehumanizing performative history, use flattened images of Blackness as signposts for nearby excitement, entertainment, and pleasurable consumption, but never as reflective of Black life *in* Europe. I walked into a Viva convenience store in Vienna, which is an Austrian parallel to Seven Eleven, albeit with potentially healthier food options. The doors I walked through were plastered with full-length advertisements for a new product Viva was selling, "Afro Coffee: Ein Hauch von Afrika[A touch of Africa]" (Fig. 3-6), complete with images of a Black woman and man sporting Afros and fashionable sunglasses and clothes. Their body language projects an image of cool, reinforcing the message that these three different flavors of canned iced coffee are "Sweet enough for the ladies," but "Strong enough for the men." Here, not only are Black bodies utilized as symbols to reference illicit desire and pleasure in consumption, but they are also marked as foreign to add to this pleasurable appeal.

Parts of the advertisement use English phrases, which appeal to a consumer who thinks of herself as a worldly, cosmopolitan person who can speak the lingua franca of global capital. The use of Blackness in this advertisement adds to this construction of the excitement and pleasure of worldliness by signposting the African continent and "Africanness." These associations of Blackness are linked to an idea of the exotic, which "in its commodified form appears as a sophisticated appreciation of other cultures or as an aestheticized nostalgia for a different place or time, but the content of exotic images links it closely to colonialism and to contemporary systems of economic and cultural domination"(Root 1996:29). In the Viva ad, the associations of Blackness to sweetness, coffee, and continental Africa bring to mind colonial and neo-colonial practices of exploitative raw material extraction from the African continent for the purposes of Western economic interests and tastes. In the moment, the advertisement also brought to mind the wall text description of a painting in the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam (Fig. 7):

> **"Batsheba at her Toilet/Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem**
>
> The beautiful Batsheba was bathing in the open air. King David spied her from the roof of his palace and instantly fell in love. Here, curiously, the painter did not depict David, but merely suggested his presence by means of the castle in the distance. Because Batsheba's maidservant is Black, the subtly erotic painting takes on an exotic image."

The curators connect Blackness to exoticism in van Haarlem's painting, but after encountering the Viva Afro Coffee advertisement, it seems that a more accurate statement is that because Batsheba's maidservant is Black, the painting for the artist, and possibly audience, takes on a subtly erotic tone and image.

Returning to the Afro Coffee advertisement, not only is Blackness referenced as a site for pleasurable consumption and as a site of worldliness, but it is also used to communicate Blackness as originating outside of Europe. Blackness in this advertisement is conflated with being related to both the United States and continental Africa, but definitely not Europe. The

coffee brew comes from the African continent. The hair of the animated Black people in the advertisements are fashioned in Afros, a hairstyle popularly associated with Black Americans and the Black Power Movements of the 1960s and 70s. The product name is a marketing play on words, referencing Blackness. Afro as: hairstyle; coming from Africa; being Black American; connected to power and strength. I do not deny or not recognize that Afro-Austrians may sport Afros for their own purposes;[20] however, I do assert that the Afro, as a popular hairstyle, originated in the United States at a particular time in history that directly associated it with the Black Power social justice movements. I asked my partner to take a picture of me posing in front of the advertisement depicting the Afro Coffee Black women. I wanted to document how much more conceptual and representational space the two-dimensional Black woman takes over the three-dimensional Black women. I also wanted to mark a moment where I experienced how "when difference itself is all that is necessary to create excitement, or to resuscitate a tired narrative, what has been determined to be different is positioned so that it is unable to move out of the conceptual box in which it has been placed" (Root 1996:30). Afterward, I entered the Viva to buy some food and water for our road trip through the Alps.

Other examples come to mind of how Blackness is marked foreign to Europe, or equated to ideas of service and pleasurable consumption. An Austrian coffee company, Meinl Kaffee, whose brand in the past featured the profile of a Black boy wearing a hat and gold earrings often seen in depictions of Blackamoors, a European decorative figure that I discuss further in the next

[20] Here I am specifically thinking about Jacqueline Nassy Brown's use of the term "Diasporic resources" in her ethnography of Black people living Liverpool. In exploring the history and experiences of contemporary Black Liverpudlians and what this illumines about space, place, race, and memory, Brown argues that "Diasporic resources may include not just cultural productions such as music, films, and literature, but also people and places, as well as iconography, ideas, ideologies association with them…[therefore] Black Liverpudlians actively appropriate particular aspects of Black America for particular reasons, to meet particular needs—but do so within limits, within and against power asymmetries, and with political consequences" (Brown 2005:42).

section (Fig. 8). The redesigned brand logo features the silhouette profile of an ungendered person, still wearing the hat, and thus, still invoking a bygone colonial era when European civil servants were serviced by Black and Brown people (Fig.9). Berlin advertisements for German-based company Sarotti Candy feature the profile of a Blackamoor, again, referencing a colonial era and associating Blackness to service (Fig.10). The updated brand logo faithfully references older logos featuring Blackface characters (Fig. 11). Even though they have recently been renamed, a popular pastry in Parisian bakeries is still commonly referred to as Tête du Negre [Nigger Heads] (Fig.12). Old advertisements for La Negrita Rum by the French spirit company, Bardinet, feature a Black women dressed in a white shirt, blue head band, blue wrap skirt, and wearing gold bangles on her ears, wrists, and ankles (Fig. 13). Newer advertisements now feature just the head of the woman (Fig. 14).

Advertisements for Dirndls and Lederhosen featuring Black people raised interesting questions for me in this encounter (Fig.15). On the one hand, this advertisement for traditional southern German clothing could be read as acknowledgment of the reality of plural racial German identities. On the other hand, with the plethora of other images of Blackness in advertisements and urban space, it is not cynical to conclude that these Dirndls and Lederhosen advertisements are another iteration of depictions of Blackness for the purposes of enticement of a normative European subject to buy consumer products. Whether these images are explicitly dehumanizing or not, a pervasive theme seen in all is one that presents a flattened, entertaining, easily consumable image of Blackness. Doing so encourages the intended normative, European viewer to not identify with the images, and instead to interact with the image in a way that aids in the construction of their own, oppositional, identity.

Blackness in European Urban Space

In the previous section, I looked at European advertising for food and clothing products to see how visual depictions of Blackness construct a normative, White, European subject. This is done by associating Blackness with pleasure, entertainment, and servitude, and often indexing Blackness as foreign. In this section I look at how Blackness appears in the built environment of European urban space to construct a normative European subject. This is done either by alluding to European colonial history through a signifier of Blackness, by placing Blackness outside of a European context, or by associating Blackness to everything other than Humanness, often through the use of anti-Black racism.

In Berlin, urban space helps construct an illegible Black European subject through the naming of streets and bars with antiquated/racial slurs for Black people. For example, a Kreuzberg bar named Zum kleinen Mohr (Fig. 16), or the U-bahn train and street signs named Mohrenstraße (Fig. 17). Located in a neighborhood I spent a great amount of time in, Zum kleinen Mohr is a Berlin bar that I passed by often . One of the last bars of its kind in gentrified Kreuzberg, Zum kleinen Mohr is a neighborhood bar that often plays popular disco and R&B songs from the 1970s and 80s, and is arranged, in what I gathered over time, as a traditional Berlin *kneipe:* one long raised counter in the center of the space with decorative balusters raised to the ceiling. At these bars there is often the option to order reasonably priced food from a limited menu; often the menu includes some type of sausage. Zum kleinen Mohr and other old-school bars like it are unlike newer open-format bars at Berlin clubs, or other bars that include wide space for table seating and service. Zum kleinen Mohr is a place where people come to sit *at* the bar and talk. I have only been to a bar like this twice, mainly because no one I socialized with went to this type of bar. The impression I always received from neighborhood bars like

Zum kleinen Mohr, whether based in fact or just my perception, was that they were for people *of* the neighborhood, and not transient inhabitants of the space, like me. The fact that I also almost never saw people of color in these bars added to this impression. I cannot say for certain, but in this moment of writing, I wonder if this impression of exclusivity for bars like it was solidified upon first seeing this bar and learning the meaning of Zum kleinen Mohr in 2010.

One interpretation of these names could literally translate to “To the Little Moor” (the bar) or “Moors’ Street” (the train station), referencing the Medieval period in Europe when North Africans settled and colonized significant parts of southern Europe along the Mediterranean. Another interpretation could be “To the Little Black” or “Blacks’ Street.” In Europe and in literature, the word “Moor,” a shortened version of the word, “Blackamoor, was used to allude to a person’s African ancestry and skin color.[21] I, however, interpret use of the word *Mohr/*Moor as a degrading racial slur of Blackness based on conversations with Afro-Germans who associate the word more closely with the English slur, “nigger. ” This sign, *Zum kleinen Mohr,* is possible to exist because it assumes that those who enter the space, that those who see the sign, could never take issue with using an antiquated racial descriptor and slur as the name for a bar. Or a name for a street and train station, as is the case with *Mohrenstraße* in the Berlin neighborhood of Stadtmitte. In this way, the use of Blackness found in urban space in such names help construct and affirm a normative, racialized White European subject who is not meant to identify with the people and histories such names invoke. This racial naming of space further makes illegible the concept of a Black European subject because it flattens Blackness to an object for naming and description.

[21] Here I am thinking in particular about the depiction of Black people as Moors in Shakespeare’s plays, such as *Othello,* and the character of Aaron in *Titus Andronicus.*

Another examples of a flattened image of Blackness in European urban space is found in the seating area of the Dahlem-Dorf U-bahn station (Fig. 18). This train station is used to travel to both Berlin's Freie University and the nearby Dahlem Ethnological Museum, which houses and exhibits cultural artifacts from the African continent, Asia, the Pacific Southwest, South America, and North American indigenous cultures. The seats of the Dahlem-Dorf station mimic, presumably, the African sculptures that are housed in the nearby ethnographic museum. The seated figures in the train station, which double as seats for commuters, presumably serve as a sign-post to visitors to the museum that they are at the correct stop. After traveling on a train, I hardly ever took, to a neighborhood outside of central Berlin, with which I was completely unfamiliar, I myself experienced the reassuring feeling that I was indeed in the right place to visit the museum after seeing the large scale mimicked African sculptures. In this instance, upon seeing something associated with Blackness, the viewer immediately associates the seats with Africa, through the simulacrum of an object most likely procured during the colonial era, and understood as something for display and representation of foreign cultures and people. Here, we can see that the function of Blackness in urban space is to both valorize Europe's colonial history and place racialized Black people as forever originating outside of Europe.

The valorization of Europe's colonial history is also seen in urban space through the image of the Blackamoor. Earlier, I discussed how the figure of the Blackamoor is associated with servitude and pleasurable consumption; here I argue that it is also a visual reference to white supremacy and European wealth gained from the exploitation of natural resources in colonized lands. I arrived at this conclusion, in February 2013,while walking through Krakow, Poland, searching for a street where a recommended restaurant was located. Street names there are posted high on the corners of buildings, and upon finding the name I was looking for I was

startled to see two sculpted Blackamoor figures above it (Fig. 19). In Krakow, I was not expecting to see an image so closely associated with colonialism, in a country not known to have a significant imperialist history on the African continent.[22] And yet here it is, a visual association of Blackness to servitude, similar to the Sarotti Candy logo brand I encountered on a Berlin building in the neighborhood of Kreuzberg.

Since the 18th century, the image of the Blackamoor has a long, documented history as a decorative artistic object in Europe (Cavanaugh, Yonan, and Childs 2010). Often depicted in ornamentalized servitude—for example, used as an ashtray holder, jewelry holder, or fountain support— the Blackamoor signaled the wealth of the object owner by invoking associations with luxury and the privilege of being able to acquire goods from "exotic," far-away (from Europe) places. These associations all implicitly reference Europe's wealth creation through the history of the European Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and colonialism. In Krakow, we see how the image of the Blackamoor and its related associations are able to travel through Europe and hold meaning even in places with no direct associations to either history.

While walking through Antwerp, Belgium with a friend, I looked up and a building displaying a name filled with racialized meanings that references and valorizes European colonial history. L'Entrepôt du Congo [Congo Warehouse], now a trendy bar, but formerly a 19th century warehouse for raw materials brought in from the Congo (Fig. 20). The building is near the Schelde River and its many ports, whose bordering walkway my friend told me is

[22] While Poland does not have a significant colonial history on the African continent, it was exposed to imperial colonial practices through a variety of channels. One in particular was the participation of Polish soldiers fighting in the French army against the Haitian revolutionaries during the 1791-1804 Haitian Revolution against French colonial rule. The participation of Polish soldiers in this war was the result of the complicated history of the formation of European nation-states that were previously multiethnic empires. Many thanks to Fatima El-Tayeb for making me aware of this piece of Haitian and European history.

referred to as "Congo Way" (Fig. 21). My friend, a native of Antwerp, was showing me around her city for the day. She was excited to take me to Congo Way to show off the beauty of the river and walk along it. I asked her why the street is named so, wanting to get a sense of how Belgium's colonial history is discussed. She said she was not sure, but believed it is because of the "long relationship Belgium has had with the Congo." I quiet at this answer, instantly thinking about my high school African History course where we read *King Leopold's Ghost,* and remembering the name and story of E.D. Morel. After observing the many ships bringing raw materials from the Congo to the ports of this this very river, but not seeing outbound ships to the Congo carrying money or goods in return, Morel concluded that slavery was occurring in the Congo under Belgium's watch (Hochschild 1999). I walk along "Congo Way" stunned at the real possibility that this "long relationship between Belgium and the Congo" is not taught at all in Belgian schools, even though the history is present throughout the history and public visual culture.

Ethnographic museums

Continuing the discussion of the valorization of European colonialism and its relationship to the visual deployment of Blackness in European public life, I now turn to ethnographic museums. I see the European ethnographic museum primarily as a space that aides in the construction of the normative, racialized White European subject.[23] There are many tools by which this occurs and visualized anti-Black racism is one of them. Thinking of "museums, and the museumizing

[23] There is quite a bit of work on ethnographic museums and how they are reflective of, or connected to, Europe's colonial history. As a sample, see: (Ames 1995; Clifford 2007; Dias 2008; von Bose 2013; Bennett 2009) I am not, therefore, trying to reinvent the wheel in this section, but to contribute to the literature by focusing specifically on the representation and imagination of Blackness in such spaces. I do so to further illuminate how such displays of Blackness shape a normative, racialized European subject as White.

imagination, [as] both profoundly political" (Anderson 1993:182), I find ethnographic museums to be invaluable sites of information with which to discuss coloniality and European racialized social identity formation. As Benedict Anderson argues, museums, working in concert with other institutions, "profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion – the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry" (168). A significant reason as to why it still remains so difficult to talk about race, racism and white supremacy in Europe is because the history of European colonialism is still popularly valorized, rather than critiqued. This is most clearly seen in the exhibitory practices of ethnographic museums, particularly as it concerns the visual depictions of Blackness through the lens of Africanness.

Before I delve into the deployment of Blackness in ethnographic museums, I first turn to the Tropen Museum in Amsterdam to demonstrate the case of colonial valorization in ethnographic museums. Here, I look at an exhibition featuring life-size wax figures of mainly White Dutch colonial civil servants stationed in Indonesia in the 19th and 20th centuries. This exhibition illustrates how Dutch colonialism is championed for the construction of a normative, White, European viewer. Here, I witness an ethnographic museum's efforts to demonstrate to its public the virtues of its country's colonial history. I am introduced to a wax figure of Bonifacious Cornelis de Jonge (Fig. 22) with wall text providing me brief biographical sketches of his life:

> "Eight of twelve children~"Boone" to family and friends~Financially independent 'So one is not a slave to one's work.' Minister of war (1917-1918), Director of Bataafse Petroleum Maatschappij (BPM) in London (1920), later BPM Commissioner ~ Governor General Netherlands East Indies (1931-1936.)"[24]

[24] "Dutch Colonialism" permanent exhibition at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Visited in 2011. Also referred to as "Netherlands East Indies" on the museum's website. For further discussion about the process that

I wonder at the means by which this man has become financially independent, curious if his and his family's wealth was derived in part by the Netherlands' mercantile history of the capture and trade of African bodies for labor in the Americas. Does this history inform his desire not to be " a slave to one's work"?[25]

I move on to another wax figure, this of an Indonesian man named, Toen ("Meneer") Anwar (Fig. 23). The wall text tells me that he was the:

> "Son (anakaraeng) of a former ruler in Southeast Sulawesi~Brought after a few years [to] primary school by his father to the Dutch administrator's office with the request to educate him~Rose from tea boy to assistant clerk, to clerk and then to assistant administrator: "Toean Assisten"~ Finally, assistant administrator first class in the Dutch colonial civil service. A man with status."

This wall text and museum display leave me with the impression that museums such as these have a White European audience in mind as the only audience taking in these images and information. "A man with status"—this description of Anwar takes on different meanings depending on who is doing the viewing. A flood of questions run through my mind as I observe this display and text. Would the assumed normative White subject question the meaning and history of such a statement? What about the politics of naming and what the archive does and does not reveal about history? If he was the son of a ruler, did he not already have status within the community? Or were Dutch military maneuvers the reason why Anwar's father became a "former" ruler, and hence a man whose son could only hold status in society when aligned with

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lead to the creation of this exhibit, see Mary Bouquet's article, "Reactivating the Colonial Collection: Exhibition-Making as Creative Process at the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam" (Bouquet 2013).

[25] This wall text reminded me of a conversation I had with a White Dutch man at a bar birthday party I attended in 2011. Upon hearing what my research was about, the man began to discuss how the Netherlands was a multicultural society and embarked on a history lesson, presumably for my benefit, about the country's history of wealth to frame how the Netherlands was different from the rest of European society. At one point he stated, "we were the kings of trade in the seas" but failed to know much about what, or more specifically, whom Dutch merchants traded in the centuries of the country's wealth building.

Dutch imperial power? Why do we not know the full name of this man, last name Anwar, and instead only know him by the Dutch word for “assistant” (Toen)? Why is it important for the wall text to explicitly inform us that Anwar was a man with status, when the same is not done for de Jonge? Or is it that the simple biographical facts of knowing that de Jonge was a minister of war and was independently wealthy so as not to be “a slave to one’s job” effectively communicate that de Jonge was a man of status in colonial Indonesia in ways that the Indonesian man Anwar was not?

“A man with status.” I wonder if this is the curator’s cumbersome attempt to acknowledge and equalize this exhibit of important people in Dutch colonial Indonesia. This question begins to take form as a conclusion in my mind when I move on to another wax figure, this one of an Indonesian woman, Kartini (Fig. 24). The wall text informs me that:

> “Raden Adjeng Kartini (1879-1904) was the daughter of the regent of Japara (central Java). She attended a European primary school with her two sisters until she was twelve. That was unusual for aristocratic Javanese girls in this period. Unlike her brothers, she was not allowed to proceed to secondary school. In her later correspondence she argued against the subservient position of Javanese women. After her death a selection of her letters was published in a volume entitled…(Through darkness to the light). In 1913 a school was named after her, the first of many. Kartini schools were strictly for Indonesian girls. Lessons were taught in Dutch. The girls learned to be housewives and mothers. Later, the curriculum also included teacher training courses. In 1964, Kartini’s birthday, 21 April, became a national holiday in Indonesia.”

Next to this biographical sketch of Kartini is a longer text that informs me about education in Indonesia during her time:

> “Improving schooling for Indonesians was one of the key goals of the ethical policy programme. The Dutch government wanted to educate Indonesians. Indeed, both government and industry needed trained workers. In the East Indies, secondary and further education were modeled on those of the Netherlands. The colonial administration set up separate primary schools for the various sections of the population: Indigenous, Chinese, Arabs and Europeans. Meanwhile, Indonesian national movements founded their own schools. The authorities unofficially tolerated these. But despite the expansion and improvement of the education system, government jobs remained out of reach for

> Indonesians. This discrimination was one of the reasons why Indonesian nationalist movements became increasingly anti-Dutch. Educated Indonesians often played a leading role in these organizations."

I am left with the impression that if it was not for the Dutch colonial administration, Indonesians would not have been educated well, would not know how to take care of their homes or be good parents, and that Indonesian women would have suffered the most.[26] Here, the lack of proper education is framed as a catalyst for Indonesian independence movements, and referenced as anti-Dutch sentiment. The wall text guides us to consider the Dutch government's positive ethical educational efforts, and more than the same government's decision to racially segregate schools, or allow only Europeans to work in Dutch government jobs. Indeed, nothing in this or the entire exhibition encourages us to question the validity of the political and economic actions of the Dutch government in the region at all.

Here, I see a tension between trying to acknowledge the injustices of colonialism while simultaneously celebrating this historical time period. Is it any wonder, then, that the trade in African bodies and its impacts is not any less obfuscated in ethnographic museums that house the cultural artifacts of the African continent for analysis and observation? This "Dutch Colonialism" Tropenmuseum exhibit returns me again to Sylvia Wynter's discussion of the function of framing African bodies as the antithesis to Whiteness/Humanness along a hierarchical racial human spectrum. We see this constructed racial/Human spectrum illustrated, in part, with the Tropenmuseum exhibit. The exhibited Indonesian historical figures are depicted differently than the White Dutch historical figures, with less detailed attention paid to their personal and professional lives. However, when compared to the depictions of African historical

[26] This wall text brings to mind Gayatri Spivak's notable phrase, "white men saving brown women from brown men". Since then, other literature has been written about the deployment of women's rights rhetoric to justify Western imperial military practices and policies (Abu-Lughod 2002; Hirschkind and Mahmood 2002).

figures (or African bodies, period) in other ethnographic museums—such as the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium—we see that the lives of Indonesian historical figures are afforded more attention than their ethnographically African peers.

I walked through the Royal Museum for Central Africa, located in Tervuren, Belgium about thirty minutes south of Brussels. I was drawn here after learning about the museum's history as the location for the1897 Colonial Exhibition as part of the Brussels International Exposition. At this fair King Leopold exhibited for public display 60 Congolese people living in a constructed, "authentic" African village. This human exhibition part of the fair was so popular that it lead to the creation of the museum.[27] I heard that the people are gone, but the structure of the fake village remains. I was curious to see what the museum looks like, and what it felt like to look at the past remnants of a human zoo in the 21st century. I never made it outside because I started my visit inside. Once there, I found it necessary to take my time viewing all that is presented to me, especially once I saw that there was an exhibit about Colonialism and Post-Colonialism in the Congo. I was still with my Antwerpian friend and, learning that this was her first visit to the museum and learning about Belgium's colonial history in the Congo, felt that it was important to not rush through the exhibit, even if I was skeptical about how this history was being presented to a general public.

At this museum I understood how Blackness in the European context is defined as African and forever originating outside of Europe. I am disorientated and disturbed to see the ways that displays of flora and fauna from the Congo are so near displays of sculptures of

[27] "Human zoos" were popular attractions in Europe and the United States during the 19th and 20th century featuring the display of African and Native American people in constructed settings meant to "place" them in their natural setting, not much unlike displays at natural history museums. Unfortunately, such attractions still occur from time to time in Europe, most notably in Germany (Ausburg) and the United Kingdom (London and Adelaide) in 2005 and 2007.

African people, or exhibits of Congolese masks. Whether looking at a stuffed giraffe, or a mask (Fig. 25), or a sculpture of an African man (Fig. 26), the effect is one of viewing the artifacts as objects of study, removed and unrelated to the person who is doing the looking. These moments of looking at the displays of Blackness here produced a destabilizing moment for me, similar to my encounter with the Viva Coffee advertisement, where I again felt like the reality of my existence was made invisible. The viewer is not assumed to be someone who is often associated with one of these objects of study. She is assumed to be a white person from Brussels, or a tourist with an interest in the museum, a "racially pure, secular subject" (Wynter 2003:309) The representational figures in the museum are not presented as rational, secular subjects, as is the case with a sculpture of a presumably African man, dressed in leopard print skins covering his waist and head, crouching over a bare-chested African woman (Fig. 27).

This man and this woman are presented in a way to reify certain associations of Blackness as animalistic, led by passion, erotic, scary, not like a normative, human, "us." The curatorial text informs us that these sculptures, created by Paul Wissaert, are "closely linked to the history of the Royal Museum of Central Africa. These group of Anioto were designed, like other "ethnographic" groups, to animate the showrooms of the Museum of the Belgian Congo at the beginning of the 20th century." The text further attempts to contextualize the sculpted scene before us:

> **The Leopard Society**
> "…This sculpture painted in plaster was created in full colonial context at a time when the museum served as a showcase of the colony. The justification of the colonial enterprise believed to bring well-being to the heart of Africa. The Anioto society of which we do not know much was equated with obscure practices. The group was realized by the sculptor and medalist Paul Wissaert (1885-1951) around the same time he depicted another group scene, a 'betrothal dance of the Dengese tribe, Lake Leopold II,' today disappeared."

The Leopard Men, or Anioto
It is in the northeast of Congo, in Ba[a]li, during the years 1934 to 1935 that there was talk of aniotisme; the killings were then severely repressed by the colonial administration. The Leopard men were closely related to the initiation association Mambela. All the young boys of Bali were required to be initiated. Religious leaders chose among them future Leopard men, or Anioto, and armed with a knife or iron claws, they terrified and killed people randomly selected to be the designated target group. This was, by force and violence, to influence the behavior and decisions of the group.

The secrecy and absolute solidarities between insiders of the same group certainly fostered the birth of the aniotisme within Mambela. But the establishment of colonial structures crumbled religious authorities, political and judicial initiates of the great holders of such powers. This may have led the Bali to erect a system of ritual murder, the only way to restore the fear of the faltering of their traditional leaders."
We see that this contextualization, is really just a history lesson for the museum visitor.

While the curatorial text hints at the negative impacts of Belgian colonialism on the governing structures of indigenous Congolese societies, this presented history ultimately frames Belgian colonial practices as a much needed civic intervention. This text further demonstrates a seeming need to valorize Belgian colonialism throughout the museum. While the curatorial text hints at the underbelly of colonialism (i.e. "the killings were then severely repressed by the colonial administration"), there is nothing in the museum that details the violence visited upon Congolese people by the Belgian government in the ways the Anioto text describes how the secret society killed members within its communities. The viewer is meant to leave with the impression that if it were not for Belgian colonialism in the Congo, such violent, inhumane, and by implication, uncivilized practices would have continued in the Congolese region of Bali

We are presented again with these same othering associations of Blackness a few steps later with a sculpture by Charles Samuel, also created for the 1897 colonial exhibition (Fig. 28). This time, the milieu depicts an African man defending an African woman, also on the ground and bare-chested, from an Arab man. Are we to assume that the woman is in danger of being beaten or sexually assaulted by the Arab man? What context is given for us to understand the

scene shown, or empathize with any of the characters depicted? Where in Africa, exactly, are these two people supposed to be from? Where is the text to remind us that these are characters from the imagination of a White European man presented as an accurate portrayal of life, somewhere on the African continent? In this museum installation, the normative, white European viewer is encouraged to project their own associations and conclusions onto the scene with the scant visual details given: We are to assume that one man is Arab, and not African, because he wears a turban, ignoring the various cultures within Africa where men wear turbans. We are to assume that the man is African because of the cloth wrapped around his waist. Displayed as is, are we also to assume that the characters depicted are humans just like the viewer?

Walking through this exhibit, we are not encouraged to think in this way, even when discussing the colonial relationship between Belgium and the Congo. As part of the "Congo: Colonization and Decolonization" colonial exhibition, I walk by displays of the personal artifacts of Henry Morton Stanley, the man King Leopold commissioned to help him establish a Belgian military outpost in the Congo.[28] It is striking to witness the ways in which the violence of that mission is both valorized and erased in this exhibition by displaying the tools of Stanley's trade. For example, the use of guns are framed, not as weapons used to kill, intimidate, and suppress African people, but as tools for protection and hunting for Stanley and his crew (Fig. 29):

> **Revolver, Reily trade-mark**
> The ordinary grip is replaced by one that can be placed on the shoulder, like a filed, to shoulder the gun and target with ease.
>
> **Self-protection and Hunting**
> Stanley's experience from previous travels and his covering wars and conflicts gave him both knowledge of, and an obvious attention for arms. For him, they are both a means to

[28] For an in-depth account and history of King Leopold's colonizing mission in the now Democratic Republic of the Congo, please see Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa.*

> be protected if attacked, and an assurance to provide the expedition with wild game and food. Before embarking for Africa, he got his supply of arms from the United States, or London, indifferently.

I am surprised to see such a positive portrayal of the man history has shown to be the ruthless executor of violently exploiting and subjugating Congolese people and their land in the name of Belgium's economic benefit.

Another display reinforces the impression that the focus of this exhibition is on the lives of the White European men involved in colonizing the Congo, and portraying their efforts in the best possible light, with little regard for the lives of Congolese people during and after Belgian colonialism. The caption next to a display of Stanley's writing and drawings (Fig. 30) tells us:

> **International Lectures**
> Stanley illustrates his various and numerous lectures with 'slides,' taken from the prints shown in his books or with the photographs from his personal collection. The drawing was transferred on a thin glass plate, sometimes enhanced with colours, and protected by another thin plate of the same material. A project, or lantern, drove a gas light through the 'slide."

The focus on Stanley's technical acumen emphasizes how instrumental he was in providing a certain type of education to the public about the countries that he visited, that King Leopold sought to exploit. Focusing on the ways Stanley's expeditions were publicized—through mass circulated articles, accompanying drawn illustrations, and public lectures—highlights past analysis of how mass mediated images at the turn of the 20th century perpetuated hierarchical ideas and practices of race, particularly as these ideas pertained to Blackness (Baker 1998).

I moved on to another display within the "Colonization and Decolonization" exhibition, this one focused on the roles of missionaries in the Congo. I am presented with various photographs of White Belgian missionaries, dressed in white, always seated or standing above

Congolese children and adults (Fig. 30 and 31**)**. The wall texts to describe the history of such scenes:

> **Evangelize and educate**
> Protestant and Catholic missions accompany the European colonization movement and support the CFS [Congo Free State] in its 'civilizing' efforts by educating and evangelizing. In 1906, however, Leopold II reaches an agreement with the Catholic missions, thus privileging their work. African spiritualties persist on the margins of the new Christian culture."
>
> **Missions, evangelization and education**
> The Belgian colonial state delegates the social, culture and medical fields in large part to the missionaries who concentrate their efforts on evangelism and education. Unlike French and British colonies, the Belgian Congo favors mass education, in local languages, rather than the training of an elite. On the eve of independence, 40% of the Congolese population is literate, thanks largely to the missions. The State and the missions provide a high level of technical education, but higher education in the true sense of the world is not introduced until the 1950s."

The response to these photos depends on the curatorial text, and on the viewer. If the viewer, prior to visiting this exhibition, has read about the Belgian colonial history of the Congo; and/or if the viewer is identified/self-identifies as Black/African-descended, is she or he disturbed by the symbolism of cultural and physical violence held in an image of hundreds of Black bodies kneeling before a White man in prayer? If the viewer is ignorant of Belgian colonial history, and/or is assumed a normative, White European, does he or she accept these images as mere documentation of the described civilizing mission of Belgian Christian missionary work? In this exhibit, by focusing on the tools of Henry Morton Stanley's trade, of the artifacts and "positive" activities of colonial civil and religious servants, the museum elides an actual visual discussion and engagement with the violent nature of colonialism and its effects on the African people

discussed.[29] Displaying these artifacts in an ostensibly objective way invariably creates a distance between the normative viewer and the people whose lives we are viewing in a box.

Conclusion

I conclude this chapter by meditating on the 2012 European Commission produced televised advertisement, "Growing Together," which championed cooperation between European Union member states.[30] In this video, a White woman in a yellow jumper and yellow sneakers walks into a desolate factory as whistle music plays reminiscent of scores played during showdown scenes in Western films. The woman stops at the sound of a gong and looks up to see an Asian man who appears before her making sounds, and moving in ways, stereotypically associated with karate films. He jumps down in front of her, where she looks calmly to her left as pigeons fly to reveal a brown man wearing a turban and holding a sword raised in front of him. The man levitates off the ground and flies toward the woman's direction; he lands and starts swinging his sword aggressively at her. At this time, the woman calmly looks to the right as a door is kicked down by a bare-chested Black man with locs, who, through martial arts moves assumed to be capoeira, flips toward her.

Now, with all the men in front of her, the White women looks at all them, closes her eyes, opens them, and exhales as she raises her arms to her side and multiplies herself to surround the

[29] An example of what this visual discussion would look was displayed at the 2016 Bronx Documentary Center "New Documents" exhibit, which focused on the role of journalism? and civic photojournalism to document human atrocities. The first image displayed was of a photograph, taken in 1904 by missionary, Alice Seeley Harris, of a Congolese man looking at the severed hand and foot of his wife and daughter, who were killed by King Leopold's Anglo-Belgian Indian Rubber Company militia. More information on this exhibit can be found at: http://bronxdoc.org/exhibitions

[30] The European Commission has since pulled down the ad from their official social media sites, but the video has been archived online by various YouTube user members: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKN67ImpO4k (EurActiv 2012).

three men. The men look around in confusion. They then put their weapons and hands down, and sit down inside the women's circle as the women themselves sit down. The camera jumps to a birds-eye view where we then see the men disappear inside the circle, with the women turning into the yellow stars of the European Union flag. The background changes into the waving blue EU flag, which fades to black with the words: "The more we are, the stronger we are," with the EU logo appearing at the bottom.

This video was pulled down after public outcries of racism and sexism, but the message had already been clearly communicated as to who the European Commission thought did and did not represent Europe. The video echoed a March 2013 group conversation I had the privilege of participating in with a mid-level EC official, as part of a tour of the European Commission. Prompted by questions about immigration to the European Union the official, a Spanish woman, started her answer by saying, "I'm sure you all were wondering, when taking the train here, 'Where are all the Belgians? There are hardly any Belgians left!'" The official was referencing the multiracial make-up of the city that I had indeed noticed upon arrival to Brussels while taking public transportation throughout the city. In her statement, the implicit message was clear that we should not assume a person was Belgium if they were not White-looking. Her statement was curious because by nature of hosting the European Union and European Commission, Brussels is an international city; would it not be faulty to assume that *anyone*, White-looking or not, was Belgian? In the EC official's statement, then, we hear the implicit equation of Europeanness to racialized Whiteness, which the EC video perfectly visualized.

It might seem odd that I am referencing a video that features racialized identities other than Black when a significant portion of this chapter has focused on the visual deployment of Blackness to oppositionary define a normative White European identity. My larger argument,

however, rests upon the notion that analyzing European visual culture further opens discourse about the continuing salience of hierarchical ideas and practices of race in Europe. This video encourages us to think about Blackness as an object of knowledge; anti-Black racism as a fundamental building block of coloniality; and how the visual symbolism and depictions of Black people inevitably affects other groups of people as well. In "People of Color Blindness: Notes on the Afterlife of Slavery," in which he grapples with the question of what does it mean to be Human for Black people when Blackness is defined as socially anti-Human and a problem, Jared Sexton engages how this dilemma effects other racialized non-White groups:

> Every analysis that attempts to understand the complexities of racial rule and the machinations of the racial state without accounting for black existence within its framework—which does not mean simply listing it among a chain of equivalents or returning to it as an afterthought—is doomed to miss what is essential about the situation. Black existence does not represent the total reality of the racial formation—it is not the beginning and the end of the story—but it does relate to the totality; it indicates the (repressed) truth of the political and economic system. That is to say, the whole range of positions within the racial formation is most fully understood from this vantage point… What is lost for the study of nonblack nonwhite existence is a proper analysis of the true scale and nature of its material and symbolic power *relative* to the category of blackness" (Sexton 2010:48).

Returning to the discussion I began earlier in this chapter, European visual culture highlights what another manifestation of institutionalized white supremacy looks like outside of the popular paradigm of New World Slavery and U.S. codified racial segregation. When we think of coloniality as a world view that orders humans as valid/invalid social subjects based on racialized hierarchies, the "Growing Together" European Commission video demonstrates the cascading social effects the European-invented White-Human/Black-Other racial binary has on groups of people who fall between this spectrum. The "Growing Together" commercial sends the clear message that it does not matter if a Black, Asian, or Middle Eastern person is born and

raised in a European Union country. Socially, as non-White people, they will never be considered a normative European person.

Returning to questioning the function of Blackness "in the life and mind of Europe," I think about the long history of visual display in the Western world of Black bodies. These display practices often, whether intentionally or not, were complicit with creating and justifying scientific racist thought. When thinking about the birth of the social sciences, especially anthropology, photographic visual representation became the main tool to validate these new burgeoning fields. Ethnographic photography and museums reduced the history, senses, emotions, thoughts, philosophy, and religions of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people to an anonymous, two-dimensional body to dissect, classify, and objectively observe along a racial hierarchy.[31] In this way, visual representation became a crucial tool with which to justify scientific racism.

This was vividly illustrated at the 2014 *Foreign Exchange* exhibition at the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt, Germany. For this exhibition, the museum exhibited ethnographic photographs that had been stored and forgotten for decades in the museum's basement, and which were taken by the founder of the museum, Bernhard Hagen.[32] Holding true to their mission of being a post-ethnographic museum that critically reflects on the relationship between culture, power, and representation, *Foreign Exchange* featured the images alongside journal

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[31] The work of painter, Rajkamal Kahlon, powerfully addresses, and intervenes, into this history through her work with colonial and military archives.

[32] The museum was officially opened in 1904. The *Foreign Exchange* exhibit introduces the photographer and his photos to museum visitors: "Hagen…made the claim that ethnography could contribute to the development of future global markets. Learning about other cultures, he declared, would provide German traders with the requisite knowledge for successful foreign exchange. As a doctor, Hagen had been stationed on plantations in South-East Asia. His photographs [of South-East Asian male nudes and male genitalia]…raise uncomfortable questions about the nature of his interest in the migrant workers he took care of." (Deliss, Mutumba, and Museum 2014)

entries of Hagen. Both were accompanied by commentary from an invited panel of scholars, artists, and curators who discussed the history and impacts of such images. Such juxtaposition of images, journal entries, and contemporary commentary revealed the biases and ulterior motives of the image taker, who justified and enacted representational racial violence in the name of science.

Many of the blatantly racist ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries are now widely disavowed by the social sciences, sciences, and popular opinion. This is especially the case with countries in Western Europe that are invested in defining their cultural and national identities, post-1945, as places where the roots of fascism, and related ideas of racial genocide, can never again take root. Despite political and social commitments to fight against this specific form of racism, the legacy of anti-Black racism, through the images of Blackness produced during European colonialism, in support of hierarchical racialized ideologies and practices of race, continue into the present moment. The effect is the creation of a culture of space that quietly communicates exclusive definitions of European identity as White. Visual culture and related textual and cultural associations, then, becomes a contested space for defining European identity. This is why popular images in contemporary Europe are a rich site of analysis to articulate contemporary ideas and practices of race in Europe. Furthermore, analysis of the deployment of Blackness in European visual culture aides in demonstrating how the reality of Black European life is made socially illegible.

Lastly, I find focusing on images in public European culture as a useful vehicle by which to enter the discussion of race in Europe. Discussing the form and function of racialized images in Europe connects conversations about *race* in Europe to conversations about the varied manifestations of coloniality in the region. Images are the clearest way to discuss this aspect of

contemporary European life, especially when public discourse is resistant to it, adamant about not seeing it (racelessness), and statistics about the racial demographics of European life are difficult to come by due to the legacy of fascism. Talking about coloniality prevents us from solely focusing on, and parsing out details about what Black life and racism looks like in one locality over the next. It becomes not about comparing and contrasting where histories of legalized discrimination, such as slavery and racial segregation did or did not occur. Instead, it becomes about looking at coloniality as a concept, as a structuring order of life that depends on a racialized hierarchical ordering of human beings. Talking about Blackness as an object of knowledge in this way helps us talk more accurately about coloniality as a structuring order that exists across time and space and that, therefore, can and does exist in contemporary European life.

Chapter Two

Coloniality in Space and Place

Introduction

In this chapter I expand on Chapter 2 by exploring a contemporary example of a space of culture, outside of consumer products, public space and ethnographic museums, to illustrate the societal structure of coloniality and the importance of analyzing Blackness as an object of knowledge. Weheliye defines race as "a mysterious thing in that the social character of racializing assemblages appears as an objective character stamped upon humans, which is presented not in the form of sociopolitical relations between humans, but as hierarchically structured races" (Weheliye 2014: 51). Weheliye encourages us to look at Blackness as an object of knowledge, not to dismiss the particularity of history and experiences of Black lives, but because this mode of analysis denaturalizes the processes and structures that shape the lives and experiences of nonwhite humans "as not-quite human" (19). I find this argument useful when discussing practices and ideologies of race in a German context because it provides a productive framework through which to articulate the various ways the understanding of Blackness-as-not-quite-human manifests itself in built environments, and gets mapped onto human populations who either may not self-identify or be identified as Black. This is the case with the Berlin neighborhood of Wedding.

In this dissertation I focus on non-mainstream Berlin art spaces as sites that encourage innovative challenges to racialized conceptions of German identity, as well as provide space to name and challenge structures of coloniality. Like museums, I argue that non-mainstream art

spaces are instrumental in placing cities on a global scale.[33] Therefore, it is important to attend to such spaces of culture to explore if and how national identities and culture are racialized within them. However, in this chapter, I examine how Berlin art spaces can also perpetuate hegemonic conceptions of German cultural identity that are implicitly equated with Whiteness through seemingly critical and inclusionary discussions about race, identity, culture, power, and economics. I illustrate this dynamic through a January 2013 exhibition and panel discussion, "Illuminations of Wedding," centered around Wedding,[34] a Berlin neighborhood currently undergoing demographic and economic transitions. "Illuminations of Wedding" was not the only example of cultural institutions in Berlin engaged with topics of race; however, I focus on this particular exhibition because I found it illuminated the inherent challenges with ill-informed institutional engagements with topics of race, culture, and identity.

Experiential Anti-Racist Neoliberal Multiculturalism

Before I discuss further the "Illuminations of Wedding" exhibition and discussion, I detour now to an experience that demonstrated to me why it is important to attend to and utilize the theoretical frameworks of coloniality and Blackness as an object of knowledge. I was forced to reckon with the experiential impacts of living in a highly mediated, globalized, post-9/11, post-Barack Obama, post-2008 financial crisis world one hot Sunday day and night in August 2012. At this time, I was traveling through West Germany by train from Kassel to Bonn. I was in Kassel during this time for three days exploring the world and art of dOCUMENTA (13). dOCUMENTA is Europe's largest art fair, occurring once every five years in the heart of Central

[33] I discuss in further detail the relationship between city-making and cultural production in Chapter Four.

[34] Ws in German sound like English Vs. Therefore, "Wedding" is pronounced as "Vedding."

West Germany. Unlike other global art fairs, the aim of dOCUMENTA is not market-based; established art galleries do not reserve booths in Kassel's museums and gallery spaces to sell their represented artists' work to collectors. Instead, dOCUMENTA, established in 1955 by Arnold Bod, was envisioned as a space where through art, Germany could rebuild its reviled image to, and relationships with, its regional neighbors and the international world after the Second World War. He also saw the fair as a way to bring Germany up to speed with the trends of modern art that the country's cultural institutions had not engaged with during the Third Reich era. dOCUMENTA was shaped to be the site where people from various international backgrounds could come together and reestablish ties through dialog and engagement around the art work presented by hundreds of established and emerging artists from around the world.

I had heard about dOCUMENTA, especially dOCUMENTA (12) curated in 2007 by the Nigerian curator and art critic Okwui Enwenzor, for years as a professional working in the film, media, and art world. The fair was spoken about in my professional world as the apex of a unique art fair moment because of the time lag— five years— in between each fair, suggesting art exhibits shaped less by art trends of the moment, and more by the vision of the lead curator. I was very excited, therefore, to learn that my research year in Germany would coincide with dOCUMENTA (13). The fair started in the summer of 2012, during which time I was living in Bonn, the former capital of both West Germany and re-unified Germany before Berlin became the country's capital in 1999. In Bonn, I was also taking daily intensive German language classes as part of my research fellowship. What made a trip to dOCUMENTA more possible and appealing was that my college friend, Justin, was performing in one of the exhibitions that year. This meant that I had a free place to stay and a behind-the-scenes chaperone into the world of artists and curators at dOCUMENTA. The art fair exceeded my imagination of what I would

encounter while there, and after three fun-filled, educational, inspiring, and transformative days in Kassel, I prepared to take the five hour Sunday evening train ride from Kassel back to Bonn in order to attend my language classes the next day.

Around 10am that Sunday morning, I slowly started my day, laughing with Justin as we commented on his neighbors outside. They lived in the same building as him and were in the backyard garden below his window enjoying themselves at their grill party. We had seen the grill party start the previous day around noon, and were amazed to wake up and find that his neighbors and their friends were turning their festivities into a 24-hour party. Legally, in Germany, there is a community silence rule from 8pm to 7am on weekdays and all day on Sunday. This means that your neighbors can and will call the police to complain about noise disturbances after the curfew, and that officers can and will fine you for breaking the rules about noise. This is why many restaurants and bars throughout Germany will quickly and effectively usher their outside dining customers inside before curfew. We were surprised that none of the surrounding neighbors had called the police on his building's neighbors. Knowing this social context of German life, and hearing the 24-hour party occurring in the backyard outside his apartment, made Justin and I think that he was living in an unusually relaxed neighborhood, if at almost 6am, his neighbors were still laughing and talking loud, and no one had reported them for disturbing the peace.

In the early hours of the day, while using the bathroom, I heard one of the backyard revelers yell in English, "White power!" This caught my attention, and kept me awake as I lay in bed trying to figure out what he and his friends were talking about. This man yelled "White power!" in English at least 20 times, but each time his utterances were met with a lot of laughter from the other people present. Because the rest of the conversation was spoken in German, this

back-and-forth made me think his “White power!” shouts were related to a joke. I could not be sure because I was in between being asleep and awake, and was still in the process of learning German. At some point during this exchange, I heard someone else mention Hitler’s name, but could not grasp the heart of the conversation because it was muted, When Justin and I were and getting ready for the day, I mentioned the “White power” moment earlier that morning and curious, we both peered out of his back window to finally see what the party was all about. There was one woman present with her husband, their neighbors, and six other male friends. A moment passed and Justin said, "interesting...they all do have shaved heads." Always trying to remain vigilant against making assumptions with little information, we told ourselves a shaved head does not a skinhead make. Even if you see seven of them sitting together at a table. We therefore simply took note of the barbecue outside and decided to make breakfast and continue with our day and.

However, about ten minutes later I decided to return to the back window to observe the party outside. I noticed that a new man, also sporting a shaved head, had joined the party and was. I then noticed a different man stretch his arms in his chair, revealing a T-shirt that said, "Old School SS" with a picture of the telltale black boots and white laces. In that moment I thought, “maybe they *are* skinheads, actually, with a shirt like that, they are probably neo-Nazis.” I recounted my new observation to Justin and his roommate and we all shared a moment of disbelief. However, after a pause we continued talking and making breakfast in the kitchen without further comment about the barbecue. After a while, something drew me back to the window, possibly because, in those first moments of observation, my eyes saw more than my mind was able to process. This time I saw that two new men, also with shaved heads, had joined the party and one had a neck tattoo that I recognized as the National Socialist Party Eagle; it is

similar to the current national German eagle emblem, but this Third Reich eagle sits on top of an encircled swastika. I then looked past this man and noticed two flags flowing in the wind behind the party on the laundry line that I had not seen before. One was the national German flag with bold English words stitched in black saying, "My Honor, My Pride." A reference, I would later learn, to a popular white supremacist heavy metal song. The second flag was also German, but this time emblazoned with the Third Reich Eagle and below it, a graphic of the Nazi Schutzstaffel (SS).

In that moment, it finally hit me that I was actually witnessing a group of neo-Nazis and skinheads sitting at a table, at a barbecue, in a garden directly behind my friend's apartment window. What was so surreal and shocking about that moment was the mundane nature of this communal scene. Everyone at the barbeque was laughing, eating, drinking, talking, and all around enjoying themselves, much like how my family, friends and I socialize with each other during the summertime. Things became a bit more surreal when I walked back to the kitchen to report to Justin and his roommate all that I had just seen. Whatever reaction I expected us to have, it did not include remaining calm and eating breakfast, but we did. The fact of the matter was, we were inside safe and they were outside drinking and eating. Looking back, I think I also was taking cues from my friend and his roommate. They lived in that building and in that neighborhood, and had been doing so for months, and if they were acting calm, I would too. By the time we were ready to leave the house two hours later, the barbecue party had finally ended and the participants were gone.

What was perplexing about this incident was that the party included neighbors and people whom Justin, a Black man, and me, a Black woman, had seen and greeted throughout the weekend whenever we crossed paths. Justin also lived in a neighborhood just outside of the city

center that was home to a lot of African immigrants. At the time of my visit, Justin had been living there for over a month and was expected to stay three more months until the end of the fair. None of these facts held together easily in my mind, which was rightfully conditioned to equate the image of neo-Nazis and skin heads with violence and alarm bells ringing in my mind.

Days later I learned that two men from my fellowship cohort had biked to Koblenz, a small, picturesque town near Bonn situated along the Rhine river, the same day of the neo-Nazi barbecue, and had witnessed a neo-Nazi parade. They also witnessed a gay pride parade on the same street, organized in protest against the neo-Nazis. Days later after hearing this story, a friend living in Berlin told me that same day was the 20th anniversary of the Rostock riots. From August 22nd to August 24th, 1999, a building housing mostly African and Vietnamese people seeking asylum in Germany was besieged by hundreds of neo-Nazis and skinheads throwing stones and fire bombs at the building. Thousands of White Germans from the city observed and applauded their actions, and Rostock police and politicians initially refused to intervene (Grimm 2012).

I knew none of these facts when I was observing the barbecue. As I left the apartment to enjoy my last day at dOCUMENTA, I was bewildered, uneasy, and frightened by the possible implications of what I had seen. I never saw Justin's neighbors again. And although I was distressed that I had just witnessed a neo-Nazi celebration, during the time of a festival that was established expressly to counter the history and values the skinheads and neo-Nazis at the barbecue represented, I was able to roam the exhibitions for hours, without any incidents, before I boarded my evening train to Bonn.

After experiencing train delays and broken air conditioning, due to the heat wave the Western part of Germany was experiencing that weekend, I arrived at Hauptbahnhof [Central

Train Station] in Bonn at midnight. It was warm and humid in ways that reminded me of New York during the summer. I was exhausted from the day and did not notice the city train I usually took to and from my German language school had switched to a weekend schedule. I ended up arriving one stop past my destination, at a train station I had never seen before, in a part of the city with which I was completely unfamiliar. I quickly exited the train, hoping that I had not missed the last train of the night that would take me back to Hauptbahnhof where I could take a cab, like, I chastised myself, for not doing in the first place.

As I walked toward the center seats on the platform to wait for the next train to arrive, I heard someone yell, “skinhead!” Given my neo-Nazi and skinhead sightings that morning 12 hours earlier, I quickly looked around thinking, “Where? Who?” All I saw was a group of four or five harmless looking 17-19 year-old White German teenage boys sitting on one set of chairs, and a Black man and his White German girlfriend, equally innocuous, sitting on the opposite set of seats close to the track of the train I wanted. I sat down next to the couple, still thinking about, and confused by the “skinhead” comment, and caught eyes with the Black man. This prompted him to speak to me in English asking if I spoke French. My instincts in that moment told me to speak in any other language but English, so I respond to him in German saying “No.” To which he responded in German, “That’s too bad. Where are you from?" “New York,” I said.

He then proceeded to go on a tirade, in a mixture of English and French, about how much he hated America, hated Americans like me, and hated Barack Obama for killing Muslim women and babies. In an instant it was clear to me that this man was the one who yelled “skinhead!” and that he was referring to me. To this day, I do not know what signaled my Americanness or foreignness to him before we spoke. I only feel certain that my almost-shaved head is what prompted his skinhead insult. For a moment, I was able to laugh to myself about the bizarreness

of the entire situation, given the actual skinheads I saw earlier that morning. Listening to this man yell at me, I guessed from his accent he was French-African because his German and English were accented with the inflection and rhythm of speech that I associate with West African languages, and because he injected French words into his tirade every now and then.[35]

Not really knowing what do, and still disbelieving that this exchange was even occurring, I continued sitting in my seat and looking at the man as he continued to tell me how he “pisses on shit America and shit Americans.” All the while, his girlfriend, who was sitting next to me with her back turned, made no attempt to stop him except, it seemed, trying to distract him at different moments by pointing to the schedule display and asking when he thought the train was going to arrive. He ignored all of her efforts. For about thirty seconds my body was in full fight-or-flight mode, noticing that this man kept moving closer in my direction as he yelled at me, and feeling like the situation could possibly escalate to a physical altercation. Reflecting on this moment two and a half years later, I am sure that if I had responded to the man in English, I would have escalated the situation by speaking in anger.

Instead, the only thing I could say in German in the moment with emotions running high and my thoughts in English flashing quickly and angrily through my mind was, “Okay, now that you've told me how much you hate America, Americans, and Barack Obama, do you feel better now?"

Him: “What?”

Me: “Do you feel better now?"

Him: “Yeah, I feel better, but…”

[35] Here, I am referring to West African languages I hear spoken in my Harlem neighborhood by the Ghanaian, Malian, Senegalese, and Burkinabe communities who live there. However, my guess about the region where this young man is from remains just a guess.

He did not finish his sentence. For the next five or so minutes, he tried to get the teenage boys sitting across from us to gang up on me—

Him: “ Hey! Don’t you also hate the US and Americans like her?”

Them (at different speeds): “Yeah! We hate America and Americans too!”

However, when their train arrived from the opposite direction, they cheerfully waved and said to me, “Bye! Get home safe!”

The man stopped speaking directly to me and instead spoke loudly to the air about “shit America and shit Americans.”

To say that that entire Sunday—from neo-Nazi morning barbecues to night-time verbal attacks for being an American—was a startling and frightening experience, is an understatement. It was also disappointing to experience, through my proximity to a neo-Nazi celebration, the worries, and fears that family and friends had for me during my previous years of travel to Berlin, that I had constantly assured them was hyped and overblown. However, during later and calmer moments of reflection, there are a few things about this experience that stand out as notable to reflect on, in particular, what the day’s events revealed about the intersections of culture, space, place, race, and nationality. When I re-read the notes I wrote for myself about the entire day’s incident, I saw how at different times in my recounting of the story, I identified myself first as a woman facing a potentially dangerous physical situation with men. Then, I saw how I identified myself as a Black woman who expected to encounter violence from White men rather than from a Black man. Then I saw how one’s nationality can throw to the wind any expected forms of solidarity (and violence) along racial lines.

This came into relief through one of my notes about safety. The night before my Sunday encounters, Justin and I had just finished a conversation about how we generally felt safer

traveling in Germany than we did in many parts of the United States. Justin had been living and traveling through Germany at that point for four years and had wanted to know if his thoughts about safety and travel as a Black person in Germany matched my own. We both acknowledged that a different, often jarring and uncomfortable, experience accompanies the felt spectacle of moving through Germany and Europe as a Black person. Our guards, however, were not constantly high and alert when walking around Berlin or West and Southern German cities like Bonn, Kassel, Cologne, Frankfurt, and Munich, in the ways that they are when we walk around the neighborhoods in the U.S. in which we have lived: New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. For example, walking home late at night from the train or bus in Bonn or Berlin, I never felt like I had to worry about men catcalling me in the streets, getting mad when I did not respond, and then proceeding to threaten me or throw bottles in my direction. These are all experiences which have occurred to my friends of color and I on a regular basis since we were teenagers living in New York. Traveling through Germany, however, I never feared for my personal safety. While living and traveling through Berlin and Germany, we both talked about how whenever the German police drove by, we did not have the same tense feeling that is always slightly present, however imperceptibly, whenever a LAPD, SFPD or NYPD patrol car slowly roll by in our neighborhoods.

It was very disorienting and disconcerting then, to have the very next day after this safety conversation be the first time since my first visit anywhere in Germany that I was forced to stop, think about, and worry about my personal safety in Germany. My thoughts quickly went from, “I wonder which exhibit I will start with first today? Will I have enough time before my train leaves to check out those three everyone keeps on talking about?” to, “Maybe I should not leave the apartment until this barbecue ends, whenever that is. Maybe it is not a good idea for me to

come back to the apartment by myself." What really destabilized me that Sunday was that I felt more concerned for my immediate safety in my interaction with the West African man at the train station than I did watching eight neo-Nazis in my friend's backyard drinking and talking around a table. What social, political, and economic dynamics were occurring in the world in 2012 that allowed for me to find myself in a situation where in one day I feared for my safety by two different persons who embodied the seemingly opposite ends of the political and racial spectrum? Even though it seems ludicrous that I, a Black American woman, would be called a skinhead by an African man in a German city, what did this epithet hurled at me reveal about underlying perceptions about power and fear across national, cultural, and racial lines in the 21st century?

I knew I had done absolutely nothing to the West African man to warrant his actions toward me. Therefore, I knew behind his verbal outburst there had to be external and/or internal issues he was dealing with. In the moment of his tirade, while feeling anxious, I also sensed that his actions, especially when talking to the German teens, were informed by a desire to demonstrate how much he belonged there, in Bonn, in Germany, by clearly demonstrating how much I did not. It felt like he was making great efforts to show me that he was absolutely nothing like me, even though we were both clearly African-descended. This was starkly felt in the moment when he tried to get all the White people present to gang up on me as an American, against them, the Germans. This experience made me wonder about whether there were moments in his life where he was not made to feel welcome in Germany and was projecting those feelings and experiences on to me.

How had the meanings of being an African immigrant, and/or Black from the United States, and/or Black person in Germany, and/or civil rights versus human rights shifted in the last

ten years and informed the experiences of those of us marked as representative of these racial and social categories? When do these categories work hand-in-hand with each other and when do they conflict?[36] My experiences in Kassel and Bonn that August Sunday clearly demonstrated to me that I would need language to name the form and function of Blackness in my research. I needed tools to distinguish and parse out the connections between the African man's actions, a verbally violent attempt to classify and stigmatize my identity. I would also need language to articulate shifts in structures and social formations that maintain hierarchies of power and societies structured in racial dominance, which differentially impact African-descended people.

It is surprising, yet understandable, why many in the world think that the election of President Barack Obama signaled the end of white supremacy and the ushering in of color-blind and racism-free societies around the world. Roderick Ferguson argues that "in this day of institutionalized affirmations, the critical intellectual is that subject who understands that we determine lines of weakness and positions of strength in circumstances that are endlessly changing" (Ferguson 2012: Loc 4529). Although my August 2012 Sunday experiences were jarring, they were a useful and needed moment for me fully comprehend the gravity of Ferguson's words. It was important for me to be reminded in no uncertain terms at the start of my research year in Germany that it was imperative to attend to more than just the intersections of race, space, culture, and nationality in my work. I would need to also pay special attention to a new formulation of social inequalities and power dynamics that cut across differing temporalities, histories, and spaces that disrupt our popular discussions of racial and cultural identities. I would have to think about race as an analytic, and Blackness as an object of

[36] Many thanks to Ari Issler and Ben Snyder for the conversations about these topics.

knowledge, through which to talk about culture, space, race, and nationality in Germany.   In sum, when writing and researching about the relationship between race and culture in Germany, I would need to include an analysis of the experiential effects of social interactions now informed by a world where a Black man was the face of American state and military power.

The Sunday incidents forced me to think about my privilege as a Black American, and about cultural cues visitors to a country may miss when traveling. Part of what stunned me as I observed the neo-Nazi barbecue was the dawning realization that I recognized some of the attendants as Justin's neighbors, both within and surrounding his apartment building, with whom he had been living for over a month. For the three days that I was visiting Justin in Kassel, I greeted his neighbors whenever we saw each other, often when entering and exiting through the building's front door. During these moments, Justin would stop and talk briefly with his neighbors about the day, asking how they were, and about the events happening at the art fair. These were the same people I saw that Sunday laughing and joking surrounded by, or wearing, White supremacist and Third Reich insignia.

Would my Afro-German friends, had they been in my place, immediately have known that Justin's neighbors were Neo-Nazis and skinheads, and that his neighborhood was probably full of the same? Would the fact this his neighbors sat outside on the steps of their homes and apartment buildings talking loudly and drinking until 4am without complaints from their neighbors or visits from the police, signal to Afro-Germans something about the social context of the neighborhood? Would this make them wary about the White people living there as opposed to in other places? What cultural cues had I missed, or was able to overlook due to being a foreigner to Germany? What possibly awkward and violent situations did I not experience because even though I was a foreigner, after talking with me, it was clear to his neighbors that I

was specifically a Black American?[37] Was the general feeling of safety I felt while walking around towns and cities in (mostly North, West and South) Germany due more to my obliviousness to cultural cues, as well as the privilege of mobility and symbolic state power my American passport gives me? Philippa Ebéné, the creative director of Berlin's Werkstatt der Kulturen, whom I interviewed for Chapter Four, refers to this privilege of mobility for Black Americans in Germany as the "you can't touch me passport." Referring specifically to interactions between police and African-descended people, Philippa notes:

> "I've never heard of a Black American being harassed by a German police. You know? That happens to us. That doesn't happen to Americans. Up until, it was even stronger during the days of, where you had Black GIs all over the place. And of course it has to do with power. It's not because they are afraid of offending you. They are afraid of stepping into a minefield. They know that there's something... They don't dare do that. You're much more protected as a Black American than you are as a Black Senegalese or South African or French or German."

Philippa's observation raises complicated questions about the symbolics of Blackness that I raised in Chapter One, and that relates to my interaction with the West African man on the Bonn platform. There is a difference in the symbolism of Diasporic Blackness and African Blackness that informs differences in experiences of being an alienated subjected, depending on the location and context in which one finds him or herself. In the U.S., the situation may be reversed,[38] but in Germany and other parts of Europe, as Philippa notes, Blackness as an American affords one more physical safety than her or his European counterparts.

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[37] Many thanks to Jessica Cattelino for the conversation about this as it relates to methods. I am struck by the importance of the need to later write an essay about methods as it relates to "cluelessness" in research sites. How does cluelessness provide a certain amount of comfort to the researcher, and what are the contradictory results that may arise from such feeling? To what places do researchers (not) travel due to comfort, that others local to the area may (not)? How does this impact the interpretation of their research?

[38] Author Yaa Gyasi discusses experiences of being differentiated from Black Americans while growing up as a first-generation Ghanaian-American in her June 18, 2106 New York Times essay, "I'm Ghanaian-American. Am I Black?"

When I reflected on this Sunday incident further, I realized that there was a good chance that the neighborhood we were in either housed many neo-Nazis and skinheads, or at the very least, sympathizers of both groups. The state of Bavaria in Germany, which owns the copyright of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, has not allowed the book to be published in Germany for over 70 years[39] . It is illegal to wear or sell merchandise bearing the swastika, or Third Reich symbols like the "SS"; a person can also be arrested for publicly giving the Hitlergruß/Hitler Salute, salute and/or saying, "Heil Hitler." The German public knows this and every day citizens often call their local police when they see breaches of these particular laws. Therefore, for Justin's neighbors and friends to sit in a backyard, surrounded by houses and apartment buildings where neighbors could see the Third Reich flags waving in the wind, behind men and women sporting t-shirts and tattoos with Third Reich symbols, clearly communicated to me that Justin's neighbors, who we passed in the street at all hours of the day and night as we biked to and from dOCUMENTA exhibitions, events, and parties, were not disturbed, or disturbed enough, to see such displays of fascism.

That following Monday, I was back in my German course recounting my weekend experiences like everyone else in the class. Not surprisingly, my story drew the most attention and prompted a long discussion with my peers and teachers about culture and race. Our conversations meandered along many paths, culminating with some of my classmates concluding, "Some cultures are simply not compatible with each other," and others saying, "It is a problem if more foreigners have babies in Germany than Germans." Others, including one of my teachers, also offered their opinions that "problems regarding race and racism are more an American problem than a German problem" or "Race as a word is very taboo here and associated

[39] A fuller description about this can be found in the British newspaper, *The Daily Mail (Hall, Allan 2012)*

with a past way of thinking, so you perhaps need to find a better way to talk about your project that does not include those words." My Sunday experiences directly contradicted everything my classmates and teachers were saying; however, their responses perfectly illustrated how ideas and practices of race in Germany are hidden within discussions about culture, religion, and immigration, thereby allowing the very words "race" and "racism" to be seen as foreign cultural imports to Germany.

My proximity to a neo-Nazi and skinhead barbeque, followed by being called a skinhead twelve hours later, that summer of 2012, revealed to me that despite a lot of global cultural and financial shifts post-2008, hierarchical racial ideologies, and the language of race continues to shape our societies in the 21st century. Rather than the overt forms of demonstrated racism we are used to reading and talking about—particularly through the lens of slavery and the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S, and through anti-Semitism and the Shoah in Germany and Europe—these forms of social power are more nuanced. They use coded terms and features that obfuscate social inequalities, while maintaining a mainstream discourse of racial social equality through the lens of anti-racism and multiculturalism. In this way, discourses about the incompatibility of certain religions and cultures with European culture and ideals, are seen as legitimate statements to make, unsullied by the taboo language of race. This is why I analyze my research through the lens of coloniality as a tool to decisively capture and explain the structure of the shifting dynamics of what I experienced that summer. Discussing racialized power dynamics in terms of coloniality, and Blackness as an object of knowledge, assists in keeping track of such dynamics that can become abstracted from race, but are definitively borne from hierarchical ideologies and practices of race.

Illuminations of Wedding

As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, visual culture in Europe is a rich site of analysis which highlights the persistence of hierarchical ideas and practices of race in contemporary society. In this chapter, I now focus my lens on spaces of culture within a specific locality in Europe, Berlin. I do so for a number of reasons. First, I find it important to look a cultural spaces in Europe outside of established, mainstream cultural institutions, like ethnographic and established art museums and galleries. Following Anderson's assertion about the "profoundly political" nature of museums (Anderson 2006:182), I seek to see if and how this continues to hold true in smaller spaces that are fashioned as counter to their established peers. Second, Berlin is widely seen as an important arts center in the global art world, especially for the fomentation of innovative, and counter-cultural arts practices. Therefore, if coloniality is a structuring societal grammar, I explore if and how it gets replicated in spaces seen as either counter to the social norm, or as part of a larger cultural ecosystem perceived as able and willing to engage difficult societal topics.

For this section, I center my discussion within Alexander Weheliye's challenge to view Blackness and racializing assemblages as objects of knowledge and "not as a biological or cultural classification but as a set of sociopolitical processes of differentiation and hierarchization, which are projected onto the putatively biological human body" (Weheliye 2014: 5). Here, racializing assemblages are defined as physical markers imbued with politicized ideas of the biological human to uphold and justify political violence. I place Weheliye's discussion in conversation with Jodi Melamed's analysis of the destructive political effects of anti-racist neoliberal multiculturalism. Here, anti-racist neoliberal multiculturalism is defined as the normalization of imperialist, capitalist, white supremacist, hetero-patriarchal hierarchies through

the incorporation of anti-racist and multicultural discourses. Put another way, anti-racist neoliberal multiculturalism is an ideology where multiculturalism and anti-racism are now seen as integral to the spirit of capitalism.[40]

I find this dual connection between Weheliye and Melamed useful to articulate how racializing assemblages are used in the contemporary moment in Germany, both visually and semantically, to affirm and reify social hierarchies and inequalities. I do this by considering how Blackness gets mapped onto a Berlin neighborhood whose demographics include a large number of economically and/or ethnically marginal people. I then look at how conversations about this neighborhood within an independent creative institution are deployed in ways that initially seem to engage its people and the socio-political and economic issues they face. However, these conventions are instead used as a platform to bolster the social and economic capital of those individuals in the neighborhood who closer represent, within the structure of coloniality, the figure of the Human/Man, defined "as synonymous with the heteromasculine, white, propertied, and liberal subject that renders all those who do not conform to these characteristics as exploitable nonhumans, literal legal no-bodies" (Weheliye 2014:135).

Melamed's insightful contribution to this discussion rests on her analysis of how literary studies in universities within the United States were a major vehicle through which the reification of both hierarchical ideologies and practices of race, and the normalization of the exploitative nature of capitalism, occurred. Incorporating minoritarian literature within literary studies at universities, accompanied by a discourse of attempting to understand and represent marginal groups, created the paradox of also divorcing the cultural products borne from social

[40] Throughout Europe, policies encouraging multiculturalism have come to be seen as an encouragement of separation from the mainstream culture. I am thinking instead of multiculturalism as an acceptance and celebration of a diversity of cultures, without stigma, within a unified political state.

justice movements they were intimately connected to, like literature, art, plays, dance. As Melamed argues through her analysis of literary works produced in the US after 1945 by and about people of color and indigenous people, we should be wary of talking about concepts such as anti-racism and multiculturalism purely as a social good. While it is a worthy and necessary goal to work toward racial social justice that abolishes structures supportive of racial inequalities, we have to also reflect on the ways that anti-racism and multiculturalism, as concepts, became tools deployed post-1945 to maintain and normalize a dynamic matrix of power defined by feminist scholar, bell hooks, as imperialist-white supremacist-capitalist-hetero-patriarchy (hooks 2004). Put another way, we have to attend to the ways that allusions to, or discourses about anti-racism and multiculturalism are used to perpetuate social hierarchies and inequalities.

While Melamed's analysis focuses on the United States, my research demonstrated the applicability of her theory within a German context.[41] Berlin, as the country's capital and the creative capital of the global art world, has become the staging ground by which Germany is advertised to the wider world as an inclusive, democratic, and tolerant country. Berlin's appeal also lies not just in the fact that it attracts artists and creative industries from around the world, but also in its depictions as being a cosmopolitan and multicultural city. The plethora of art institutions, galleries, and collectives—mainstream and independent—, as well as artists and curators seeking to make Berlin their home base, fuels this depiction of Berlin. A closer look at

[41] There are a number of challenges with reading U.S. theory about race across to Europe. However, scholars have demonstrated that this does not negate all together the applicability of such theories to a European context, especially when there are institutional and semantic obstacles in Europe that prevent a wide-spread, engaged discourse on race within Europe (Theo Goldberg 2006; El-Tayeb 2011;). As Dutch anthropologist Gloria Wekker notes, speaking specifically about the study of the African diaspora, "…although there has been great pain, often high personal costs, and institutional cutbacks, an infrastructure of knowledge production on black matters has been erected in the United States, with publication outlets, museums, and websites for collaboration and dissemination, that has no parallels in other parts of the Black diaspora" (2009: 281). This in effect, for the time being, demands cross-readings to begin articulating ideas and practices of race in Europe, but also demands, as Fatima El-Tayeb argues, a creolization of theory (El-Tayeb 2011:xvii).

the social, economic, and political dynamics of art institutions, exhibition, production, and participation, however, reveals unequal social relations of power informed by race and class found in larger society.

Even though Berlin does not have one main center, like Les Halles in Paris, or Times Square in New York City, Wedding is situated north of many of Berlin's city centers. For example, the arts-oriented neighborhoods of Mitte and Kreuzberg and Potsdamer Platz, which was the city center of Berlin during the Weimar Republic, and which the city council is currently trying to revitalize in an effort to attract more tourists and Berlin residents. During the Cold War, Wedding was within the East Berlin boundaries of the city, which one can tell by the presence of street trains and tracks that crisscross throughout the neighborhood. When walking through the neighborhood, it is clear that Wedding is not what people have in mind when talking about the cosmopolitan make-up of Berlin. I noted this fact one day looking for an apartment, surprised to see the racial and ethnic diversity of the neighborhood. It seemed that there was, in fact, and contrary to my understanding of the city, a residential neighborhood in Berlin where a large number of Black people lived. In Wedding, there are a lot of Black Africans and Afro-Germans, as well as South Asian, Turkish Germans, Middle Eastern Germans, and White Germans. One also finds many grocery stores that cater to the varied cultural diets of the residents there.

When talking with people about the neighborhood, it was clear that Wedding was marked racially with Blackness, here discussed as an object of knowledge. Since reunification, Wedding is often described as working class, and in some respects has been stigmatized in the public because of this label and the demographics of the people who live there. While living in Berlin, the running joke I heard was that even though Wedding was a 20 to 30-minute train ride away from Kreuzberg and Neukölln—the neighborhoods many associate as Berlin's exciting cultural

centers—if you moved there, you should never expect for your friends to visit you, especially during the winter months. The idea being that there is nothing interesting to do in Wedding, the crime is higher there, and the neighborhood houses more unsavory characters than in other, “nicer” parts of Berlin that have whiter and more international residents.

However, with rents throughout the city rising 45 percent in the last ten years, Wedding is also the newest neighborhood experiencing gentrification in Berlin, , with Kreuzberg and Neukölln rising the fastest. One sees this most prominently through the proliferation of gallery spaces in the neighborhood, specifically an area known as Kolonie Wedding [Wedding Colony]. Over the years, there has been an increase of newer, international residents, or Germans from other parts of the country moving to Berlin. The expansion of art galleries in Wedding is in large part due to low-cost rents offered by Degewo, the property managers of many of the buildings the galleries are located in Wedding. Degewo owns many vacant properties in Berlin. These properties remain vacant due to the precarious economy of the city, which limits the possibility of rapid real estate development often seen in sought-after cities. Therefore, Degewo leases the storefronts, or portions of their buildings, at low rents to artists and curators. This is done in an effort to ensure that the buildings do not fall into disrepair, and possibly, to draw potential renters to the building and neighborhood.

With all this in mind, in January 2013, I was excited to attend an advertised discussion about public art engagement with changing communities in multiracial and multiethnic Wedding. The advertisement for the talk, “Illuminations of Wedding” read in part:

> As Berlin's growth as a global creative hub continues, SUPERMARKT’s[42] home in Wedding has taken on particular significance within the city’s cultural atmosphere. Raw warehouses and their surrounding 'street' stories reveal traces of history and layers of

[42] The German “S” sounds like the English “Z”. Therefore, Supermarkt should be pronounced as “Zupermarkt.”

> memories of a Berlin gone-by. Wedding is a neighborhood on the verge of socio-economic transition. As young creative's begin to infiltrate this part of Berlin, fears of rising rents and living costs give way to frictions between communities past and present. **Illuminations of Wedding** is a project exploring forms of urban expressionism from the perspective of Wedding and its identity, with SUPERMARKT's facade and interior used as a digital canvas. Artists explore Wedding's changing role in relation to their own artistic developments. How does the city and this particular neighborhood reflect our desires and notions of identity? How can a place like SUPERMARKT remain in balance with its surrounding communities?[43]

However, upon arriving to the event it was soon clear that the issues this advertisement implied it would raise—how to creatively engage the issue gentrification raises in relation to racially and economically marginal groups of people getting pushed out of neighborhoods for racially and economically dominant people to move in—would not take place at this discussion. First, everyone on the panel, except for one woman, was White. Second, the panel was presented in English, with questions allowed in German and English, which signaled a non-engagement with the surrounding community. The panel was organized around an exhibition curated by an American woman as part of her fellowship training as a curator, and was curated in tandem with a Berlin digital art festival. The exhibition was experimental in that it was displayed not in a traditional gallery space, but a co-working space, Supermarkt.

Supermarkt is an abandoned grocery supermarket that was converted into a multi-use working space for freelancers and start-up companies working in the creative industries. The "Illuminations of Wedding" exhibition was their first attempt at their stated goal of expanding Supermarkt into an art gallery space. Supermarkt represents another example of the growing creative and technologically-focused industries, often funded by venture capital, that champion the mobility of freelance workers, social entrepreneurship, and creating technological solutions

[43] January 2012 email advertisement through a listserv I am a part of for American scholars and artists living in Berlin.

to societal problems. The creative industries are also targeted by politicians in cash-poor Berlin who view the industry as a way to increase economic opportunities in the city via real estate development, increased tourism, and jobs.[44] Wedding then, and the changing discourse about the neighborhood, is seen as a potential place of economic opportunity for Berlin by attracting more of the people - artists and creatives - who are popularly thought of as the first wave of change in an economically depressed neighborhood.

In this sense, if we are to view Wedding as "blackened" because of the economically and racially marginalized people who predominantly live there, then we can say that the new international, German, and predominantly White people moving into Wedding who represent the creative industries are encouraged to live there because of their presumed, and actual, greater access to economic, social, and political capital. The artists' Whiteness in this sense is also "an object of knowledge…[that] designates not actually existing groupings but a series of hierarchical power structures that apportion and delimit which members of the Homo sapiens species can lay claim to full human status" (Weheliye 2014:19).This was seen clearly during the panel discussion, where the focus centered not on critically engaged theories about public engagement through art, or the productive possibilities of transforming public space through building relationships, nor on co-working with the existing community, but on a free interpretation of what it meant to engage with, and be from, Wedding.

Even though one of the stated goals of the exhibit was to engage with the residents of Wedding in the artists' practice, and to exhibit art "from the perspective of Wedding and its identity," no one on the panel engaged with the residents of Wedding in their artistic practice,

[44] How this discourse about the possibilities of monetizing the creative industries is engaged with by Berlin artists and the city is something I discuss further in the next chapter.

except for the moments of public participation in art already created by the invited artists. This was demonstrated by a female panelist who presented an art project that was representative of the work of the global collective she is a part of:

> This is a GRL classic. The LED throw-y. It's an LED and a battery taped together and in this case with a small magnet taped to it. Then it can stick to Ferro metallic surfaces and it's very easy to throw. You're invited to throw it to the surfaces. Basically, you can reach places that are out of reach and normally no one looks or they're normally unattractive. In this case it's under the bridge at Kottbusser Tor. In this case, it's a place where usually people pass by as fast as possible. It's very dirty and not very cool there. We went there and applied about 300,400 LED throw-y's which we'd only done before at a workshop. One workshop we did it with kids so it's very easy to make. In the workshop, we make all the throwys and then go to the location and start. And whenever we start, immediately there's a crowd of people, especially if it's a very highly frequented place like this and they join in without getting any explanations. They see what we do, they copy it, and then after they've had a few tries, they ask, 'how does this work?" So it's very self-explanatory and suitable for all ages and all abilities.[45]

The art in this example, was considered publically engaged because its use in public attracted crowds of people, who were then invited to throw the art onto the underside structure of the train station, Kottbusser Tor. However, in this example, a few contradictions exists within the artist's stated goal of "Illuminating Wedding" and engaging the community there through art. First, Kottbusser Tor is not in Wedding, but in another neighborhood further south, Kreuzberg. A similar project to the highlighted example later occurred in Wedding after the initial Kottbusser Tor public happening, for the "Illuminations of Wedding" exhibition opening. Second, the artist's discussion of inviting the public to engage with ready-made art raises the question of who, exactly, gets to determine the scope and nature of community-engaged art? In this example, the art project in question was unidirectional in conception, with the public engagement occurring at the end, and not the beginning, of the project. The project's goal was well-

[45] All block quotes in this chapter, from this point forward, are part of a transcription of the January 26, 2012 Supermarkt public panel exhibition discussion.

intentioned, but its execution raised doubts about how it "illuminated" the community of Wedding and its changing demographics.

Another pair of exhibited artists, who worked in sound, made it clear during the Q&A portion of the panel discussion, with Supermarkt's events coordinator, that their objective for this particular exhibition was in fact not to engage with the community of Wedding or talk about issues relevant to the community there:

> MICHELLE.: So taking it back to the themes of Illuminations of Wedding. And some of the projects that were actually made for this exhibition specifically, we could draw out some of the ideas behind those?…I wanted to put forward the question to two of the artists here in the audience today, Peter K. and Gemma W., who did an audiovisual performance last night, collecting field recordings from the community. So, we have the question here, sort of laid out: How did the location inspire the project to come into existence? Malcolm talked about this a little bit. But I wanted to see if you guys wanted to bounce some ideas back and forth about how that happened. Both in terms of history, but also in terms of the outward engagement with the community, and how you approached that and how you managed it. Can you explain what the performance was last night and how you went about working on it with Gemma?
>
> PETER: So the sound. We started with the sound collection. It was a combination of sound that I was collecting and an open call for people to contribute sounds to the project as well. On the video side, the video was more of a solo project. The video was collected by Gemma. On the sound side, I guess what's interesting to me, back to the location question... We had different kinds of artists and some people who just happened to have a recorder lying around, and a couple of people who were sound artists... It was not such a narrative project in terms of the sounds that we got. People kind of went out... I heard some of the sounds they did after we had gone out and collected sounds... And found things that were interesting sounds.
>
> So it wasn't so much, here's a set of sounds that's telling a story about being in this neighborhood. It was kind of, here's this fascinating sound that the casino game machines make. Here's the sound of church bells. We got a description from an artist friend of ours who lives here named, Elan, of a mysterious sound that sounded kind of like a muted organ that lived in his flat, but he didn't know what it was. I asked if he could record it. He said he didn't know because he didn't know if it would return of if he had imagined it somehow or something. So we had a lot of personal sensory experiences that we got as feedback. I would say, that doing that, and some of the research that I had done and other people had done in mapping urban soundscapes. People found that the sonic experience of all these conversations were very personal and very much about what they heard in the moment.

Here we see the moderator of the panel attempt to guide the discussion toward the themes of the specific location of Wedding, and how the neighborhood informed the arts projects created specifically for the exhibition. This question was attempted many times throughout the panel discussion by the moderator and curator, and many times was met with evasive or dismissive answers, as evidenced by Peter's response, which made clear that his and his collective's primary interest was decidedly *not* about creating a sound installation that engaged the surrounding Wedding community, but instead was about collecting and editing sounds that interested them as the artist. Furthermore, the sounds he referenced as collecting—casino game machines, a possible organ--were completely abstracted or disconnected from the people producing those sounds. This art collective not only did *not* attempt the stated goal of artistically engaging with the community of Wedding outside of their personal art networks, but through their produced work of focusing on abstracted "urban soundscapes," they also effectively erased the Wedding community from public recognition or contemplation within the exhibit.

The social, economic, and racial privileges afforded these two artists, that allowed for their total non-engagement with, and dismissal of, the larger Wedding community, hinted at the narrow social and business networks they operated in. Their non-engagement also revealed the biases and imbalances of shared available resources inherent to homogenous social and business networks. We can also view Peter K's description of his commissioned work for the "Illuminations of Wedding" exhibit as exemplary of an artist working within a curatorial framework that in theory was about the contemporary multicultural neighborhood of Wedding, but in practice was not concerned with engaging with or illuminating the experiences and identities of a significant portion of the neighborhood's current residents.

One of the other invited artists, Malcolm, demonstrated the inherent problem of creating an exhibit about illuminating a neighborhood with which one is not engaged or familiar. His engagement with the neighborhood also revealed the biases and imbalances of available resources inherent to social and business networks. The impact of both of these scenarios was a dismissal/non-engagement/overlooking of the issues affecting, and important to, the larger, non-art-identified Wedding community. Malcolm's description of how he came to create art specific to Wedding may also reveal the information that was and was not provided to him by the curators of the exhibit, causing wonder about their place in, and engagement with, the contours and characteristics of contemporary Wedding:

> MALCOLM: For "Illuminations of Wedding," what I looked into, when Kris and Michelle asked me to do the exhibition, they said, well the theme is Illuminations of Wedding, and I said, well, I don't live in Wedding, I live in Vancouver, in Canada, but part of my family is German Jewish, so every time I have been to Berlin, which is a number of times in my life, I have always thought about the war and everything else. What Jewish landmarks, if any, are in Wedding? I don't, you know. So what they came back with were, a few locations, but one of them was the Jüdisches Krankenhaus, which is the Jewish hospital in Berlin. I searched and found the one interview that was done after the war with someone who had been in the hospital. Interestingly, it was the only Jewish institution that survived all of WWII completely.

In this instance, Malcolm acknowledges his ignorance about the neighborhood or history of Wedding, and decides to enter the neighborhood and shape his artistic response to it through his identity as a descendent of German Jews. This is a decision that many artists and scholars understandably make when encountering new spaces in the world for the first time.

What is of interest in this moment, however, is not how he chose to enter the space, but how he was invited into the space through social and business networks outside of Wedding, as well as how he attempts to connect it the neighborhood:

> What's interesting is that there isn't anything about the hospital online. When you go to the site for the hospital, it mentions some things, but it doesn't really talk about it. When

> you go to the Shoah Foundation that talks about memories of the Holocaust, there's nothing about the hospital. I think it was because it was a world of grey. How it came to exist, what happened within it, who was there, how they were there, how they came to carry on through the war and why? Through that, I took the narrative of Hilda Kahn, and built a smaller 18 minute narrative. The original interview was three hours long. And then when I got to Wedding, I filmed in different places that she talked about in the interview, within the site of the hospital, so it was basically 18 minutes of audio and these are some of the images that came out of it…So for me, in the context of public space and looking at Wedding, Jüdisches Krankenhaus Berlin, for me was a way of looking at public space, looking at what lies in-between, and dealing with ideas of history culture and memory.

In one light, we can view Malcolm's artistic engagement with Wedding as sincere and honest in that he acknowledged his ignorance of the contemporary neighborhood. He then decided to engage with it through his art in a way that best made sense to him, which was through the lens of the past focused on a specific moment in time directly related to his Jewish identity. In another light, we can view Malcolm's description of his commissioned art for this exhibit as exemplary of an artist working within a curatorial framework that, in theory was about the contemporary multicultural neighborhood of Wedding but, in practice was not concerned with illuminating the experiences and identities of a significant portion of the neighborhood's current residents.

The possible reasons for this are something I will expand on shortly. In this moment, however, I focus on the way the curator introduced the panel discussion about the exhibition:

> This is the last of the three-day celebration here about Wedding and the community here and using Supermarkt as a creative amplification of those concepts. Today is the chance to speak with a few of the participants and curators from the local area, so we have a few different perspectives coming to this community and we'd like to speak with them about their work and their process and how they work with site specific work, as well as their viewpoints on Wedding, specifically.

Her introduction framed the community of, and viewpoints of Wedding, as those of the seemingly burgeoning artistic community in the neighborhood. The racially and economically marginalized residents of Wedding were not a part of the discussion, or the focus of any of the

artistic work presented. This allowed for the conversation of evolving communities of Wedding to be one about the evolving institutionalized *artistic* community of Wedding, which is predominantly White and German, or White and international. A conversation about artists from Wedding, who existed before the newly recognized "artistic community of Wedding", or how gentrification may disproportionately and negatively affect the long-term residents of Wedding slowly being priced out of their neighborhood was not a part of the conversation. Instead, the exhibition and panel discussion revolved around the institutionalized Wedding artistic community and the problems they face as the victims of gentrification inspired by unequal real estate developmental practices.

This was stunningly seen during the question and answer segment of the panel, when one of the event organizers asked panelists to talk specifically about gentrification:

> MICHELLE: I have a question for Suze. This one is more specific about Wedding and the community here. Wedding is such a complex neighborhood. I mean it's had many different waves of immigration. Volterstrasse U-Bahn which is right outside was the last U-Bahn[46] stop before the Berlin Wall. And now we see this growth of the creative industry coming very quickly into this area. The dreaded gentrification. Supermarkt actually finds itself now on a gentrification tour of Berlin based outside and we are an example of this which to me is a really interesting concept. Public Art Lab Berlin is based, as I mentioned, very close by, just down the street, and I wonder what influence, working in Wedding, has on your projects and your practice, and how you see the Wedding community influencing your work.
>
> SUZE: I think it's interesting how this whole area changes in the moment and also interesting for us for example, when we... we had this office over there, and then, we called after the Supermarkt was installed and opened, we called the Degewo and said "oh, look at this wonderful Supermarkt, we are so happy that they are here now and what about us?"…Because they can cancel the contract within four weeks. And then they said "yes, you know, from our side, we just can only say that we fulfilled our regeneration program from Brunnenstrasse 60 to Brunnenstrasse 70, so this program is now fulfilled—regenerated. And, yes, would you agree to pay more rent?" And then I said, "yes, of course, I would also pay more rent…Maybe it should also be renovated then?" And I never heard anything more from them.

[46] Train station

> But if you walk down the street then of course you see lots of small creative NGOs pass by with shops over there and how it's slowly going to generate... I think, therefore, these resource centers, like Supermarkt, are so important to really see also from a political point of view. The whole program, what you're running here, to create this kind of awareness to be part of this gentrification process. And not only be a victim of it, but to be part of it, and to push these debates and discussions about it. And of course also including the people who are living here. It's such, as you said, a diverse, different, public audiences…And maybe there's a chance to bring them together here and have a good project, how they can join, but of course, for the normal aesthetically view of the inhabitants who are living here, the Supermarkt is like a UFO.
>
> MICHELLE: That's an interesting point. You can have interesting projects in a space but the local public interacting is a different question entirely.

We see here in this exchange no critical engagement with *why* Supermarkt and other galleries may be on this gentrification tour. Suze's response fashions herself and her peers in Wedding as the victims of gentrification, but curiously does not seem to recognize that they themselves may be seen as perpetrators of gentrification by other Wedding residents, as unintentionally evidenced by her assertion that she and her peers should "not only be victim, but part of it" as well. As a seeming afterthought to this discussion of being a part of gentrification, she mentions "also including the people who are living here." I mark this moment as an afterthought due to Suze's implication that Wedding residents lack a refined aesthetical taste which colors their perception of Supermarkt as a UFO, and not as a part of the Wedding community. Again, with the exception of Michelle's closing comment, we do not see an engagement by the artists with the surrounding Wedding community to understand why Supermarkt might seem alien to the neighborhood.

The fact that this exhibition and panel discussion was organized around the theme of engaging with a changing neighborhood, but in practice did not address the theme or related issues, hinted at a growing pan-European public awareness about the lack of engagement with the social realities of a multiracial and multiethnic Europe. However, it was clear at the panel

discussion that this awareness was not informed by a sustained and vigorous dialogue about the contours of these issues. This produced an awkward, ill-prepared, and skewed discussion about Wedding and the demographic changes occurring within the neighborhood. Cynically, but I think quite apparently, this interest in engaging with a social topic long ignored by a mainstream German and European public was connected to economic necessity.

For the entire time I lived in Berlin, an ongoing concern heard in public and private discussions was about the lack of funding for the arts, and the independent art scene in particular. Unlike funding models for the arts found in the United States, arts museums and galleries – mainstream and independent – are largely publically funded. In 2013, Supermarkt, and the exhibition it helped sponsor, received funds from the European Commission Funds for Regional Development [Europäisches Fonds für Regional Entwicklung]. This fund provides grants to organizations within the European Union, in regions considered economically weak, in an effort toward economic revitalization and social cohesion. The funds focus on reaching four specific areas: 1) Innovation and research; 2) The digital agenda; 3) Support for small and medium-sized enterprises; and 4) the low-carbon economy.[47] How a region is classified determines how many focus points a receiving entity of ECFRD funds has to address. Supermarkt received its funds officially for infrastructure support to develop the creative economy of Mitte, Wedding's neighbor to the south.[48] This funding fact illustrates a widely accepted belief that there is a strong corollary between certain artistic communities and "positive" economic gains in the neighborhoods they exist in.

[47] European Union Regional Policy

[48] Begünstigtenverzeichnis des EFRE in Berlin 2013/ Directory of Beneficieries of EFRE funds in Berlin. p.14

This belief, supported through the monetary investments in independent Berlin-based art organizations like Supermarkt, is where I see Weheliye's theory of racializing assemblages converging with Jodi Melamed's theory of anti-racist neoliberal multiculturalism. Weheliye, admittedly informed and indebted to Black feminist scholars like Sylvia Wynter and Hortense Spillers, encourages us to look at Blackness as an object of knowledge, not to dismiss the particularity of history and experiences of Black lives, but because this mode of analysis denaturalizes the processes and structures that shape the lives and experiences of nonwhite humans "as not-quite human" (Weheliye 2014:19). I find his argument productive to articulate practices and ideologies of race in a German context because it provides a useful framework through which to articulate the various ways the understanding of Blackness-as-not-quite-human manifests itself both visually, and in built environments. This framework also helps us articulate the ways Blackness becomes spatialized and mapped onto human populations who either may or may not self-identify or be identified as Black. Here, I am also thinking about anthropologist Jacqueline Nassy-Brown's exploration of the co-constitutive social construction of space, place, and race through her ethnography of Liverpool. Thinking again about the ways that Wedding is often constructed as a neighborhood within Berlin —working class, and comprised of racialized "immigrant" communities— we can think of Wedding as marked racially with Blackness.

Weheliye argues that "articulated assemblages such as racialization materialize as sets of complex relations of articulations that constitute an open articulating principle…structured in political, economic, social, racial, and heteropatriarchal dominance" (49). The *Illuminations of Wedding* curator and associated organizers, when advertising Supermarkt and its exhibition , relied on an implicitly recognizable racialized assemblage of Wedding as economically and racially marginal. The fact that the discussion and exhibition never sincerely addressed the

marginal status of the neighborhood, but instead focused on the concerns of the newly arrived curators and artists working there, indicates the maneuvers an institution deploys to ensure its economic viability.

This chasm between the stated goal of the *Illuminations of Wedding* exhibition and panel discussion, and its end result, illustrates one of these maneuvers and is best analyzed through Melamed's theory of anti-racist neoliberal multiculturalism. Thinking of this as an ideology where anti-racism and multiculturalism are seen as part and parcel of capitalism, Supermarkt's use of ECFRD funds was used in part under the provision of infrastructure support to develop the creative economy, and hence, the implied larger economy of Wedding. Supermarkt further signaled their engagement with Wedding and its economic development through the implied discourse of multiculturalism. Implications were made through the description of Wedding in Supermarkt's advertising, that I argue depended on widely held public views of Wedding as socially and economically marginal to Berlin specifically because of the racially diverse residents who lived there.

The disconnect between the intended goal of the "Illuminations of Wedding" exhibition and its actual execution also demonstrates Weheliye's argument that "the current system of racializing assemblages must clearly demarcate the selected from the deselected" (Weheliye 2014:72). The selected in this case being Wedding's so-called creative class, who are seen as the agents of revitalization of the neighborhood, and the deselected being the immigrant and/or working-class and/or non-white residents of Wedding, who are seen as not being agents of this revitalization. This failure of objective for the exhibit also illustrates Melamed's analysis of how cultural artifacts—and I argue, cultural institutions as well—become unwitting vehicles of anti-racist neoliberal multiculturalism. By relying on implied or clearly stated goals of engagement

with multiculturalism, but not connecting rhetoric and practices to the community in which they were located, Supermarkt represents how non-mainstream Berlin arts spaces, informed by economic inequalities, reify racialized hierarchies that mark people as valid/invalid social subjects.

To better understand the genesis of the *Illuminations of Wedding* exhibition, as well as the mission and work of Supermarkt, I sought interviews with the curator of the exhibition, the events manager of Supermarkt, and the director of Supermarkt. The curator of the exhibition never arrived to our agreed upon date and place for our interview, and never responded to several follow-up emails I sent to her. We lived in the same neighborhood of Neukölln, and shopped at the same grocery stores. On at least two occasions after our missed interview, she avoided eye-contact when she saw me and/or attempted to walk in the opposite direction. While the two women from Supermarkt responded to my emails for an interview, nine months later no interview materialized. I reached out to them again when I returned to Berlin the following summer in 2014, and, again we were unable to connect for an interview. The reasons they gave were always travel or a busy schedule.

This might have been true, but informed by the behavior of the curator, I interpreted these moments as avoidance of engaging with me about the nature of the exhibition. To me this avoidance signaled an awareness on their part that the exhibition and panel discussion were disorganized and in practice did not meet their stated goals. After talking with a friend, Paula,[49] whose research overlapped with mine in Berlin, about the obstacles I was experiencing obtaining an interview with all three women, my suspicions that the three women were avoiding me felt confirmed. Paula had interviewed some of the directors of Supermarkt and said that the

[49] Not her real name.

conversation with them gave her the impression that they were not concerned with deeply engaging the discourse and issues about gentrification in Wedding. She also received the impression that they were feeling targeted by those who were having those conversations. Paula had interviewed the organizers of Supermarkt the year prior to me, and I wondered if in the time between when she interviewed them and my request for an interview, the organizers and those associated with them had moved into a defensive position. It seemed possible they were avoiding speaking with anyone who might be critical of Supermarkt and the role it was playing with Wedding's gentrification.

I remembered the comment one of the artists said about Supermarkt, "but of course, for the normal aesthetically view of the inhabitants who are living here, the Supermarkt is like a UFO".[50] Meaning, the creative space of Supermarkt, opened to those who rented our used the space for creative pursuits and businesses, seemed like an anomaly to the neighborhood when it stopped being an actual supermarket open to and used by the general public. The fact that there was a public recognition at the *Illuminations of Wedding* panel discussion that Supermarkt and other creative spaces like it in Wedding, symbolized a source of tension or non-congruence with the neighborhood, further hinted at the potential unease the curator and organizers had with engaging the issue through an art exhibition and discussion surrounding it.

Conclusion

I conclude this chapter by turning to Roderick Ferguson's discussion of the challenges inherent to affirmative institutional practices (Ferguson 2012). Examining the emergence of Black and Ethnic Studies in Universities in the United States in the 1960s, Ferguson argues that affirmative,

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[50] Transcription. January 2012 Public panel exhibition discussion.

rather than exclusionary, institutional practices of minority difference, while deemed radical at the time, ultimately upheld the status quo of the unequal distribution of resources amongst and between communities. By analyzing this process, Ferguson demonstrates the imperative to understand affirmative power as potentially another process that maintains a society structured in dominance. Like Jodi Melamed, Ferguson does not dismiss the important social and political gains made by racially marginalized groups of people and women in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States. Rather, Ferguson argues the imperative to attend to the unforeseen consequences of affirmative institutional practices, namely, by viewing institutional affirmative, rather than exclusionary, power as a maneuver of maintaining hierarchal racialized dominance. More to the point, Ferguson is concerned with how the seduction of representation in institutions diverts our attention away from the work being done within and outside of institutions to redistribute material resources in ways that benefits the communities we write and talk about.

While Ferguson's analysis focuses on universities within the United States, his work is useful and applicable to think through within the context of creative institutions in Berlin. The way the *Illuminations of Wedding* panel was organized signals the potential problems that can and will occur as various institutions in Germany continue to grapple with the history and reality of a multiracial and multicultural population. Namely, a non-critical engagement with constructed racial and cultural difference, coupled with "…negotiat[ing] a political economy that deploys minority affirmation to rebuttress institutional power" (Ferguson 2012: Loc 3500), which produces misinformation about the marginal communities that are the focus of said engagement. Paradoxically, it also produces a non-engagement with these communities, especially those within Germany's borders.

Germany at the moment appears to be a long way from feeling the pressure to diversify the leadership and content of its various cultural institutions in ways that reflect a multiracial and multicultural society. However, as I highlighted in the previous chapter, there is a growing public awareness and discussion about the pressing need to attend to the experiential reality of *race* and plural racial, cultural, and ethnic identities in Germany. These issues and discussions often occur within the rubrics of migration and integration, given the fact that the word rasse [race] is still strongly associated with the National Socialist Party, and that the word rasselizierung [racialization] is still finding its footing as a useful descriptive word in German academic circles. The fact that issues of migration and integration dominate discourse about "difference" in Germany attests to the pervasiveness of a racialized conception of culture, a feature found throughout Western and Southern Europe. This conception of culture perpetuates a narrative that Europeans of color are never truly products of their respective countries, but always come from somewhere other than Europe.

Cultural institutions, like academic ones, are both shaped by and shape their societies and the communities that reside in them. They inform how we talk and think about social issues and concerns, and ultimately, how we respond to them. The "Illuminations of Wedding" exhibition illustrated an underlying economic incentive to engage with the issues surrounding socially constructed "differences," and the problems that emerge with that incentive. Namely, the inability to have an honest and nuanced dialogue with the issues at hand, with a focus on working toward creating a socially inclusive society. Additionally, *Illuminations of Wedding* signaled the ways in which institutional artistic production becomes a vehicle for neoliberal ideologies that maintain racialized hierarchies through the production of "valid" and "invalid" multicultural domestic and global citizens.

Chapter Three

Black Intervention: Critical Dialogues in Spaces of Performance

Introduction

In November 2012, Mekonnen Mesghena and his then-seven-year old daughter wrote a protest letter. It was addressed to Klaus Willenberg, the head of Thienemann Publishers, that produce the popular German children's book, *Die Kleine Hexe/The Little Witch.* In the letter, Mekonnen and his daughter protested the use of racist language and imagery throughout the book, and in one chapter in particular. Mekonnen did not feel comfortable reading out loud to his German-born daughter the word *Negerlein*,[51] a diminutive racial slur used to describe a Black girl character in the book. His daughter, though young, was her father's child and herself did not like hearing the language used in the book. In an inspiring lesson of teaching by doing, Mekonnen showed his daughter the power of the saying, "The pen is mightier than the sword."

For the next three weeks, Mekonnen and his daughter exchanged emails with Klaus Willenberg, who was at first resistant to accepting the idea that there was anything racist about the children's book. The conversation that grew from these letters prompted Willenberg to share Mekonnen's thoughts with the then 85-year old Otfried Preußler, author of *Die Kleine Hexe*. Preußler was initially against the idea of changing the language in his book, but was eventually swayed by Mekonnen's argument for why changes should occur. He agreed that from June 2013 onward, new published books of *Die Kleine Hexe* would no longer use racist language and imagery. Instead, *Die Kleine Hexe* would be published with "updated" language suitable for the

[51] Many English newspaper outlets erroneously translate *Neger* to simply mean "Negro." This is not the case and actually translates to the same racial slur used to refer to Black people in English.

contemporary moment. Preußler and Willenberg used this as an occasion to also omit the words, *ziegeneur,* a racial slur toward Roma people, and *wichsen,* an Old German word that used to refer to polishing, but which is now a colloquialism used to describe masturbation.

In this chapter, I analyze the ensuing public firestorm that resulted from Preußler and Willenberg's decision to omit the racist language found in *Die Kleine Hexe.* Parsing out the components of negative public reactions to the language change illustrates how popular conceptions of German culture and identity are equated with a racialized White identity. This racialization of cultural and national identity is one that many scholars have observed and analyzed in both German and European society. The literature on this topic often focuses on colonial histories and continuing legacies of colonialism (Smith 1998; Stoler 1995; Walther 2002; Wekker 2009; Zimmerman 2012; on economic crises as the root cause of contemporary European racism (Balibar and Wallerstein 2011; Pred 2000); or on post-1945 discourse of racism vis-à-vis fascism El-Tayeb 2011; (Chin et al. 2009). My aim for this chapter, however, is to explore the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate and counter-debate through the "theoretical dimensions of reading colonialism as a new and integrating Master narrative of the West" (Arndt 2006:15). I use the term "coloniality," as predicated on anti-Black racism, when referencing this idea put forth by Arndt and others who take up the charge to analyze ideas and practices of *race* through Fanon's theories of the ontology of Blackness (Fanon 2005; 2008). This term dislocates our focus from a specific time or space, which often occurs when referencing colonialism, and instead trains our questions on articulating the social function of the position of Blackness in German society.

Building from Sanders Gilman's theorization of racial stereotypes and social structures (Gilman 1985), Susan Arndt's theory of language and racial domination in Germany, and Frank

B. Wilderson's theory of the ontology of Blackness as a grammar of suffering (Wilderson III 2010), I argue that the *Die Kleine Hexe* popular debate illustrated both the boundary-defining function of Blackness for social legibility in German society, and the ways in which this boundary was contested in independent Berlin art spaces. These public discussions for and against the book's language change demonstrated the significance of conceptualizing Blackness as more than just an experiential fact of life within the realm of racial and cultural identities. I argue that instead, we should frame these debates within calls to think of Blackness as an object of knowledge (Weheliye 2014:20), which enables a better articulation of the oftentimes veiled and unequal forms of social, political, and economic power found in societies structured in dominance. Furthermore, I also explore the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate as a way to think through the usefulness of anthropology in demonstrating the form and function of coloniality as predicated on anti-Black racism.

In this regard, I am thinking in particular of Talal Asad's observation about the challenges of studying secularity in that, "…because the secular is so much part of our modern life, it is not easy to grasp it directly" (Asad 2003:16). The same can be said of coloniality and anti-Black racism as the underpinnings of Western modernity, and hence, of German and European society. Therefore, I forward the idea that ethnography allows us to highlight "the shadows" of coloniality, such as debates about racist language in a children's book. This in turn allows us to better articulate coloniality and anti-Black racism in and of itself, and not explicated through, for example, theories of political economy, secularism, or nationalism. As Wilderson notes, "semiotics and linguistics teach us that when we speak, our grammar goes unspoken. Our grammar is assumed. It is the structure through which labor of speech is possible" (Wilderson III 2010:5). In Germany, as in the rest of Europe, coloniality and Blackness as alienated and

exploited subject is the assumed social grammar that structures legible/Human/White/German citizens.

Thinking of the ontology of Blackness allows us to attend to how Blackness as a racial identity is often cast as distinctly different and incompatible with other socially constructed identities (Wright 2015); how abject human characteristics are attributed to Blackness; and to articulate the social function of both phenomena (Weheliye 2014). I also work within Sylvia Wynter's theoretical framework that views anti-Blackness as the fulcrum by which Western modernity emerged, and hence, our contemporary notions of what it means to be human (Wynter 2003). Therefore, when I talk about Blackness in this chapter, I aim to focus more on the moments that highlight the symbolism and social function of Blackness, more so than the experiential description of African-descended people living in Germany. Although the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate focused on the literary use of racist signifiers of Blackness, I nonetheless find the debate useful to think through how anti-Blackness is visually deployed to perpetuate a racial equation of Germaneness with Whiteness. I also find the debate useful to raise questions about how independent Berlin art institutions provide space for racialized identities to be made socially legible within Germany society.

Called to meditate on the relationship between Blackness and performance, I find Carbado and Gulati's discussion about Blackness as performance in the United States useful for this discussion to fold into explorations of the ontology of Blackness. I also contrast this discussion with what I think of as displayed Blackness as foreignness in both Europe and Germany. In discussing racial performance, Carbado and Gulati focus on what they call "Working Identities," or the various performances of identities that racialized groups in the U.S. draw from in their spaces of employment. Carbado and Gulati define Working Identity as

"constituted by a range of racially associated ways of being, including how one dresses, speaks, styles one's hair; one's professional and social affiliations; who one marries or dates; one's politics and views about race; where one lives, and so on and so forth" (Carbado 2013). In relation to Black American identities in the U.S., Working Identities,

> function as a set of racial criteria people can employ to ascertain not simply whether a person is black in terms of how she looks but whether that person is black in terms of how she is perceived to act. In this sense, Working Identity refers both to the perceived choices people make about their self-presentation (the racially associated ways of being listed above) and to the perceived identity that emerges from those choices (how black we determine a person to be). (Carbado and Gulati 2013: 1)

In contrast to Europe generally, and Germany specifically, there currently does not exist a popular paradigm in the cultural archive of what it means to perform Afro-German Blackness with the attendant social benefits and losses that Carbado and Gulati outline in the U.S. context. This is not to say that Afro-Germans do not, "in order to succeed,…need to partake in the dominant cultural modes of negotiating, of reaching consensus" (Wekker 2009), but that there does not exist (as of yet) a dominant conception of (un/acceptable) Afro-German Blackness as there is a dominant conception of (un/acceptable) African American Blackness, the performance of which greatly determines an individuals' access to, or exclusion from, various institutions in society.

Scholars have noted the challenges of describing and theorizing Afro-European identity in terms outside of the globally disseminated images and cultural products of Black Americans (Brown 2005; Campt 2005), as well as outside of the narrative of the Middle Passage and a desire for return to a constructed homeland (Wekker 2009; Wright 2015). What one *does* see in Europe are displays of Blackness that are often used for the purposes of entertainment and advertising, and are often rooted in racist stereotypes of African-descended people (Micosse-

Aikins 2013).[52] Examples of this are seen most notably in the contemporary use of Blackface in German theaters, opera, and ballet productions, as well as in the annual Zwarte Piet festival in the Netherlands that occurs around Christmas.[53]

This iteration of performative Blackness has deep roots in Europe that are inextricably linked to the history of European colonial expansion into the African continent. One well-known, but not the sole, example is found in the tragic history of how the body of a Koi woman, Sarah Baartman, was grotesquely displayed for European publics starting in the 19th century, in both life and death.[54] The first section of this chapter builds from the idea that the function of such performative and exhibitive moments of Blackness, as revealed in the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate, has less to do with entertaining a European public, and more to do with perpetuating an implicit racial equation of Whiteness to Europeanness and Humanness. Such displays of Blackness in turn reiterate a framing of Black bodies as foreign to Europe and Other-than Human. It is within this visual and historical context that The *Die Kleine Hexe* debate illustrated the ways in which Black bodies in Germany are continuously made socially illegible as Germans, even if legally, they are German citizens.

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[52] See Sanders Gilman's analysis of visual and literary texts that include Black characters to illustrate the form and function of pathological racial stereotypes (Gilman 1985).

[53] Zwarte Piet—"Black Peter" in English—is fashioned in Dutch culture as the helper of St. Nicholas during Christmas time. During the annual festival celebrating St. Nicholas, in which St. Nicholas enters the city, he is preceded by children and adults dressed up as Zwarte Piet by blackening their faces, wearing bright red lipstick and curly afro wigs, and dressing in Renaissance style clothing. Children in schools often have their own St. Nicholas celebrations and are encouraged to attend classes during this time as Zwarte Piet.

[54] The scholar, photographer, curator Deborah Willis provides a rich history about Sarah Baartman in *Black Venus 2010: They Called her "Hottentot."* She says, "Born in South Africa in 1789, Baartman was captured and brought to England and placed on exhibit in 1810. She was exhibited [nude] on stage and in a cage in London and Paris and performed at private parties for a little more than five years. The 'Hottentot Venus' was 'admired' by her protagonists, who depicted her as animal-like, exotic, different and deviant [due to her "abnormally" big buttocks and breasts]." (Willis 2010: 4) When she died in 1815, her body was dissected and her genitalia placed on public view at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris before being repatriated in 2002 to South Africa near the Gamtoos River.

The second section of this chapter builds from Wilderson's theorization of the ontology of Blackness, conceptualized as other than Human/White/European, as a grammar of suffering, a grammar that undergirds Western modernity "…whose constituent elements are exploitation and alienation" (Wilderson III 2010:20). I use Wilderson's grammar as theoretical scaffolding to think through how independent art spaces in Berlin are possible sites that engender challenges to dominant conceptions of German cultural identity and Blackness. However, I pivot from Wilderson in his discussion about the ultimate ineffectiveness of artistically-produced counter-narratives. Wilderson argues that even though politically engaged films are produced in solidarity with exploited and racialized peoples, they nonetheless perpetuate the paradigm the protagonists are suffering within—here, an ontology of Blackness—through the formal and narrative conventions of film. I contend that the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate highlighted the potential use of art spaces in Berlin as zones that disrupt, if only temporarily, the performance and function of Blackness as objects for display, entertainment, and as antithetical examples of European identity. I argue that through a town-hall meeting called, "Black Intervention," the paradigm of the ontology of Blackness was briefly disrupted for a moment in time. This was done by unsettling the formal conventions of displaying Black bodies in theater space by using a theater as a communal town-hall meeting, not to produce counter-images of Blackness, but instead to produce counter-narratives to anti-Black racism.

My argument draws from 15 months of research in Berlin and Germany through interviews and discussions with artists, curators, and scholars on the intersection of race, nationality, visual representation, and art spaces. My overall conclusions are drawn from other moments in which art spaces were sites of intervention challenging the performance of anti-Black racism, but for this chapter I focus on an interview I had the pleasure of conducting with

Mekonnen Mesghena, an Eritrean-born German citizen living in Germany for over 20 years and the man who initiated the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate. I focus on Mekonnen's story because this interview echoed themes from other interviews I conducted about art spaces and activism. By highlighting Mekonnen's story, as well as key moments in the *Die Kleine Hexe*, I argue that these moments exemplify: 1) how the popular understanding of culture in Germany is infused with the pseudoscientific logic of biological race; 2) How this "logic" is disseminated to the larger public primarily through the deployment of Blackness in visual cultural products; 3) How Blackness is then associated always as something foreign to Germany; and 4) How artistic spaces can be utilized in solidarity with political and social projects that challenge a conception of national culture, and the people living within a nation, as fixed and bounded. In so doing, this chapter aims to think about the function of art spaces as sites that engender the first steps for people to communally envision and dialog about, as Robin Kelley says, " the kind of world we want to struggle for" (Robin D.G. Kelley 2003).

Writing Exchange

I find Susan Arndt's discussion about the relationship between racial ideologies and language, in Germany, useful to analyze the public debate over the language change in *Die Kleine Hexe.* When Mekonnen Mesghena first began corresponding with Klaus Willenberg about the racist language in Otfried Preußler's children's book, Willenberg initially protested Mekonnen's assignation of the book as "racist", stating that the author was anything but. The publisher argued that in 1957, when *Die Kleine Hexe,* was first published, words like *Negerlein* were simply the language of the time and had no bearing on the present. Mekonnen consistently counter-argued the fact that a person can say, do, and write racist things, even if they and their

community do not consider them to be racist. Furthermore, language used in the past could still bear meaning in the present if socio-political contexts existed that disproportionately and negatively affected one segment of a population for the greater social, political, and economic gain of another. He continued by saying the language in the book also taught children considered unaffected by the racist language, that is, White German children, how to dehumanize groups of people and mark them as different from the perceived norm.

Mekonnen's argument to Willenberg echoes Arndt's assertion that

> because language is shaped by historical, social, and cultural events, it cannot be a valid criterion as to how one individually uses a word, or how it is intended personally or whether everyone uses it or has always used it that way. Rather, the etymology and the historical context of a word, the connotations of the current usage, as well as common assertions linked with these words are crucial. (Arndt 2006:35)

Ultimately, the "racist terms have the effect of stereotyping and creating 'normalities,' and thereby contribute significantly to the 'creation' of Whites and Blacks. They…[also] prepare the ground for other forms of White violence, as well as the potential for embedding White myths, hierarchies, and matricies of power" (Arndt 2006:36). In January 2013, after Preußler agreed to change the language in *Die Kleine Hexe*, Mekonnen posted the good news on his personal Facebook account, savoring with his social network a moment when he and his daughter were able to positively affect change in their country. The news of their victory went viral, and as is commonplace in the age of social media, related Facebook posts were picked up by journalists of media outlets in Germany. Whereas the majority of Mekonnen's social network was happy to receive the news of the change in *Die Kleine Hexe,* the wider news media and the public that read them were outraged to hear of the news. Parents and critics decried the decision in letters and emails written to the publisher, saying Willenberg's decision to remove the world *negerlein*

from new publications made him a “culture criminal” and “Bolshevik indocrinator” to name just a few of the terms that were levied Willenberg’s way (Freund, Wieland 2013).

For over a month, Mekonnen received hate mail at his work and via email, as well as private and public letters expressing outrage toward him and his argument that the old version of *Die Kleine Hexe* perpetuated racism.[55] Vitriolic newspaper editorials and articles were written critiquing the move. Arguing that the language change was political correctness gone too far, Jacques Schuster, writing for the conservative newspaper, *Die Welt,* asked,

> Why should parents not be allowed to have the choice, to decide while they read what their children should hear? And even if they spit out the gross words, is the cell of racism then placed in the heads of the little ones? How many German baby boomers born between 1955-1970 swallowed “Mohrenköpfe”,[56] and sung in school Carl Gottlieb Hering's song “C-a-f-f-e-e, do not drink as much coffee,”[57] without having ever defamed Blacks or Turks, or joined the NPD?”…[58] anyone who has the view that one is allowed to change art because it contradicts the prevailing morality, would have been pleased when the Taliban destroyed the Buddhas of Bamiyan in 2001. The question remains as to whether or not the books of Preußler, Lindgren and Tucholskys are art. The author sees it as such.[59]

[55] These private letters sent to Mekonnen included one from the relatively well-known German author, Claus Cornelius Fischer.

[56] Rough translation: “Moors’ Heads,” which is a baked pastry of profiteroles stuffed with cream and glazed on top with chocolate.

[57] Herring was a 19th century teacher and composer who wrote a famous children’s round, *C-a-f-f-e-e-, trink nicht so viel Kaffee!* with the lyrics: “C-a-f-f-e-e, do not drink so much coffee! The Turkish drink is not for children, it weakens the nerves, makes you pale and sick. Don’t be like a Muslim, who cannot leave it alone!”

[58] Der Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland/ The National Democratic Party of Germany, is an extreme-right political party that is widely viewed as a neo-Nazi organization.

[59] “*Warum dürfen Eltern nicht die Wahl haben, während sie vorlesen selbst zu entscheiden was ihre Kinder hören sollen? Und selbst wenn sie die Igitt-Wörter ausspucken, ist die Urzelle des Rassismus dann schon in den Kopf der Kleinen gelegt? Wie viele deutsche Babyboomer der Jahrgänge 1955 bis 1970 haben "Mohrenköpfe" verschlungen und in der Schule Carl Gottlieb Herings Lied "C-a-f-f-e-e, trink nicht so viel Kaffee" gesungen, ohne Schwarze oder Türken je diffamiert zu haben oder in die NPD eingetreten zu sein?…..Wer der Ansicht ist, man dürfe Kunstwerke im Nachhinein verändern, weil sie der herrschenden Moral widersprechen, der wird sich gefreut haben, als die Taliban 2001 die Buddha-Statuen von Bamyian zerstörten. Bleibt die Frage, ob Preußlers, Lindgrens und Tucholskys Bücher Kunst sind. Der Autor sieht es so*.” Translation author.

The other names Schuster referenced in relation to Otfried Preußler, the author of *Die Kleine Hexe* were well-known references to a German public specifically chosen to sway the reader to Schuster's point of view by provoking ire in them. Astrid Lindgren, author of another favorite children's book, *Pippi Longstocking,* made headlines in 2011 when the German theologian, Eske Wollrad, started a debate by declaring *Pippi Longstocking* full of racist and colonialist imagery (Flood 2011). Schuster's reference, in particular to Kurt Tucholskys, was a way of invoking the history of the Nazi party, implying that the publishers and their supporters were participating in a new type of book burning. Tucholskys was a German-Jewish journalist during the Weimar Republic who wrote for the liberal newspaper *Die Weltbühne.* His work predicted the dangers of the rise of National Socialism and Hitler's rise to power, which resulted in his books being banned and burned by the Nazis in 1933. In this way Schuster astonishingly equated Mekonnen, Thienemann Publishers, and anyone else who supported the change of language to *Die Kleine Hexe* to the Nazi Party, underscoring the heightened emotional tenor of the language change debate.

Other public arguments, such as the editorial written by Tilman Spreckelsen for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Spreckelsen 2013), asserted that taking the offensive language out of the book resulted in a missed teachable moment for children and the German public:

> One can also place to the side a book that they do not like reading out loud to their children as it is. There are plenty of others. Who, however, rewrites a text in order to take away an offense achieves only one thing: that this moment of irritation is no longer talked about. And thus, about what constitutes serious literature.[60]

[60] "Ein Buch, das man seinen Kindern nicht so vorlesen mag, wie es ist, kann man auch zur Seite legen. Es gibt genug andere. Wer aber einen Text umschreibt, um ihm das Anstößige zu nehmen, erreicht damit nur eins: dass über dieses Moment der Irritation nicht mehr gesprochen wird. Und damit über das, was ernsthafte Literatur ausmacht." Translation author.

In other words, many believed that the offensive language should remain in the book so that parents could take the opportunity to talk to their children about the history of the words as they relate to discrimination and racism. As Mekonnen noted and refuted, Spreckelsen's argument rested on the notion that the majority of German parents would actually do this:

> It's one of the most popular arguments. And people even telling me, also arguing that I was unable to describe the context to my daughter and so on. Which mostly I replied… this 7-year-old girl understands more about racism than any 55-year-old White German person. So she doesn't need an explanation from me…She knows exactly the context and she understands that. So that is like, zero argument in this context. So if you talk about other white German children and families, I don't have any trust that they are able to explain the context of that word, the meanings of that word. And if they are going to write a note, a footnote: who is going to write that? Which context? It's also the power of definition of a footnote. So if they want to write a footnote and they are ready to read that footnote to their child, then it should be written by somebody who is anti-racist. So somebody has to explain it is an issue of genocide in that footnote. Are they willing to read, really, that history as a bedtime story? Are they ready to do that? No. They are not.[61]

Mekonnen's analysis of public arguments made against changing the language of *Die Kleine Hexe* ultimately was a demand that when it comes to language that evokes or is specifically associated with Blackness, we must publically acknowledge that "…the power of these…images should not be underestimated. They remain impressed on a culture as on a palimpsest, shaping and coloring all of the images that evolve at later dates. The representations of the world, those structured ideological statements about the way the word should be, have a history" (Gilman 1985:239).

However, it did not seem to matter to anyone that both the author of the children's book and his publishers believed in the validity of Mekonnen's arguments, or that they had already approved the decision to change the language in *Die Kleine Hexe*. What mattered was the perceived threat of political correctness gone too far, and more importantly, the effect on German

[61] Interview with author.

culture of having so many "foreigners" in Germany. This was shockingly illustrated one Sunday morning on public television ARD by the literary critic Dennis Scheck, who appeared in blackface during a segment of the show, "Hot Off the Press." With minstrel-like music playing in the background, Scheck protested the political correctness he believed informed the change to *Die Kleine Hexe,* and other beloved children's books, like *Pippi Longstocking*. In his opinion, everyone had become so ridiculously PC that the children of Germany were being unfairly and unnecessarily affected. Further, Germans' very right to freedom of expression and humor was under attack by the "PC police."

The *Die Kleine Hexe* debate was rich in evidence both about the ways German culture is popularly imagined with a logic of *race* and the power of language to either express or silence various perspectives or experiences. In this debate, Blackness was immediately seen as foreign to Germany. No one in the popular media made an attempt to recognize or grapple with the fact that a German citizen, not a foreigner, was raising the critique of racist language in the children's' book. Nor was an attempt made to talk with German-born Black citizens who felt similarly to Mekonnen, and who were equally happy to see a moment of change with the removal of racist language from *Die Kleine Hexe.* The barrage of criticisms to the language change in the children's book all seemed to share an implicit belief that no "real" German had a problem with the book. That is, for a person to recognize and take offense at a representation of themselves in a cultural artifact steeped in racist language and ideologies meant that that person was not White, and hence, not German. This public discussion demonstrated the anxieties many White Germans have about cultural and demographic changes occurring at a seemingly larger scale in their communities and country. It also demonstrated how the logic of race as fixed,

bounded, and biological is inscribed into a discussion about culture, seen within a debate about racism in a children's book.

Mekonnen's analysis of the backlash to the news of the language change in *Die Kleine Hexe*, highlights Fatima El-Tayeb and others' assertion about the problematics of a mainstream race-blind public discourse in Germany and Europe. Namely, it prevents proper recognition and engagement with contemporary tactics of maintaining exclusionary definitions of race, culture, and nationality. Mekonnen reiterated this point when discussing why he felt it necessary to write to the publishers of *Die Kleine Hexe*. He further stressed the importance of changing the language in the children's book by highlighting the relationship between history, identity formation, and language within societies structured in dominance:

> I have met many parents who say they alter those words, they don't read those to their children, they use other words. They also skip certain paragraphs and so on…But, I am talking about a minority that is willing and able to do that. Here we are talking about the majority. Even the intellectual majority is not really willing to alter this language because that is also how they reacted in the media. It symbolizes how they are willing to keep the structure of society, the dominance of the majority, and the relationship between black and white. It is a power struggle. Not necessarily that they are racist in their daily interactions, but it is about the power of definition, of language.[62]

If we are thinking about what it means to theorize Western modernity though the lens of coloniality, Mekonnen's observation of the public debate highlights one aspect of coloniality in action. Namely, through the language of a children's book we can see the construction of socially legible German subjects as predicated on the occurrence anti-Black racism.

[62] October 2013 interview with author.

Reframing the Debate

As demonstrated in the previous section, Mekonnen was adept at reframing the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate in his defense, using the languages of experience and history. The next chapter in the story of this debate revealed the unique power of independent Berlin art spaces to mobilize and support the production of counter-narratives to hegemonic conceptions of German identity. Additionally, it also signals the ability of these spaces to, if only temporarily, disrupt the normalized expectation of Black bodies as performative objects of display and exhibition of Blackness as antithetical to Humanness/Whiteness/Europeanness/Germaneness. Here, I am talking about the mobilization of the communities Mekonnen was a part of, in a show of support for him and his argument, through a town hall meeting at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße theater.

Dennis Scheck's racist blackface stunt on public television, which of course, he insisted was merely and expression of nothing but humor and freedom of speech, was the apex of over a month of steady public critique and outrage over Preußler and Willenberg's decision to change the language of *Die Kleine Hexe.* Two weeks after Scheck's appearance, which garnered a write up in the *New Yorker*'s online blog, a town hall meeting called "Black Intervention" was announced at Ballhaus Naunynstraße. The publicized description of the event stated:

> For several weeks now a debate is raging in feuilletons and culture magazines that shows once more how far, still, the center of the German society is from accepting its actual diversity, and how much its sensitivity for inclusive and non-hierarchical language remains in disarray. Language is more than a tool for communication. It is also a barometer of social connections and relations. To date, however, it makes use of the language arithmetic of the colonial era in many popular children's books.
>
> Triggered by Mekonnen Mesghena, the linguistic modification of the children's book "The Little Witch" struck huge waves in Germany and far beyond its borders.
> In particular, the nomenclature of the German feuilleton pages defends the preservation of discriminatory terms in children's books vehemently and by invoking various enemies: "censorship", "language police", "Political Correctness". Diversity of opinions: Nothing to report. White men discussing with each other about racism, and whether minorities may feel discriminated against or not: That which was right for the white man

then, cannot be wrong today. Only tentative individual voices that denounced the colonial legacy were permitted.

Accompanying the debate is personal defamation, racist attacks and hate mail, particularly against the initiator of the debate.

Due to recent provocations, the event "Black Intervention" offers space for black, PoC and post-migrant voices and perspectives from the academic and art world."[63]

The meeting was organized partly in response to Scheck's TV Blackface antics, however, the intervention framed the event first as a show of solidarity for Mekonnen's intervention into the language of *Die Kleine Hexe.* Second, it was an invitation to the entire Berlin public to participate in discussions about the historical context of Scheck's TV appearance; to highlight how language is a primary tool through which to perpetuate racism in Germany; as well as to provide ways to challenge everyday racism in Berlin and Germany.

News of the February intervention spread through word of mouth, email listservs, and social media. I learned about the intervention through an email from a friend, a Facebook invite to "Black Intervention," and through a Berlin-based anti-racism listserv of which I am a part. At the time I was concluding a trip to Krakow, Poland, where I traveled to visit the Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camp memorial sites. Learning about the intervention soon after visiting

[63] Original text from Ballhaus' website:
„Seit einigen Wochen tobt in Feuilletons und Kulturmagazinen eine Debatte, die erneut zeigt, wie weit die Mitte der deutschen Gesellschaft von einer Akzeptanz ihrer realen Vielfalt noch entfernt ist, und wie sehr es mit der Sensibilität für eine inklusive und herrschaftsfreie Sprache noch im Argen liegt. Sprache ist mehr als ein Kommunikationsinstrument. Sie ist auch ein Barometer sozialer Beziehungen und Verhältnisse. Bis heute aber bedienen sich zahlreiche populäre Kinderbücher der Spracharithmetik der Kolonialzeit. Die durch Mekonnen Mesghena angestoßene sprachliche Anpassung des Kinderbuches "Die kleine Hexe" hat in Deutschland und weit über die Grenzen hinaus große Wellen geschlagen. Insbesondere die Nomenklatura der deutschsprachigen Feuilletonseiten verteidigt den Erhalt diskriminierender Begriffe in Kinderbüchern vehement und unter Anrufung verschiedenster Feindbilder: "Zensur", "Sprachpolizei", "Political Correctness". Meinungsvielfalt: Fehlanzeige. Weiße Männer diskutieren miteinander über Rassismus, und darüber, ob Minderheiten sich diskriminiert fühlen dürfen oder nicht: Was damals für den weißen Mann richtig war, das kann heute nicht falsch sein. Nur zaghaft wurden einzelne Stimmen zugelassen, die koloniale Altlasten anprangerten. Begleitet wird die Debatte mit persönlichen Diffamierungen, rassistischen Angriffen und Hassmails, insbesondere gegen den Initiator der Debatte. Aus aktuellem Anlass bietet die Veranstaltung Black Intervention Raum für Schwarze, PoC und postmigrantische Stimmen und Perspektiven aus Wissenschaft und Kunst."

the memorial sites, highlighted the irony of the imbalance within the popular European discourse and imagination between the history of fascism and the continuing racial legacies of European colonialism. In that moment I was reminded of the puzzlement from others I often encountered in the early days of my research when they learned about my interest in understanding the simultaneous visual displays, and disavowals, of anti-Black racism in Germany. When I would pose questions about how race and racism were talked about in Germany, to mostly White individuals in both Germany and the US, I was often met with passionate explanations about how racism was an American, and *not* a German issue. Germany, I was told, had worked hard to eradicate fascism after WWII and I would do best to keep this in mind and not allow my experiences as a Black American woman color my observations living in Berlin and traveling through Germany.

Damani Partridge articulates one result of this siloing of histories of racism through his examination of the ways in which discourse of Holocaust memorials in Germany, as taught to racialized German Pakistani, Turkish, and Moroccan youth by their mostly White German teachers, unwittingly produces forms of national inclusion and exclusion along racial lines. Partridge argues that narratives memorializing the Holocaust reaffirm a racialized conception of German nationality by emphasizing the idea of Germans as the descendants of perpetrators of genocide. This in turn excludes German nationals whose family histories do not include stories of complicity with the Holocaust, but who may have histories of ethnic and racial discrimination and persecution. For Partridge, lessons taught to racialized German students surrounding Holocaust memorialization, “perpetration, and guilt, among not only teachers, but also Germans more broadly, [is] fully retrospective, and [avoids] any connections between the genocide and contemporary circumstances” (Partridge 2010:882).

Unable to change my flight from Krakow to leave a day earlier in order to attend "Black Intervention," I relied on descriptions of the event relayed to me by Mekonnen and friends who were in attendance. I attended events at Ballhaus before and after "Black Intervention," and could understand the significance of the sheer number of people who attended, and hoped to attend, the intervention. While a prominent sign on the façade of the building clearly communicates the purpose of Ballhaus Naunynstraße as a theater, structurally, Ballhaus is nearly identical to the residential buildings located next to and around it. When visitors enter through the building's front door, they walk through an open courtyard, and toward another building in the back, which houses the main theater. Inside, Ballhaus is comprised of two theater spaces: on the first floor, a traditional theater, with an audience-facing stage, and on the second floor, a black box theater. The basement of the theater holds a conference room, a small exhibition space, and a bar and café. On the night of the intervention, the inside of the main theater of Ballhaus, which holds only 138 seats, was packed to capacity with over 400 people waiting outside of Ballhaus trying to get in. Mekonnen and invited speakers were seated on stage discussing why it was important to change the language in *Die Kleine Hexe,* and the historical contexts for resistance to the debate. For Mekonnen, the intervention that night was a beautiful moment of solidarity to witness, as well as an event that buoyed his spirits in ways that allowed him to continue speaking back to his critics.

Art, Space, and Activism

It is no coincidence that Ballhaus Naunynstraße was the location for the convening of a public town-hall meeting that provided counter-narratives in support of changing the racist language in *Die Kleine Hexe.* Ballhaus, located in the heart of Kreuzberg, one of the most popular and

quickly gentrifying art epicenters of the Berlin arts scene, represents what a cultural institution responsive to societal change and the needs and wants of its surrounding community looks like. Since the 1970s, Kreuzberg was generally viewed as a Turkish neighborhood, despite available statistics that point to White Germans as the racial majority of the neighborhood. Historically, Kreuzberg is also a working-class neighborhood, which means that in combination with the perceived racial demographics, it was seen as a "bad", crime-ridden neighborhood as recently as 2006.

Established in the mid-19th century, Ballhaus Naunynstraße was for many years like the rest of popular ballrooms in Berlin and Germany. It was a privately funded site of "high culture" where the public attended theater, orchestral, opera, and dance performances. In the 1990s, it was repurposed as a publically-funded theater, but at the turn of the 21st century it experienced a seismic change in leadership and focus when, Shermin Langhoff, a Turkish-German woman, became the director of Ballhaus. Langhoff changed the mission of the theater, aiming to be a focal point for artists of color who reflect the diversity of Kreuzberg, Berlin, and Germany as a whole. Until recently, Kreuzberg was not popularly discussed as a destination neighborhood for all things related to art and culture. Furthermore, discussions related to contemporary ideologies and practices of race, as well as post-migrant identities and culture still currently do not circulate in dominant popular German discourse. The current public discourse, instead, focuses on the problems with immigrant integration and their failed assimilation into German culture and its Democratic, Christian values. This was demonstrated most tellingly in 2010 when German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared in a public speech that multiculturalism was a "failed concept" and that the German government needed to change their policies on immigration and assimilation accordingly (Weaver 2010). Within this context, Ballhaus Naunynstraße

specifically sought dance, theater, and musical productions from creators whose work often are never featured in mainstream German cultural institutions for a range of reasons related to the dynamic intersection of race, class, nationality, and gender politics.

Having a Berlin-based, and more specifically, Kreuzberg-based theater frame its mission as being a space for artistic production by and about people from marginalized communities further facilitated an ongoing conversation about racially exclusive definitions of German identity and nationality. The new mission of Ballhaus Naunynstraße and the critical acclaim its numerous theater productions received, both domestically and internationally, were part of the many factors, people, and organizations that changed how the neighborhood of Kreuzberg was popularly talked about. Like Harlem in New York City, and other gentrifying neighborhoods around the world, Kreuzberg has a new neighborhood allure[64] with many young artists, students, and scholars—German and international—flooding the streets year after year, and raising the once-notoriously affordable rents. It is also now more popularly acceptable to see the racial and ethnic diversity of the neighborhood as a source of strength. All of these changes, combined with the work of social justice activists, conspired to make Ballhaus Naunynstraße the obvious location for the convening of a public town-hall meeting providing counter-narratives in support of changing the racist language in *Die Kleine Hexe.*

Wagner Carvalho, the current director of Ballhaus Naunynstraße and an Afro-Brazilian man, discussed how the town-hall meeting, "Black Intervention," was organized:

> Well in fact it was a kind of, on the weekend, it was Saturday. There started to become a lot of Facebook messages. "There's a trend! What's going on with…Mekonnen?' So I called him and he said, "Are you able to make a discussion about it in Ballhaus?"

[64] I recognize the problems with such assignations of gentrifying neighborhoods that were earlier stigmatized for being a place where large groups of people of color and/or working-class people lived. The scope of this chapter does not allow for a focus on this dynamic occurring in Berlin, but it is something that I explore further in other written works.

> Because…in this circumstance, it was Mekonnen who was really attacked. He said, "No, no we are not alone. It is about all of us." Then let's do it. And then we started to ask people. Of course, I spoke with my colleagues inside of the house, because we had to make some decisions. And then we said, "Yes!" That's one very important thing, in this house, because we can react very quickly when something like that comes out and we can decide when to do it. That's very important I think…Then we had, I think it was two weeks, to organize. It was very fast.[65]

Carvalho then pointed to the performances and public discussions held at Ballhaus years past that enabled "Black Intervention," to occur at the theater:

> But then last year we had also—it was not so fast as "Black Intervention"—…, we had this blackface situation in Berlin. That two venues used blackface in two different [theater] productions. And then there was a huge reaction: Bühnenwatch, and two colleagues made a lot of interventions. And then we discussed it with the colleagues from Deutsches Theater and Schlosspark Theater and made an intervention during the performance. And then after that we realized we would like to make one discussion also about it. And then we made it, "Facing Black People" in 2012.
>
> It means that we started this whole debate some years ago. When I came here, and brought one project, *project in/out*, with dance performances, and then we had Boyzie Cekwana from South Africa. And then when we made this "Facing Black People" discussion. It was a kind of continuation of what we have done on the stage with performance. Because, it was a political statement, this "Facing Black People," like "Black Intervention" with Mekonnen and the other colleagues. And we can react very fast. And this is new, because now we have one space to make it. For us it's new.

This organized intervention, in support of Mekonnen and the issues he raised with *Die Kleine Hexe* the previous month, and in reaction to critics of the language change in the children's book, in many ways is part of a larger and longer history in the relationship between arts movements, community engagement, and political activism. A fruitful body of scholarly work has emerged that illustrates how important and linked cultural production and institutions are to social justice movements within the African diaspora (Edwards 2003; Jaji 2014; Redmond 2013; Young 2006). In his exhaustive study of the Black Arts and Black Power Movements in

[65] October 2013 interview with author.

various regions of the United States in the 1960s and 70s, James Smethurst demonstrates the importance of institutions—museums, periodicals, theater spaces, and literary workshops—in creating spaces to give voice to, and disseminate to a wider audience, counter-narratives to mainstream ideas and practices of culture, nation, and racial identity (Smethurst 2005). The situation in Berlin regarding Ballhaus, the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate, and how notions of German citizenship and culture are challenged within the city, diverges and converges in two significant ways from the examples Smethurst provides in his analysis in the Black Arts movement.

First, in Berlin, unlike in the regions of the US that Smethurst highlights, such as New York, Detroit, and Los Angeles, there does not exist a distinctly radical Afro-German nationalist movement. As the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate reveals, there is instead a movement to push into mainstream German discussions a public acknowledgement and reckoning both with the fact that racism does exist in Germany in the 21st century, and that the professional, personal, political, and economic experiences of individuals in German society are shaped by historical racial assignations of both perceived phenotypical, and assumed biological, differences. The intervention at Ballhaus, therefore, provided a literal space for different racialized communities living in Berlin to convene around an issue specific to Afro-Germans, and name their lived histories of constantly being considered a foreigner to their country by White Germans and institutions. It further provided a space to specifically articulate how visual Blackness in Germany is constantly framed as antithetical to both Germanness and the concept of being Human.

Second, "Black Intervention" supports Smethurst's argument that the line between artists and activists is a false one to draw, noting that the political and cultural work of individuals was often inextricably linked:

> One obvious problem that makes both Black Power and Black Arts such elastic terms is that there was no real center to the interlocked movements. That is to say, there was no predominant organization or ideology with which or against which various artists and activists defined themselves (Smethurst 2005:14).

While Ballhaus provided the much-needed space for "Black Intervention" to successfully occur, and illustrates the interconnection of art production, art spaces, and political activism, it is not the locus of social justice organizing in Berlin. As Wagner Carvalho emphasized, the mission of Ballhaus is in providing a space to produce art from diverse perspectives: "That's very important. What we are doing here is art, not work. Not social work. Through theatre, dance, film, literature, installation we can shift the issues inside of the cultural landscape of Berlin, Germany, and some other European countries." Ballhaus as a cultural institution is part of a larger network of interracial and intercultural "formal and informal networks" (Smethurst 2005: 368) of people within and outside of the art world, committed to creating a more socially inclusive, safe, and just society in Germany.

However, while not the center of social justice organizing, we can think of Ballhaus as emblematic of the potential of independent Berlin art spaces to produce counter-narratives to popular conceptions of German culture and identity. Such spaces not only make visible a hidden societal grammar of suffering dependent on Black alienation and exploitation, but they also disrupt this grammar. They do so by disturbing the historical relationality of Blackness in art spaces as performative display and exhibition of Otherness, and instead, manifest Blackness in art spaces as a site for community building around challenges to anti-Black racism. We can see this through the effect "Black Intervention" had on Mekonnen, who, upon reflection of all that occurred during the public *Die Kleine Hexe* debate, concluded:

> In that sense I think the debate was very helpful and was also a power struggle. I think at the end of the day there is no winner or loser anyway because you cannot measure that. Many people came out of their living room and voiced their objection against racism.

> Many people went out actually. In my perspective there was a victory in mobilizing people from all walks of life from all ethnic background[s]. I can't tell if there was any dominance in color, it was all ethnicities. So in that sense it was [a] very important experience.[66]

Conclusion

I conclude with a photograph I took in 2011 in one of my favorite places in Berlin, Tempelhof Park (FIG. 33). I took the photo because I enjoyed watching the young boy mimic the movements of the adults in his family who were searching where to join their friends in the park. When I returned to the image a few months later, I was struck by how it visually captured many of the research questions and themes I continuously ran into while conducting my fieldwork. On one hand, the family represented a normalized view of the activities families do together on weekend afternoons, in this particular case, hanging out in the park with friends. On the other hand, the family's searching hand gestures, coupled with seeing the TV tower at Alexanderplatz—an iconic symbol of former East-Berlin—in the background of the image disrupted my initial normative reading of the image I saw. It reminded me of the initial surprised reactions I received, when first discussing my research with friends, family and colleagues years ago: "There are Black people in Germany?"; "Are issues of race really a problem there?" Subsequent viewings of this image made me confront the fact that the existence of Black people in Germany is still constructed as foreign to the normative idea of who is really considered German.

This photograph further symbolized for me how the global and domestic identity of Germany is consciously under construction, over 25 years after reunification. Tempelhof Park is

[66] October 2013 interview with author.

one example of this narrative. During World War II, it was a primary area of industrial production for military aircrafts. After the war ended, it became famous as the site of the Berlin airlifts by the occupying Allied Forces. Two years after it was closed as an airport, Tempelhof Park re-opened, after much debate, as a public park in 2010, complete with community-shared gardens, grill areas, and numerous paths for biking, running, walking, and outdoor events. The park represents how the ways in which communities of people working at the local, municipal, and state levels decide to use spaces, and the histories housed within them, becomes vitally important in the construction of communal identities. Not surprisingly, this project of re-nation building is filled with numerous tensions and contradictions that are further heightened with the increasing awareness of the presence of German citizens whose lived experiences reject the narrative of a raceless and racism-free Germany. The actions of leaders in Germany's political, economic, and cultural spheres are championed for how they have visibly acknowledged and responded to the country's troubled history of genocide and regional military domination in ways that have successfully constructed Germany "anew" as a better country moving forward to the future.[67] The various uses of public spaces informs interactions between individuals and communities in a given place. In this photograph, I saw a symbolization of the search for Blackness and Black lives to function as more than objects against which to define and shape German cultural identity, a search which the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate brought into full relief.

In Germany, there are still many aspects of the country's past with racism that are not publicly acknowledged and grappled with, such as German colonialism on the African continent. There are still many histories that are actively ignored, obfuscated, or repressed. One effect of

[67] This is illustrated particularly clearly in the recent *New Yorker* article, profiling the life and career of German Chancellor Angela Merkel. (Packer 2014)

this is that many citizens in Germany, connected to these "lost" histories, are rendered in the popular German imagination as oxymorons in their plural racial and ethnic German identities; as forever foreign to their homeland. The other effect is that it allows mainstream popular discourse, both within and outside of Germany, to perpetuate the false idea that race and racism are no longer an issue there. This in effect allows people to use Germany's reckoning with its fascist past to enact and defend racist attitudes and practices in the present without shame. The events surrounding the *Die Kleine Hexe* debate are fruitful grounds from which to parse out and understand the practices and conceptions of culture in German society that inevitably affects an individual's subjective experience of social citizenship. The debate also specifically highlighted the function of the symbolism of Blackness as an alien and exploited subject in Germany. While the debate highlighted the experiential effects of Blackness in Germany, I argue it additionally demonstrated how coloniality, as predicated on anti-Black racism, is expressed in German culture.

What prompted Mekonnen Mesghena to write Thienemann Publishers was the unexpected and unpleasant experience of reading out loud to his daughter a racial slur in her children's book. The debate that ensued, however, over the decision to omit this language reveals the usefulness of thinking about Blackness, not as just a real, experiential fact, but as an object of knowledge used to maintain racialized hierarchies within societies structured in dominance. The *Die Kleine Hexe* debate was not just about the experiences and feelings of a marginalized population in Germany. It highlighted the cultural power dynamics between different racialized groups in Germany. It raised questions over who is given the power to determine who belongs and who does not belong to the culture and country; who can speak and who cannot speak about what is and is not, or should and should not be a facet of German culture. In this instance, a

children's book illustrated one of the ways Blackness is deployed in literary and visual culture to demarcate the boundaries of cultural citizenship and national identities. Furthermore, through visual language, *Die Kleine Hexe* communicated an implicit conception of German culture as one shaped by past pseudo-scientific definitions of race as fixed, bounded, and biological.

The reaction to the debate, in the form of the "Black Intervention" town hall meeting at Ballhaus Naunynstraße, revealed one of the nuanced ways art spaces can challenge the deployment of Blackness-as-Other-than Human/White/European. Within a European historical context of displaying and exhibiting Black bodies as observable-beings for entertainment; for "scientific" study; or, as examples of the antithesis to humanity and hence, as shaping European identities, Ballhaus Naunynstraße exemplified the transformative role art spaces can play in disrupting dominant views of cultural citizenship, both in thought and practice. Hosting "Black Intervention" within the theater temporarily reconfigured the space into serving something more than performance and visual display. Instead, the intervention shaped Ballhaus into a space that facilitated challenges to dominant conceptions of Blackness, as well as a normalized and racialized German cultural identity. Not just a space for the performance of art, Ballhaus became a space that addressed issues and concerns of a multi-racial, multi-ethnic German community beyond the artistic community. It also served as a space for this demographic of people to see and hear themselves in each other's stories.

Let us be clear that the arts, and the independent spaces that exhibit them, will not be the sole vehicles that substantially change the experiences and lives of Black German citizens. Social and economic policies will. However, "Black Intervention" at Ballhaus, held in response to the negative public reactions toward the language change in *Die Kleine Hexe,* demonstrated that art spaces are the fabric that informs the fomentation of a critical mass of citizens to work toward

naming their history and experiences. Art and art spaces expand the capacity to move people on issues in ways that governmental debates may not. In so doing, the possibilities of creating new social policies and initiating institutional change that respond to the needs and demands of all people within a community increase. Rather than be forced into definitions of existence that were never meant to include them, art spaces are the places where Black people can envision and articulate their place in society and how they want their world to adapt and change to them.

Chapter Four

"We Create Spaces For People Who Need Spaces": Placing Berlin Within Challenges to Coloniality

Introduction

The theme connecting all of the chapters in this dissertation thus far is how visual images and/or arts spaces in Berlin are used to either challenge or perpetuate coloniality in Germany. My focus is rooted in Berlin, but as I argue in Chapter 1, this is an issue not particularly unique to Berlin or Germany. Instead, coloniality, as predicated on anti-Black racism, is a structuring societal grammar of Western modernity, and hence of Europe as a whole as well. In this chapter, I circle back to a question and answer raised by Mekonnen Mesghena, the man from Chapter 3, at the center of a debate about changing language in a popular children's book. When discussing the interventions and discussions held in support of him, Mekonnen reflected on the feedback he received from people living in other parts of Germany:

> I received feedback, and also many messages from other cities [saying], 'How are you [managing] that in Berlin? And, why do you have all those events there? Why is there a strong Black presence and also visibility compared to other cities?' I receive all of these questions and my arguments are always the same. It is because there are places like Ballhaus Naunynstraße, Werkstatt der Kulturen, where there are people whose Black leadership are able to provide space so debates can take place. So it is about leadership and resources.
>
> So perhaps there are other cities like Frankfurt, if you look into the number of Black or people of African descent, perhaps most of them live in Frankfurt and so on. But they need a structure, they need positions and they need resources to at least mobilize certain activities and initiatives. In Berlin there is definitely more concentration of people working in those fields as well. But I think more decisively it is the structure, because you need structures and also resources to do that. So if there is a lot of people thinking and working and if you don't provide them space they remain invisible. So how can you secure visibility? How can you offer rooms for discussion and also for a new perspective?

> It is about also working together. I think we have a very lucky consolation in Berlin. There are certain people in certain positions who really join hands and work together. I think that's one of the patterns and structures. I always tell people if they ask that there is certain concentration of visibility and activities so even many activists from other cities come to Berlin and do their activities here although they live in Frankfurt, in Stuttgart, in Cologne, in Hamburg and so on, because they find here this space. You need these spaces to do all those intellectual activities as well.

In essence, for this chapter, I explore the factors Mekonnen raises to try and answer: What conditions allow for Black people in Berlin to come together and challenge dominant conceptions of German identity and culture?

In so doing, I focus on what is unique about Berlin, in terms of why I thought it was the best place through which to explore this research project. What is it about Berlin as a city that makes it possible for Black people in particular, and other racialized identities in general, to publically discuss their experiences of racism, challenge practices of coloniality in Berlin Germany, and make connections to both with the rest of Europe? Nascent scholarship has illuminated and detailed the ways European People of Color have used the arts to challenge both their marginalization, racism and coloniality (El-Tayeb 2011); or, scholarship has focused on European cities within a specific historical moment to explicate the transnational flow of ideas among African-descendent people (Edwards 2003). However, focus on the specifics of locality within a contemporary European city that may or may not support such challenges and movements of resistance has not yet occurred.

Much has been written about Berlin focused on urban infrastructure and memory (Till 2005); Huyssen 2003); on immigration and migration (Mandel 2008); or a historical military perspective as it relates to post-1945 and Cold War Politics (Borneman 1992); Partridge 2008) . For this chapter and dissertation, I turn to and build from scholarship on space, place, and memory to situate Berlin within my larger discussion about race, white supremacy, and visual

culture. Arjun Appadurai demands that we attend to the reality that the ethnographer and the people that she writes about may not always share the same cultural reference points about the place described. Furthermore, in the final textual analysis produced, the meaning of her place in her field site, as well as the space and place she inhabits while writing, oftentimes is hidden and under theorized in her final document (Appadurai 1988).Therefore, in this chapter I attempt to unpack why Berlin seems to be a significant locus point for "artivism", or the dynamic intersection of artistic production and political activism, most significantly around addressing coloniality in society.

I do this in part to also explain for myself how and why the meaning I derived from Berlin, as a place encouraging of artivism, converged and/or diverged with the views of my interview participants. In the attempt to answer the question, "Why Berlin?", I analyze interviews I conducted with artists, art workers, and scholars who were active in community engaged arts practices, producing and/or exhibiting artistic work challenging white supremacy in German society, and organizing around economic sustainability issues for independent arts workers in Berlin. I do so to highlight recurring themes that emerged in efforts to answer this question amongst participants. These themes emerged when participants talked about the significance and importance of Berlin as a place for their work.

People often talk about an intangible energy that they felt when first visiting the city. Something difficult to put into words, but an energy nonetheless that quickens the blood, electrifies the senses, and makes one feel like they have to be a part of whatever is happening in the city. Additionally, as Mekonnen Mesghena recounted in a discussion about moving to Berlin from Cologne, Berlin gives many the feeling that they can carve out a place for themselves in the city. It is a city that literally and figuratively is under construction in an effort to situate its local

identity within a regional and global context. However, this feeling is not the sole domain of newly arrived Berliners; many native Berliners also often talk about how they grew up feeling like their city was a special place, different somehow than the rest of Germany. A friend of mine, Aicha, a native Berliner, once recounted how as a child observing the people in Berlin she often felt like she lived in a city that had an exciting, almost magical, feeling about it, often saying to herself, "Wow, I live in a really cool city!" I myself felt all of these descriptions when first visiting Berlin in 2006 and in my nearly annual returns since then. "Electrified" and "Disorientated" are the best words that come to mind when I remember my first encounter with the city. Berlin felt both familiar as a Western metropolis, and strange as a city that included socialist realism architecture that at times made me feel like I was in Eastern Europe. I had never been to a city before where the effects of a traumatic history were still apparent and felt. Bullet holes marking residential building facades, and tourist attractions, like the pillars on Museum Island where a famous fight between Russian and German soldiers transpired near the end of World War II.[68]

My interviews with participants always orbited around the themes of visual culture, race, and art spaces. I usually ended by asking them if and why they believed that the city of Berlin played a significant role in their work and/or activism. All respondents, except for one, resoundingly answered "yes" to this question. What follows in this chapter is an analysis of the reasons given by respondents as to why they felt this way about Berlin. I then connect these similarly thematic answers to a discussion of the why the city of Berlin produces conditions that encourage the production of counter-narratives to embedded popular ideas about coloniality in Germany.

[68] The bullet holes have since disappeared due to renovations of the nearby Neues and Pergamon museums.

Throughout, I argue that the historical significance of Berlin post-1945 as a physical site of both division and reunification, coupled with the funding structure of the arts in Germany and the economy of the city of Berlin, literally creates both spatial and social space for people living in Berlin to actively define and shape their city and their place within it in ways that is not as easy to do in other cities in Europe. I argue further that there is a unique history of cultural funding in Germany directly related to Germany's post-1945 politics of engagement with the world. This history of robust cultural funding helped create current conditions ripe for addressing continuing ideas and practices of race in Germany through cultural production, even though this is not the stated goal of such funding policies.

I organize this chapter into three sections: “Interventions in Space and Place”; "Off-Scene" Art Spaces; and “Not-Quite-Art Spaces.” The first section focuses on an interview with Noa Ha, a woman who created a public intervention to address racism and coloniality in Berlin. This interview highlights recurring themes found in most of my interviews articulating what made such interventions possible to produce, and why Berlin as a city was instrumental to these moments. The second section focuses on an interview with an artist and the head of an independent interdisciplinary arts space, WerkStadt Berlin. I use this interview to spotlight organizations that are active in defining the important role of arts to the city of Berlin. They do so primarily by engaging in political activism aimed specifically at creating a robust funding structure for non-mainstream, independent art organizations. Unlike the other organizations discussed in this chapter, WerkStadt Berlin’s mission and work does not specifically focus on art that addresses ideas and practices of race. However, their activism regarding the politics of funding does connect to the other people and organizations discussed in this section in ways that highlights the material and historical conditions that make Berlin a unique site for addressing and

challenging the manifestation of coloniality in contemporary German society. The last section shares some similarity to the previous sections; however, with this interview I focus on the relationship between cultural production and non-art space specific organizations based in Berlin. Doing so reveals how art is an important way to engage public dialogues about identity, and race, and, at times, is used as a tool for cultural diplomacy and city-making.

Interventions in Space and Place

In the introduction of my dissertation I discussed that the reason I shifted the focus of my initial research questions was because, at the time of my research, there was not a critical mass of Berlin-based art spaces focused primarily on exhibiting the work of Afro-German or artists of color. There were, however, created spaces of intervention in Berlin public discourse to highlight coloniality in practice, as well as anti-Black racism, and general racial discrimination in Germany. The following excerpted interview is with a woman, Noa Ha, who helped create a public intervention in Berlin to specifically addresses practices of racism and the manifestation of coloniality in contemporary German culture. By including Noa in my analysis I make a slight departure from a focus on visual culture and art space. I say slight because the intervention she co-created, "Decolonize the City," focused on another type of public visual culture—the built public environment—that I briefly explored in Chapter 1. However, I find it important to include Noa's intervention in order to underscore the interlocking importance of material conditions, the locality of Berlin, and social networks as the catalyst for such discussions.

I first heard about Noa Ha through emails and Facebook invites friends and acquaintances forwarded to me about events occurring in Berlin related to the 2013 conference,

“Decolonize the City,” that she co-organized with Anna Younes, Mahdis Azarmandi, Andrea Meza Torres, and Veronika Zablotsky:

> The »Decolonize the City!« conference aims at developing a decolonial perspective on the neoliberal city. Our intention is to add to and foster debate on the effects of globalized capitalism and its modes of action in respect to the City. We would like to examine politico-economical approaches in Urban Studies critical of the commodification of urban space as well as urban social movements staging resistance to these processes theorized as gentrification and touristification. However, these perspectives in fact only superficially address who is being displaced – namely working-class immigrant and/or neighborhoods of color. What happens when those who have been confined to particular areas of the city have to move as their income steadily decreases, rents go up and forms of social surveillance and policing intensify? Anti-racist perspectives on the intersections of neoliberal, racist and heterosexist urban (development) policies are (so far) utterly absent from German critical Urban Studies.
>
> We hope that we can create a space for a discussion of the various strategies of resistance, re-interpretation and re-inscription in the making of this marginalization. With that, we aim at framing urban spatial processes as intersectional, interrelating and inter-corresponding in clear vision of racism, and complex sets of power relations, such as classism, sexism, homonationalism and heteronormativity rather than arguing the primacy of global entrepreneurs’ interests.
>
> By taking a decolonial perspective, the conference will shine a light on colonial continuities which are inscribed in modern archives of knowledge. Postcolonial theory emerged as a form of anti-colonial resistance in scrutinizing the making of subjectivities at the margins and contesting the universalization of European Enlightenment thought.
>
> A decolonial perspective challenges Western-centric epistemologies of science and modernity and insists on a self-critical re-examination. It is of utmost importance to attend to the complexity of intertwined relations of power resulting from class, gender, race, body, heteronormativity, homonationalism and other categories of oppression.[69]

[69] http://www.decolonizethecity.de/about

What initially caught my attention about the conference was that one panel discussion was being held at a multi-disciplinary art and studio space in Kreuzberg I was familiar with. I wanted to attend the discussion to see if and how the overlapping of scholarship and activism worked in art spaces. At the talk, Noa presented her research, which made me decide to interview her for my project after hearing her arguments. In particular, Noa argued that the production of the city is the production of racial identities and that our understanding of urban spaces is shaped by colonialism. While her research and the conference was not focused on art, what did seem relevant to my project was her focus on how coloniality is manifested in contemporary German public society.

Noa Ha is a second generation Asian-German citizen whose research and activism about contemporary forms of racism and coloniality in German society was initially formed by Afro-German scholarship and activism. She describes her work as related to a growing political and social racial consciousness raising that started with her moving to Berlin:

> Before, I was growing up in West Germany and I had no contacts to the Afro-German community. And to me it was reading the book *Farbe bekennen [Showing Our True Colors]*—I was growing up in kind of a color blind society. Like my father, he is white. My mother, she is Indonesian-Dutch. And to me I was always like some other white girl. I am just like the others, I don't care. And it was actually kind of like a very choice way to cope about racism, "We don't talk about it. We only speak one language at home." … So to me it's like this part of my biography or family history is also a process of colonization…But this took a long time to understand. It took me a while. By that time I can say, "What's wrong with you asking me where I'm from?" I just came through that door. So everyone was asking me "Where are you from?" Because that's like a very typical question you get in Germany.
>
> And so by that time I was also an Indonesian and then this book [*Farbe bekennen*] was really amazing because I was reading the book, and also it was written out of an Afro-German perspective, dealing with anti-Black racism. I was [thinking], "there are so many similarities." And by that time I was [saying], "I'm not a white person here. And that's a difference. And that difference is coming from somewhere." And so I was trying to understand what is this difference about? And what are the similarities and not? And so I was in contact with the Afro-German community. And by that time, I would call myself Black. I was like, "I'm black. I am black."

> But at that time I was also at the Bundestreffen**…**[70] And I got this kind of warning that not everybody will take it for granted that I'll be there. I was like well I'll go and check it out. At the time I wasn't sure if that's the right place for me being there. Because there was this one workshop on "Who's Black?" You were sitting in the room and there were all like Asian-German, Arab-German, many different people. All of them who were not sure about themselves as being a Black German. They were all in that room because they were not sure. And then we had this discussion. And it turned up that there were also some Black Germans who came up and they were saying being Black is of being of African Descent…I wanted to commit myself to a political understanding of Blackness, but what I was seeing was more like a cultural commitment, and also like, community building and so on and so I was like, "I don't know if I really fit here."
>
> … But then I was like, "What's my cup of tea?" … But it was also clear to me, and that's what I'm doing right now, trying to build up communities in terms of People of Color communities, but also in terms of Asian-German communities. So it's not like it's only this or that. I think there are different political activisms. And so to do building of Asian-German communities, it has kind of politicized being Asian in Germany. Because I think there are many Asian people in Germany who are like, "Yeah I'm Asian, but I don't have problems with racism." So that's what I think is pretty normal in Germany. Many people are like, "I don't experience racism. Like, Okay people ask me where I'm from but it's not racism." I think that's normal. I think it's also because it has to do with what we do understand in Europe about racism.[71]

By the time Noa helped co-create the conference, "Decolonize the City," she had gone through a years-long process learning how to articulate and situate her experiences growing up as an Asian-German within an understanding of how anti-Black racism functioned in society. She points to the collection of essays in *Farbe bekennen* [*Showing our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Ou*t], often seen as a major catalyst that encouraged African-descended Germans to self-identity as Afro-German, as also her own catalyst for understanding her position in society as a

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[70] The Bundestreffen is an annual meeting of Black people living in Germany organized by the German association, Initiative Schwarzer Menschen in Deutschland e. V. [The Initiative of Black People in Germany.] Founded in 1985, and in parallel association with ADEFRA e. V., Schwarze Frauen in Deutschland (Black Women in Germany)— both a result of publishing of *Farbe bekennen [Showing our Colors],* the first book in Germany focused on Afro-Germans as a national identity— ISD works at a variety of social and political levels confronting racism in Germany; to raise public awareness about Afro-German history; and to facilitate social, professional, and political networking of Black people and their organizations.

[71] September 2013 interview with author.

racialized woman. Overtime, Noa concluded that a political awareness of Blackness, and a commitment to challenge anti-Black racism did not require that she self-identity as Black. In fact, it required that she begin to identify and community build as an Asian-German in solidarity with Afro-German and other German People of Color.

Noa's biographical history, along with past work experiences in landscaping, and present PhD research in architecture and urban planning,[72] informed how and why she wanted to create an intervention in the public space of Berlin.

> I'm saying, it's so important to understand racism as a colonial idea. Because what happens in Europe, everybody is like, 'Racism is all about prejudices. It's like what Black people are saying bad about White people.' And I'm like, 'Yeah, forget about it.' But these are the discussions we have when growing up and people don't know about racism. It's because no one does not talk about the colonial continuities. And that is really a problem, which I think serves particular interests which I think is pretty biased…. I was reading the critical urban studies and neo-Marxist or political economic approach and it was all like, 'Yeah, it's capitalist! It's a capitalist system!' And I'm like, 'Yeaaah you're right, but can you please tell me where racism fits into that or sexism?' People are subjected to it in a different way, so why/where is it? … So I was trying to understand what does it do, how does it happen, to whom belongs public space?

"Decolonize the City" therefore, was a project that came about namely to articulate contemporary forms of racism in German and European cities. For Noa, the best way to do this was through discussing the ongoing impacts of European colonialism in the present moment, as manifested in public space and urban infrastructure. "Decolonize the City" was an attempt to talk past, but not negate, the particularities of racial marginalization toward a clearer articulation of coloniality as a structuring grammar of German and European society.

"Decolonize the City" was a three-day event occurring in September 2012 with an average daily attendance of about two hundred people. Participants included scholars such as, Natasha Kelley, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Ella Shohat, Jonathan Kwesi

[72] At the time of our meeting, Noa Ha was pursuing her PhD, which she has since received.

Aikins, and Cengiz Barskanmaz. One important aspect of the event for was the intention of creating a space in Berlin welcoming of critical dialogues about the manifestations of coloniality in Germany, and throughout Europe, topics often met with resistance and silence. As she explained, "To us, we were a group of People of Color, women of color, and we wanted to have a conference…to attempt by ourselves. And we also wanted to have a conference where we feel safe." For Noa, "Decolonize the City" was a successful event and intervention into discourse about public and urban space, both in Germany and throughout Europe. She pointed to two factors of the conference as key to this success: the location of the conference and funding. In terms of location, the conference took place in a grand hall at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, and not at a university as was expected. Despite this, Noa elaborated:

> Mostly it was a very academic format. Podium discussion and then a big audience in front. But it was not taking place in the University. It was taking place in the Luxemburg Foundation and I think that was *really* important because by that, it empowered some political activist people to speak there. Because the Luxemburg Foundation is the foundation which is close to the Left party. And that's a house of political education, and that's what their work is dedicated to: political education."

Noa was clear in our interview that "Decolonize the City," despite some workshops as part of the event, was mainly an academic conference. However, she also saw it as important that the conference was not held in an academic setting. Hosting "Decolonize the City" at a foundation well-known for its purported progressive political leanings, and not at a university that might engender feelings of political neutrality, created a space allowing for activists to be a part of the conversation. Founded in 1990 as a small political group called, "Social Analysis and Political Education Association," The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation is one of many political education organizations in Germany. In 1996, it was officially recognized as a national affiliate of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the social-democratic political party in German government. The location where "Decolonize the City" was held allowed for not just the presenting of papers

at a podium, but also engaged people whose work on the ground supported or contradicted the theoretical arguments of said research. Noa many times throughout our interview reiterated that she did not think such a space for cross-dialogue between academic and activists would have occurred in an academic setting.

Noa also asserted that such an event would not have occurred if it were not for the funding that she received from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation:

> I think that's unique, throughout Europe, that Germany has these political foundations. That's kind of a legacy of the Second World War. Because other countries were saying, 'No, the German's need kind of an infrastructure of political education because if they're only focused on their next election then we know what happened. So they need to have political education to rethink their own political visions on a longer distance.' Therefore, we have the political foundations, which are funded by the government. And the money they get from the government— it's not private foundations—and that enables the parties to make, kind of, their own political education. But, it's *not* the same because there are also conflicts between the *party* and the *foundation*. So I know from the people who came here from the United States, like Ruth Wilson Gilmore, she was like, 'It's amazing being here in the house which is called after Rosa Luxemburg! I'm a Marxist, I'm a black Marxist so it's great being here!" So that was important.

Again, not only did Noa highlight the importance of the particular foundation where her conference was held, but she also highlighted the importance of where the funding from said foundation came from. Her discussion of the history of political funding in Germany demonstrated an awareness on Noa's part, which I also observed throughout interviews as a general awareness of the German public, of the present-day impact of post-1945 German history and politics. Noa saw the nation building politics of West Germany as directly connected to present-day political and cultural funding that allows for unique forums and discussions such as "Decolonize the City" to occur. I myself throughout the year saw the effects of this history through the various conferences and symposiums I attended while in Berlin that were funded by other political foundations like the Henrich Böll Foundation. Noa's shared thoughts on the elements of success of "Decolonize the City" suggests that due to the fact that the main source of

cultural funding in Germany comes from the government, there seems to be a greater awareness of the history such funding is tied to, especially *because* of Germany's World War II history.

Noa's assertion that the funding she received for "Decolonize the City" was an important factor in the success of the event, and her belief that Germany's post-1945 history was directly tied to such contemporary funding structures in society, naturally lead us to discuss the particular significance of Berlin. I asked Noa if she thought having the conference in Berlin also contributed to the success of "Decolonize the City," and she responded strongly in the affirmative. In answering, Noa first described the founding of some of the anti-racist groups in Berlin:

> I think Berlin is unique. And I think that it doesn't mean that what's taking place in Berlin isn't taking place in other places. But from what I observed, I had the feeling—like, if you look at the "Move
>
> On Up" list,[73] it was people from Berlin who were coming together and saying, "We want to do it." And I did the first, there were just two events, like, meetings that were taking place in Berlin. People from Berlin and from all over Germany were coming up. And the people who initiated the first meetings created this mailing list only for People of Color in Germany. And then you see that other people from the list are like, "I'm here in Hamburg, is there anybody here in Hamburg? Let's meet." So, I think it's [Berlin] always in a dialogue that it's always inspiring people in other areas.
>
> And also if you look at this whole issue of, "Decolonizing the City" in terms of post-colonial representation, like street renaming and so on, you have, "Postcolonial Freiburg," "Postcolonial Hamburg." There are many cities [that] have a website. Though as far as what I see, the awareness is kind of growing and growing. This enables different forms of activities. But, I think Berlin is a city which is kind of advancing, because it is the political headquarters of the nation. So you have the different institutions here, which made sense for the refugee protest to come to Berlin,[74] …so this is one aspect.

[73] Move On Up, is an email listserv, of which I am also a part, committed to anti-racist activism and scholarship in Berlin and throughout Germany. It connects people from a variety of professional, racial, and ethnic backgrounds living in Germany, to share news and information about workshops, rallies, and politics.

[74] In October 2012, a delegation of mostly African refugees walked 600 kilometers from Würzberg, Germany to Brandenberg Gates in Berlin, Germany, to protest the deplorable conditions of their asylum centers while waiting for determinations of their political asylum applications. The protest was started in response to the suicide of an Irannian refugee, Muhammad Rahsahpar, in the Würzberg Germany. The protestors then moved to set up a protest camp at Oranienplatz, a public walk space in Kreuzberg, with the aim of not moving until their demands, such as

Noa acknowledges that Berlin being the country's capital is one significant reason why it often is the locus point for political activism in Germany. However, when thinking of other political capitals in the world, like Washington, D.C, this does not fully explain why Berlin is also the locus point for cultural activities focused on addressing continuing legacies of racism and coloniality in Germany. Noa's continued discussion about Berlin points to why this is the case:

> And I think also in terms of the discussion between East and West, what was the experience of racism in the GDR?[75] I think [about] what is the experience of racism in the West and to have that dialogue. I think there is no other city you can have it at that quality than in other cities.
>
> And to me it was really, when I came to Berlin…most Afro-German people I met were East Berliners. And I was like, when they were telling me, 'My mother she is a dentist; My mother was working like this.' And I'm like, "My mother is a housewife and every other mother was working at home and the husband was working. Where have you been living? Tell me.' But it's interesting, if you look at the research, talking about racism in the GDR is very much under-researched, but I know that it happens because I know what people are telling me with whom I'm friends.

Recounting her experiences moving from formerly West Germany to reunified Berlin, Noa highlights one historical impact of post-World War II and post-Cold War politics on space and people. Newly produced closer interactions between people who had once lived in a divided city prompted observations, curiosities and desires to compare and contrast cultural differences and similarities between formerly West and East Germany. What was particularly striking for Noa was recognizing differences in gender norms between her West German life, and the East German life her friends and roommates described. What was also striking was Noa's curiosity about the differing experiences of racism in West and East Germany, and her questioning about

freedom of movement through Germany while waiting for asylum determinations and the abolishment of inhumane prison-like government-sanctioned refugee camps, were met by the German government. More information can be found at: http://oplatz.net/about/

[75] German Democratic Republic, the official name of former East Germany.

why experiences of race and racism are understudied in academia. For Noa, it is the actual historical space of Berlin that produces the opportunity for stark and nuanced dialogues and comparisons of space, place, race, and one's positioning in society as a racialized subject.

Continuing this discussion about space in Berlin, Noa said:

> And this is what I *really* love about Berlin, that this, you can see it, like material wise, the city looks different. There's space and there's *space*. And you have so many breaks. What you were saying when you were at O2? You go, and say, 'this is kind of off the map,' and then you try and bring it back. Because you have, it's not really like a center. And then it spreads out. You have two centers, and now it's trying to bring it back to one center. And so this I really appreciate about the city. And I think it's also enabling the transformation, and…because there is so much left over space, many people think, 'I just come and take over that space and do what I want to do." And people have their own visions, and do it.
>
> And I think in other cities which are much older, have older hierarchies, you don't allow yourself to have that vision of 'the living might be different.' And I think that's very important to have [in] a struggle. To have a vision of how it could be different. But if you're like, 'It has been always this, and why should it change, and how could it be different? How could it be better?' If you don't know that, how are you going to go for any change? And I think because of the urban history, and the political history, Berlin is kind of giving those spaces.

Whereas earlier Noa focused on the importance of the historically specific place of Berlin, in this moment she focused on the importance of the physical space of Berlin. Namely, the importance of how much wide open space exists in Berlin, and how the geography of the city is constantly changing due to this space and history. To make this point, Noa referenced a story I had recounted to her earlier of how I got lost on my way to attend a concert at Berlin's O2 sports and entertainment arena. O2 is located near the Warschauer Straße S-bahn and U-Bahn train stations, and most widely known to tourists as near the East Side Gallery. The East Side Gallery is where a significant portion of the Berlin Wall remains standing, and upon which visual artists have painted various tableaus, ranging from political commentary on history and the present, to humorous takes on life. When I left my apartment to travel to O2, I did not bother to check for

directions because I was confident that I knew how to get there. O2 is built on what used to be an expansive open field, which I traveled to often during my very first visit to Berlin in 2006 to visit a friend. This friend was a member of Cirque du Soleil, whose circus tent was set up in the field on which O2 now stands. However, upon arriving near the location of O2, I quickly became geographically disorientated because the open field in my mind's eye was replaced by big-box construction stores and other new building structures surrounding the arena.

Noa enjoyed hearing this story because it was a familiar one to her and many others living in Berlin. The seemingly never-ending urban development and construction demands that one constantly rework their mental map of the city. The vastness of space in Berlin is greatly due to the structural devastation of the city during bombing campaigns near the end of World War II. Listening to Noa talk, it seemed like the silver lining in this violent history is that such an abundance of open space in the city creates opportunities for people to envision new possibilities for creating a place for themselves within society. The constant rebuilding of the city leads to a reworking of definitions of what it means to be from that space. When meditating on the significance of Berlin as a place in relationship to the success of "Decolonize the City" a recurring theme emerged from my interview with Noa. It became clear that the city being marked by a history of division, reunification, and rebuilding requires a constant negotiating of what it means to be from "here" both locally and for the country. As a site, Berlin produces these conversations because its physicality and historical locality in essence demands this. In turn, this convergence of history, space, place and cultural funding is what allows for and fosters challenging societal conversations, like racism, to more visibly enter the public realm.

“Off-Scene" Art Spaces

To further emphasize the point of how the place of Berlin creates conditions for challenges to coloniality to occur, I now turn to an analysis of another interview I conducted with Jason Merrill Benedict, the Art Director of an independent Berlin-based interdisciplinary art space, WerkStadt Kulturverein Berlin, colloquially known as WerkStadt Berlin.[76] I argue that the specific locality, history, and economy of Berlin, coupled with robust German public funding for cultural production make Berlin the likely place where space is made for counter-narratives to popular conceptions of Germany culture and identity. In addition, these factors create a space for public discourse about continuing hierarchical ideas and practices of race, to emerge. Unlike Ballhaus Naunynstraße, WerkStadt Berlin is not an independent art space with a stated mission of showcasing works by or about People of Color, or people with “post-migrant identities.”[77] My interview with Jason highlights recurring themes that emerged in all of my interviews with independent art space. In these interviews, when asked, in response to, or in discussion about, what made their organizations successful, participants pointed to: the importance and politics of public funding for the arts in Berlin; Berlin's reputation of being a "poor, but sexy" city[78] that

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[76] “Werkstadt” sounds similar to, and is a play on the word “Werkstatt” which translates in English to “workshop” or “studio.” The German word “Stadt” means “City”, and “Kulturverein” translates to “Arts Association.” I therefore translate WerkStadt Kulturverein as City Workshop Arts Association.

[77] A term initially created to discuss the identities of third-generation Turkish-Germans who have neither the experience or memories of their parents and grandparents of migrating to Germany, nor full social, economic, or political inclusion into dominant German society that situates them as foreigners to their own country. For a more thorough discussion of this term, please see “New and Old Identity Patterns of Religious Young Muslims in Germany,” by Cüneyd Dinç in *New Multicultural Identities in Europe: Religion and Ethnicity in Secular Societies* (Toğuşlu, Leman, and Sezgin 2014).

[78] Berlin’s mayor, Klaus Wowerweit, during a November 2003 television interview, in response to the question of whether or not money made one sexy, famously declared, “Nein. Das sieht man an Berlin. Wir sind zwar arm, aber trotzdem sexy.” [No. One can see this in Berlin. We are poor, but nevertheless sexy.”] *(Focus.de Online n.d.)*. “Poor, but sexy” informally became Berlin’s slogan, in large part due to Wowerweit repeatedly using the term during his reelection campaign. The changing economic reality of Berlin in the last ten years, due to an increase in tourism and venture capitalism in creative industries, has complicated the veracity of this statement.

attracts artists and therefore creates various artists' community; and the significance of being located in certain Berlin neighborhoods. I include this interview with Jason to highlight how the materiality, history, and cultural funding politics of Berlin are constantly referenced in my interview with him and others as the source of their innovative art, art spaces, and dialogues had within them. I argue that these are the ingredients that also open up space through which to approach, and voice in public, uncomfortable histories and life experiences related to anti-Black racism, white supremacy, and coloniality.

I learned about Jason and WerkStadt Berlin through Regine Rapp and Christian de Lutz, two artists and curators of their own independent art space, Art Laboratory Berlin. I spoke with Art Laboratory to learn more about the political organizing work they were doing with other independent artists and organizations. Often referred to as the "Off Scene," Art Laboratory worked to bring awareness to the importance and need for support and funding for non-mainstream independent art organizations. I became aware of this activism for the arts after attending a series of public discussions in the city about gentrification happening around the city, the related rising rents in Berlin, and its adverse impact on long-time Berlin residents. Gentrification was most noticeable in Kreuzberg, Neukölln, and Wedding— three of the most multicultural neighborhoods in the city, that comprise the social center of the Berlin art world. Long heralded as housing large apartments at unbelievably "cheap" rent, rents in these neighborhoods and around the city were quickly increasing at alarming rates for a city with a 10.7% unemployment rate[79] .

[79] As of January 2016, compared to the rest of Germany at 6.7%.(EURES - Labour Market Information - Berlin - European Commission n.d.)

Outside of these public events, gentrification within the city was a constant topic of conversation in private amongst friends and acquaintances, disrupting the easy feel of time and space that so many artists and people flock to Berlin for, by creating a sense of anxiety over housing security in the city. It was within this context that a growing collective of artists and organizations began working to underscore how they, the independent art scene, helped attract tourists to Berlin. As such, they argued that it was important for the civic life of the city to support the work that they did through more robust funding specifically for independent art spaces and artists, and not just for mainstream theater, opera, museum and spaces.[80] My interview with Jason illustrated the substance of this claim by the Off Scene, as well as the significance of the locality of Berlin, its economy, and German support for the arts.

WerkStadt Berlin is an interdisciplinary art space housing multiple art studios. While an entirely different project, the prelude to WerkStadt started in 2006 by Jason Benedict and six other people who sought to create a group studio. It originally opened in the East Berlin neighborhood of Friedrichshain, where, as Jason notes, it looked similar to a lot of other independent arts space in Berlin neighborhoods,

> It was a very small space in an abandoned storefront like a lot of spaces here in Berlin for relatively cheap. Did a little bit of renovations there and then had a photo lab and a wood workshop and a painting studio. And kind of started to form a good core group of people that were interested kind of working as a group.

For Jason, the appeal of this group studio was in in the do-it-yourself culture of Berlin and the lack of isolation he found as an artist. Having previously worked as an artist in Spain, in a group

[80] Haben und Brauchen [To have and to need], a collective of independent artists and art spaces, often referred to as the "Off-Scene", put forth a manifesto analyzing the economic situation of artists in Berlin and outlining policies the city can take to rectify the lack of structural support for this demographic: http://www.habenundbrauchen.de/en/category/haben-und-brauchen/manifest/

studio with seventeen artists he rarely saw, Berlin to Jason felt like a place where artists quickly and actively built community amongst themselves and supported each other's work.

After a few years in Friedrichshain, the group studio Jason co-founded had to move out of their location due to problems with their landlord. A handful of those members formed a new separate arts collective. After a series of successful events they, in addition with non-artists who were good at formalizing the strengths of the institution and pushing studio work into the public arts sphere, decided they wanted to formalize their collective:

> There's this great tax structure that's very flexible, which is the *Verein* here in Germany. The loose translation is a 'non-profit organization.' You just need 7 people to found it as an institution. And then you can kind of exist as an institution on paper. And that can be anything. It can be a club for kids to play soccer. It can be a card-playing betting club. *Bayern München* [Bavaria Munich] has a big football organization based somewhat on that structure too. It can be an arts association. It can be anything. And you have a lot of tax benefits. So anything from a small club to a really big non-profit organization.

Here, Jason sees a particular aspect of the established German governmental bureaucratic structure as a significant factor that helped foment the creation of his independent art space. As with other similarly structured art spaces, this allows for subsequent funding support of an independent art organization, both through the form of tax benefits, and through the ability to apply for public funds for cultural projects and development.

This bureaucratic structure inadvertently foments innovative uses of art space through rules of governance. Due to WerkStadt Berlin's status as a *Verein*, the art space is not allowed to sell tickets to event or charge entry fees to the art space. This compels the organization, as Jason noted, "… to do as many events as [they] can in the space that are based on artistic experimentation." Jason elaborated further, describing the physical space of WerkStadt Berlin that lends itself to versatility in creating public artistic events:

> But we do like concert series. Like we had a jazz series here for a long time here that's turned into a bigger project. And we do monthly changing exhibitions. We do some

> improv theatre and experimental performance pieces and things like that. And the space kind of changes based on what's going on. So say, what you see right now is this kind of cafe atmosphere. But then, the furniture gets all cleared up and the lights get turned up and it looks a little bit more like a gallery. Or, and then, put some cloth to cover up the windows and then put all the chairs in a row and it looks a bit more like a theatre. And it's all on this kind of modest basis, but it helps draw attention to what we're doing and seems to have been very well received by people and as an opportunity to present their ideas or to experiment.
>
> We got up to, it's been stable since then, about 35 active members. Half of them are artists who are working in the studios and half of them are people from other backgrounds who are supporting the projects or who are interested in doing their own projects, like bringing their ideas. And this has become an important aspect of it. It's that people can come to us with ideas for projects and we can be the signer of that project. That we can be the official entity that can then apply for funds to actually execute a project. A community arts project or a curatorial project or film production or whatever.

While WerkStadt's status as a *Verein* seems similar to 501(c)3 status non-profits in the United States, it is distinctly different in three ways. First, unlike U.S. non-profits which require multiple forms of documentation, only the commitment of seven people with similar interests is needed in order to establish a *Verein.* Second, most non-profits in the U.S. are established as providing a service to the wider public community, which is not necessarily always the case in Germany. Third, most non-profits in the U.S. are established to perform in the service of one uniform goal; however, WerkStadt Berlin as a *Verein* is as an interdisciplinary functional and exhibitory art space. The second important factor in fomenting the creation of innovative independent art spaces is the location in which these organizations are housed. After formalizing their collective, Jason and his peers sought a new place to house their organization, and found themselves in Neukölln:

> So, we started looking around here [Neukölln], and because we had this on paper we found an institution, the Zwischen | Nutzungs | Agentur, which was a kind of development office …There was a lot of empty spaces here. All the storefronts were empty, all the businesses had long ago gone out of business. So they were trying to get people into these spaces and get people to use them somehow, and working with the owners of the buildings to negotiate good conditions for these artists' studios or lamp repair shops or whatever that people were trying to do. And so that was really nice,

> because it helped us have a little bit of a better negotiating focus when we got this space. So this first space that we had was an abandoned pharmacy. It was in very very bad condition. And so we started renovating it. And really quickly I was surprised—there were four or five core people that started the project, but pretty quickly other people started coming to us. It was that they kind of saw there was some activity, and we had a relatively very open democratic structure. And so people just started joining in the project.

As Jason noted, the neighborhood of Neukölln was filled with many vacant properties when WerkStadt Berlin established their organization there. Due to this fact, Jason and his peers were able to receive favorable contract conditions that included working in the space for the first six months in residence rent-free exclusive of costs for garbage and utilities. Every six months afterward the rent would increase until WerkStadt was paying the full rent of the place, which Jason noted was inexpensive for what it was. While it was not the aim of the organization to establish an arts base in a non-competitive real-estate market, opening their studio space in an economically marginalized neighborhood had significant benefits for WerkStadt. The Neukölln location allowed the collective to focus their energies more on building the substance of their organization, rather than spending considerable energies on fundraising to pay rent.

As noted in the previous chapter, certain neighborhoods in Berlin have historically been working class post-1945, such as Wedding, Kreuzberg, and Neukölln. It is those neighborhoods to which artists have flocked in increasing numbers in the past decade. It is also those neighborhoods that have garnered increasing attention by government entities channeling material resources to "revitalize" the neighborhood, with the arts being seen as a significant vehicle by which this is done. WerkStadt's decision to expand its space reflects this aspect of neighborhood development through the arts. Jason continues with the history of WerkStadt Berlin:

> So we took on a second space with some more studios, because it started to get crowded. Our rental conditions there are maybe not quite as good, but it was also like an

> abandoned store-front. I think it had been empty for about 10 years…So we had that expansion and then around that time an organization called the Quartiersmanagement approached us. They work here in the neighborhood. It's a development agency sponsored by the Berlin senate and some funds from the European Union. And their work is to try to create social, public, educational, artistic projects with…a neighborhood council to try to bring some energy, some bureaucratic love somehow, to a neighborhood that has been largely forgotten in a German political context.

Jason's discussion of government efforts to "revitalize" neighborhoods in Berlin brings to mind the process of using art and cultural production in city-making.[81] I argue that the arts in the 21st century has increasingly become a major vehicle used to place cites on the globalized map, which Jason's discussion of WerkStadt Berlin demonstrates. While there exists literature about the "global city", which discusses the power and placement of cities in globalized forms of economic, political, and state power (Brenner 2004; Sassen 1999), scant attention is paid to how artistic production is also utilized to create and solidify cities' reputations as powerful global urban centers (Benneworth and Dauncey 2010). The literature that does exist on the relationship between artistic production and city-making largely focuses on art biennales, film festivals, and their economic value and impacts both locally and globally. Thus, such literature will often analyze cultural events within the larger professional and social habitus within which they exist (Moeran and Pedersen 2011; Thornton 2009).

A growing body of literature is focusing on how arts festivals are instruments used to globalize the cities in which they occur (Kong 2007; Pensa 2012), or to navigate regional identities (Kim 2005; Shin 2005). However, their focus is placed on international festivals and do not explore larger questions of how the reputation of artistic production works as a significant

[81] This is an argument that grew in part from my collaboration with geographer, Dr. Julie Ren, on a 2013 proposal we co-authored to study the use of film festivals and art biennales in processes of city-making in African and East Asian cities. We both interviewed artists and curators in Berlin for our dissertation projects and found that our research overlapped in key areas. I am very much thankful to Dr. Ren for bringing my awareness to literature in geography analyzing cities in relation to power, large-scale festivals, and economics.

vehicle of city-making. This is accomplished by both gaining international recognition and influence through cultural production, and by shaping and challenging dominant notions of community and communal identity. The fact that WerkStadt Berlin benefited from German public funds, as well as funds from the European Union, specifically earmarked for arts and cultural production and institutions as a means to economic revitalization of Berlin neighborhoods, points to, on the part of Berlin and supra-national state officials, a recognition and acceptance of arts and art spaces as important tools for gaining influence as a city on a global scale.

One possible impact of gaining such influence would be to generate economic activity in a monetarily poor city. When asked about the importance of neighborhoods to certain arts spaces, Jason elaborated to discuss further why Berlin itself attracted so many artists:

> The thing you've got to understand about Berlin, just a little bit of statistics, is that Berlin is chronically in crises and has been since 1990 or 1992. You have 25% unemployment. At least one in five Berliners are on social welfare. The job market is weak. Wages are low. For all the people that are coming here looking for something, there are a lot of other people that are leaving because they can't find a job, or older people that move out of the city because they want to live in the country. The population has stayed pretty stable here as a city of three and a half million people. But Berlin from the 1920's was a city of five and a half million people. So with the history of the war and the divided city and what not, there's still these stretches of open space that nobody wants. And that was kind of the context of how we started working in Neukölln. And there's still other you know, other parts of the city that people in the arts don't really go to, and there are maybe possibilities to do something there too, but it hasn't moved there yet.

Jason in this moment touches on a nuanced caveat I have to make when arguing about how the economics of Berlin is one significant force for attracting artists. The economics alone of a neighborhood is not what is going to draw artists and art spaces to it. The specifics of the neighborhood matter in terms of demographics and narratives. First, it is not by coincidence that German and international artists drawn to Berlin typically reside and work in Kreuzberg, Neukölln, and Wedding. These neighborhoods are near Mitte and Prenzlauerberg, neighborhoods

located in former East Berlin and with their own histories of artist expansion in the early 1990s, following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Second, these are also neighborhoods that have a reputation for being racially and ethnically diverse, and hence, more welcoming to people of diverse backgrounds. If a neighborhood in Berlin has significantly more affordable rents than the neighborhoods referenced above, but is associated with housing significant neo-Nazis and right-wing extremists groups—as the neighborhoods of Lichtenberg and Schöneweide are—very few people working in the arts scene would move there. While the demographics of artist communities in Berlin may change and spread out over time due to the rising rents in Kreuzberg and Neukölln in particular,[82] for the time being this does not seem a likely scenario.

While the economic reality of Berlin is shifting, during the time I lived there, the economy of the city created an atmosphere that allowed artists to easily gather in community with time and space to create their work in ways one cannot find as easily in other cities. This comparison of Berlin to cities like New York and London in terms of economic conditions favorable to artists, was echoed in other interviews I had with cultural producers. Berlin was attractive to artists, not just for its reputation as being one of the global artistic centers, but more so for the feasibility of an artist to spend more time creating art, rather than working at a day job to pay rent. This in turn, for Jason, produced a rich cultural scene in Berlin that attracts tourists, and provides optimal conditions for artists to create innovative art:

> This independent scene, which has made Berlin so famous, and which has created a lot of hype around it, and I think it's a fact now, I don't think you can argue it, that Berlin is now one of the seven art capitals in the world now with LA, New York, and London, and Paris and more and more Moscow and Shanghai. But it's not because of the money here.

[82] I recently talked with a friend living in Berlin about how it is nearly impossible to move into an apartment in Neukölln, even though six years ago in 2010 we both remember how there were "For Rent" signs everywhere in the neighborhood. This same friend moved into her spacious, three-room Neukölln apartment in 2006 for 500 euros/month, exclusive of utilities. For a similar apartment, about 900 square feet, in the same neighborhood, rent in 2016 is now about 1,200 euros/month. Other people I talked to who have lived in Berlin for eight years or more tell similar stories.

> It's because all of the artists are moving here. Because there are these structures that help an artist survive. You can get a studio for cheaper. You see on a lot of artists' resume's, "Zurich and Berlin", or "Amsterdam and Berlin". And [that is] because the money that they make in those places can go a lot further here and so can actually work. And then, also just the creative atmosphere where you're meeting a lot of people, and so it's a hotbed for a kind of experimentation and these interdisciplinary practices.

Jason's assertion that Berlin is one of the global art scene centers *because* artists are moving there is supported in part by the global response to the city's reputation. One example that Jason and other arts workers I spoke to often pointed to was Klaus Biesenbach. Bisenbach is the founder of the internationally recognized Berlin-based Kunst-Werke (KW) Institute for Contemporary Art, and the Berlin Biennale, the success of which lead to his appointment as Chief Curator of the Department of Media and Performance Art at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) PS1 location in Queens, NY. Many saw his appointment as international recognition of the innovative art and art institutions produced in Berlin. As Jason noted,

> And then you have all these other spaces, and it's about the brand of Berlin at the art fairs, because that's where most-high end commercial galleries are operating and they're selling work in those art fairs and Berlin as an address. And so we see a lot of galleries from the rest of Germany from Frankfurt or from Düsseldorf or whatever, and they'll open up a satellite space. Rents for that kind of gallery here are relatively inexpensive. It's an address. It's a mailing address. They throw a party, they do an exhibition there, but it's about how they present themselves at the art fair.

In the previous section, I focused on the history of the locality of Berlin, and the history of a focused support for public cultural and political funding in Germany. I did so to illustrate that both are key factors in creating conditions ripe for public discourse, highlighting aspects of coloniality in the present moment. Jason's discussion in this section about the economics of Berlin, and its global reputation as a significant and innovative urban arts center, are two other important factors.

More importantly, focusing on the genesis of WerkStadt Berlin signals why many public challenges to, and discourse about, contemporary forms of racism and coloniality in Germany

seem to occur most productively in “Off-Scene” arts spaces. Comparable to other Western cities associated with a rich arts and cultural scene—such as New York, Paris, or London— Berlin, due to a depressed economy informed in part by post-reunification economic effects, offers artists and arts worker more affordable studio, gallery, and residential rents. Berlin’s post-World War II physical and political configurations, along with a Cold War history embedded in public infrastructure, lends the city a reputation of being “not quite” like the rest of Germany. This reputation is further emphasized by declarations of the city being “sexy”; the Berlin “Off-Scene” art scene is often credited as the driver behind the city’s sex appeal, and hence, the driver behind the city’s increased tourism. A lot of focus on, and support of, the arts in Berlin then follows. Combined, all of these factors attract a variety of people to the city, many of whom who may feel compelled to challenge accepted norms because, like the city, they don’t quite fit the established mold.

Not-Quite-Art Spaces

I now turn to an interview with Philippa Ebéné, director of Werkstatt der Kulturen, literally translated as "Workshop of Cultures." I focus on her interview to explore the question of why Berlin is a unique site that allows for the emergence of dialogues about contemporary racism in Germany. I do so by further thinking through how art is used to place Berlin and Germany on the global stage, and what new spaces of dialogue this opens for questions about the role of art and art spaces in city-making. Philippa’s interview raised complicated questions for me about slippages in definitions, such as, “What makes an art institution?” In this vein of questioning, what do these slippages signal about how art may be seen within certain German political institutions as a tool for cultural diplomacy and cohesion?

Werkstatt der Kulturen was established in 1993 primarily as a place to serve the events needs of Vereins [Associations] and migrant organizations of the surrounding Neukölln community. Overtime, particularly under Philippa Ebéné's direction, Werkstatt der Kulturen became an institution known for diverse artistic programming focused on exploring migrant, Black, and People of Color perspectives and histories in Germany and abroad. Initially, Werkstatt der Kulturen was on my radar because of its location in Neukölln, blocks away from where many friends of mine lived, and where I myself lived during my summer research trips to Berlin. I often had brunch at the cultural space on Sundays in the restaurant, Aicy and Mimi's, run by an Afro-German mother and daughter team. Having brunch with friends at Aicy and Mimi's became a regular weekend ritual after I first was invited there for a "Black Women in Berlin" brunch. Many events occurred in the space that I either attended, or wished that I could attend when my schedule did not permit. These were the things that made Werkstatt der Kulturen most known to me. However, throughout the city, Werkstatt der Kulturen is most known as the sponsor of the annual parade, Karneval der Kulturen [Carnival of Cultures]. With over 1.5 million visitors in attendance, the parade founded, in 1996, and its related performances is the biggest open-air event that Berlin has every year.[83] *Karneval der Kulturen* is four-day event billed as a celebration of cultures within Berlin. If features musical performances from the African diaspora, South America, the Middle East, and Europe and Asia. The event culminates in a parade, usually on the German holiday of Pentecost Sunday,[84] made up of over 100 floats and 5,000 people, with over 700,000 spectators attending. Citing these statistics, Philippa noted,

[83] The annual electronic music festival parade, "The Love Parade," used to be the biggest open-air event in Berlin until 2003, when the parade at different times was either canceled or moved to the Ruhr region of Germany.

[84] A Christian holiday occurring 50 days after Easter.

> And the question is why right? Why is it? The initial idea was to basically show Berlin. You know, just, this is Berlin, these are Berliners. We are not visible in theatres, in museums, and other cultural institutions, that was the idea. So let us take the street. So you have…the association of Korean nurses; a Nigerian dance group; a Colombian, or Bolivian folklore group, all kinds of different groups. You also have people with political messages, but you can have a political message, but you sort of have to turn to some kind of artistic presentation.
>
> And I think the first year they were a little group of 20 people, 20 groups, and now it's around a hundred. We don't accept everybody, but it's open. It's open to everybody, but you have to have some kind of concept to take part in it. There's as a jury because there are prizes. It's probably the most successful event in Berlin--open air event. So in a way it's a success, on the other hand, it didn't really, how should I put it? The idea was actually to make oneself visible in order to then be able to then enter, or become producers in theaters, be seen in theaters or in music halls and museums or in cultures. This didn't happen. What happened was the carnival grew bigger. Right? So that's there (*laughs*) as a problem.

Here we see a moment in which, faced with mainstream Berlin cultural institutions' inabilities to reflect the racial and cultural diversity of the city, a non-mainstream cultural organization challenged such institutional exclusion by temporarily transforming public space to reflect the city's racial and cultural diversity on a large scale. In this way, Werkstatt der Kulturen represents the institutions I first sought at the beginning of my research: An institution that actively sought to represent the racial and cultural diversity of Berlin.

However, as Philippa pointed out, the fact that the birth of Karneval der Kulturen was a reaction against exclusionary institutional actions was quickly overlooked by most, and did not result in substantive engagement of this issue by the majority of mainstream institutions. As the editors of *Farbe bekennen* made clear, having spaces within which to address the concerns particular to Black people and People of Color in Germany is important to effectively challenge various forms of silencing and marginalization. I see Werkstatt der Kulturen, like Ballhaus Naunynstraße, as one such space, which prompted me to better understand the conditions that fostered its existence. My conversation with Philippa often touched on the themes this project

was most interested in terms of how art spaces in Berlin engaged with the issue of race and racism in contemporary society. I focus on my interview with Philippa in this section to highlight the triumph and challenges of a non-mainstream cultural organization invested in using its space to illuminate: overlooked aspects of Germany's history with race and colonialism; the history and experiences of marginalized German communities; and the plurality of Berlin and German life.

I also explore my conversation with Philippa in connection with the other interviews in this chapter. I do so to think more deeply about: the history of German governmental funding for the arts; what such history points toward in terms of the relationship between using the arts as a vehicle for (cultural) diplomacy; and city making. I analyze the avenues of discussion about race and coloniality that are opened and closed off by certain funding mandates. Lastly, the contradictions between intent and outcomes of Karneval der Kulturen aside, I focus on this interview with the organization's director to explore the benefits to German public culture of having an institution with demonstrated anti-racist, community inclusive exhibitions and events.

Namely, I focus on two exhibitions that Philippa highlighted in our interview that point towards the triumphs and challenges of running such an institution. In the spring of 2008, Philippa Ebéné became the executive director of Werkstatt der Kulturen. A few months later she produced an exhibition there, "200 Years Later," which featured images of people, either in the African diaspora who resisted their enslavement, or of people who challenged the enslavement of people of African descent. "200 Years Later" received a lot of favorable attention, a reader of the exhibition was published and that same year, Werkstatt der Kulturen (WdK) received the Toussaint L'Ouverture medal. The UNESCO Executive Council presented WdK with the

Toussaint L'Ouverture medal to celebrate its "contribution to the struggle against domination, racism, and intolerance."[85]

Philippa saw the success of this exhibition as an indicator that artistic cultural production was an effective way by which to discuss difficult societal subjects, such as racism and colonialism:

> And I thought "OK, fine. This is a way of introducing certain topics." Of course we had concerts. Films, concerts, entertainment, and education kind of events for two weeks. And in 2009 we came closer to Germany because we wanted to celebrate, or commemorate the beginning of the Second World War. And I wanted to draw some *Aufmerksamkeit* [Attention] to the fact that millions of colonial soldiers died in the due course of liberating Europe and Germany. And now this is when it became more difficult.

The exhibition Philippa refers to is, "Die Dritte Welt Im Zweiten Weltkrieg [The Third World in the Second World War]", a traveling photographic exhibition begun in 2009 and organized by the German journalist, Karl Roessel. The exhibition was characterized as balancing the lack of knowledge about the role of Black people and People of Color in WWII by focusing on the role of soldiers from European colonies in Africa and Asia who fought against fascism, both within Europe and on the African continent.[86] Problems arose when, two weeks before "The Third World in the Second World War" was set to open at WDK, Philippa asked to view the exhibition in preparation for the anticipated discussions and questions as part of the show. Upon viewing the contents of the exhibition, Philippa saw that the show greatly contradicted the mission and expectation of WDK:

> We were supposed to cooperate with an organization, a guy, actually, a journalist who had published a book on the topic. And I was interested. I said "Yes, I would like to see the exhibition before we exhibit" because I need to know its contents. When I finally saw it two weeks before the exhibition was to be opened, I saw it and I said "We are not going to do this." Partly because you had, *Überschrift* [Captions] like, Africa as in *Arabische Kollaborateur* [Arab collaborator]. So, it wasn't Africa as in *Arabische Welt* [Arab

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[85] http://www.africavenir.org/projects/project-archive/200-years-later.html
[86] The traveling exhibition has its own website, which can be viewed at: http://www.3www2.de/

> world]. It was Africa as in *Arabische Kollaborateur* and I said, “well what exactly are you trying to say?”
>
> Secondly, I said, “Where’s Ousmane Sembene? Where's Chris Kofania and Dan Daniels?” He’s one of the best known African film directors who made the most important film on the Second World War and the participation of African soldiers. Because he had been one and he had been a prison of war. He doesn’t, he’s nowhere in this exhibition. And instead we have the Mufti of Jerusalem, the Mufti at the time who was an anti-Semite. So what are we talking about in this exhibition?"

At issue for Philippa was, rather than include more examples of colonial African people who fought in World War Two, or the people who documented this forgotten part of German history, a significant focus of “The Third World in the Second World War” exhibition was on examples of Arab politicians and elites who worked in collaboration with German national socialists. Philippa decided not to exhibit the show at Werkstatt der Kulturen because she believed that the commemoration of African soldiers in the Second World War would have been, as the German media watch group, *Der Braune Mob* [*The Brown Mob]* observed, “put on par with, or perhaps even outweighed by the heinous crimes of a few individuals.”[87] Philippa’s decision not to exhibit “The Third World in the Second World War” show became a controversy that gained wide media attention, being reprinted not just in Berlin newspapers, but in national papers throughout Germany, and even internationally in Israeli and Russian newspapers.

As Philippa noted, what was troubling about the structure of “The Third World in the Second World War” exhibit, and the subsequent fallout from her decision not to continue with the show, was the erasure of the agentive role of people of African descent within the history of Germany, particularly as it related to the history of the Second World War. Furthermore, it sidelined focus of German colonial history on the African continent. The only way “The Third World in the Second World War” exhibition could seem to conceive of the African presence in

[87] http://blog.derbraunemob.info/2009/08/30/exhibition-at-werkstatt-der-kulturen-statement-call-for-support/

this particular aspect of Germany's history was to associate Africans, as Arabs, as anti-Semitic Nazi collaborators. For Philippa, this erasure spoke to a larger issue in popular discourse of German history that erases Afro-Germans and German colonialism from the cultural archive:

> As a person of African descent in Germany, somehow, whatever needs you have when it comes to talking about German involvement in Africa, you are ignored, as you might have noticed. People don't know. People don't want to know…. It's very difficult to address certain issues. So what we do is, we try to address them through art. After this, when I said "No," it was like I was anti-Semitic. What they said then was that I wasn't willing to talk about the fact that People of Color had been anti-Semitic, like the Mufti of Jerusalem. That's why I don't want to [show him in the exhibition?] That's not the point. The point is this is commemoration. We want to commemorate millions of people who died in order to free *you*. Right? This is the issue. The issue is not: Arabs have always been anti-Semitic. They are today and they will be in the future. That's very rude. We're not talking about this now. This wasn't allowed, basically. And insofar this was a very interesting conflict.

Philippa's observation speaks to a larger issue in Germany of equating racism solely to fascism. This in turn makes it extremely difficult to talk about continuing practices of racism outside of the history of World War II; or, conversely, it makes it difficult to have a discussion about why certain racialized groups' histories, related to World War II, are not included in the larger historical narrative.

The outrage Philippa received in response to her refusal to exhibit images and texts hostile toward, and not in commemoration of, colonial African soldiers who fought in the Second World War against Germany was in part a reaction to a perceived reticence to talk about fascism and anti-Semitism. Within a German context, such reticence can quickly be misread for something more sinister, like a neo-fascist or Holocaust denier in the making. This knee-jerk response to a misperceived instance of anti-Semitism echoes Mekonnen's observation in Chapter 2, when discussing the outcry against the language change in *Die Kleine Hexe,* many White Germans feel the constant need to prove that they are not fascists. This response is an emotional one that seems especially heightened when contemporary forms of racism are highlighted and

critiqued. The irony of both situations is that a hypervigilance against displays of fascism or anti-Semitism is not extended to public discussions of other manifestations of racism and white supremacy—for example, in this case, the obfuscation of the role of colonial African soldiers fighting in the war against fascism. This, in part, is why Philippa initially agreed to have Werkstatt der Kulturen exhibit the images for "The Third World in the Second World War."

I return again to Philippa Ebéné's observation of "The Third World in the Second World War" exhibition fall-out to focus on her emphasis on the role of art to address difficult societal issues around the continuing legacies of colonialism and white supremacy in a German context:

> As a person of African descent in Germany, somehow, whatever needs you have when it comes to talking about German involvement in Africa, you are ignored, as you might have noticed. People don't know. People don't want to know…. It's very difficult to address certain issues. So what we do is, we try to address them through art."

At issue here was Werkstatt der Kulturen's aim of highlighting a hidden colonial history interrelated to German history and the Second World War. Experiencing the difficulty of, and resistance to, broaching such a topic and its related conversation of contemporary forms of racism in Germany, Philippa, like others I interviewed, saw art as the most effective vehicle to bring such topics to the forefront. This conclusion is supported and encouraged, in part, by a history of the arts being used as a form of cultural diplomacy in Germany post-1945. This conclusion is also encouraged by the moments when the exhibiting exhibition of art makes a demonstrable impact on communities.

Philippa noted this with a smile and some well-deserved pride in our conversation about some of the events Werkstatt der Kulturen has curated since she became its director. Due to the public outrage and debate over Philippa's refusal to put on "The Third World in the Second World War" exhibit, Philippa decided to continue the conversation of colonialism and race

through art. So, in February during commemorations of The Berlin Conference,[88] Werkstatt der Kulturen produced a series of musical events featuring performers of African descent, workshops, and films about colonialism, called "1884." In recounting the event, Philippa repeatedly highlighted the plurality of identities, histories, and experiences of African-descended people living in Germany:

> I wanted to talk about colonialism I wanted to talk about the German involvement *because* of what had happened the year before. In 2010, people were commemorating 125 years of the Berlin conference, so we invited musicians of African descent: Ghanaians, Congolese, Senegalese, Nigerians and so on, and we held workshops. Two film curators showed films. They would just show films about colonialism, shot during the time of colonialism. Because you need to understand if, say you are a 70-year-old Congolese, you went through colonialism yourself. Your experience with Belgium colonialism is different from what a 20-year-old Ghanaian goes through. So we tried to show different aspects. And different time periods. And this happened here.

Exhibiting the films and bringing in a diverse range of musicians was a recognition of the dynamism of African identities and cultures, a dynamism ignored during the carving up of the African continent for European colonial interests during The Berlin Conference. In the present day, this dynamism, as has been noted earlier in Chapter 1, is so often flattened to one disaggregated, homogenous group called "African." The films invited the public to reflect on and discuss how the meaning of a historical moment, such as colonialism, changes from one generation to the next. Not only was this event a recognition of such changes, it also created a space for passing down histories not central to core educational curricula in Germany or any Western nation.

[88] The Berlin Conference occurred on November 15, 1884 under the leadership of Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, and is widely seen as the formalization between European powers of "The Scramble for Africa," otherwise known as European colonization of the African continent. At the conference, European officials debated and agreed upon which regions of the African continent "belonged" to which European country.

In addition to bringing attention to the history of German colonialism, producing the "1884" event literally created a space within Werkstatt der Kulturen to reflect and centralize the cultural diversity on the African continent, and by association, of Berlin and Germany as well. Philippa noted this:

> And after the sessions the musicians would go downstairs and jam. And they wrote music…People wrote songs. They wrote lyrics. We wanted to make sure that different African languages are heard so we have Twi, we have Zulu, we have Lingala, we have Wolof. We also have Pidgin…we have German, we have French. We have Spanish too, because two Cuban musicians said "well, we're also Africans and we want to participate." So, it was a way of dealing with the fact that German society doesn't want to deal with it and I do think we were able to create a little bit of awareness for the issue….Lots of people didn't know before. And the idea was also to use oral history, and to make this part of what's an African tradition of telling stories through music and song. And I think it worked. I do think it worked.

The event worked, not only because the CD created from the event was still being sold, at the time that we spoke, three years later but also because it had a direct impact on the German educational system. The CD and related exhibition materials were licensed in 2014 by the *Bundeszentral für politisiche Bildung* [The Federal Agency for Civic Education],[89] to create a new school book educating teachers on how to introduce the history of German colonialism in German schools. While many scholars and activist have talked and written for years about German colonialism, it was an art exhibition produced by an institution with a mission to reflect the diversity of Berlin and German society, that brought the discussion into a public realm for continuing dialogues in primary educational settings.

As discussed in the previous section with Jason Benedict, recognition by Berlin officials of the importance of cultural and artistic production as a means to social integration is connected to a larger process of city-making by "placing" Berlin, and by association, Germany within the

[89] The Federal Agency for Civic Education is a German governmental agency set up to provide education on citizenship and political issues for anyone living in Germany.

global world. What is unique about the success of Werkstatt der Kulturen using art to engage the public in difficult conversations is its status as an institution. Although much of Werkstatt der Kulturen's programming revolves around a variety of artistic expression, its official institutional status is as a "space for integration." That is, WdK is not officially an arts space. Philippa discussed the financial challenges Werkstatt der Kulturen faced because of its official status as a non-arts space:

> Technically we are not an art space. Technically we are a space for integration of the "other." *The other* being reintegrated into German society. That makes it even more difficult because that means we don't receive the kind of money that art spaces receive. We receive, we *used* to receive up until this year…730,000 euro from 2006 to 2013, 730,000 a year. From 2010-2013, an additional 270,000 for the Karneval. Which means we received a million for the past three years. For an operation as big as this one, in comparison, the Komische Oper, which is the smallest opera house in Berlin—you have two other bigger ones— the smallest opera house in Berlin receives…30 million, and they find another 5 million. We receive one million. OK? And we find another million if we're lucky. From the next year on it's going to be 23,000 euros less than what we've received so far.

Philippa's discussion of the funding disparities within cultural institutions in Berlin highlights two important features of German funding for cultural production. First, the official status of Werkstatt der Kulturen as a space for "integrating the other," signals a recognition by German officials of the importance of using cultural production as a tool to facilitate macro-level societal relationship building. In this particular example, Werkstatt der Kulturen is officially seen as a cultural space that aids in the social integration of presumed and actual foreigners into Berlin and Germany overall. Placing politics briefly to the side of the problematic semantics with the phrase, "integrating the other," as demonstrated by Werkstatt's well-received programming, utilizing artistic production has been fundamental to achieving this mission.

Germany provides robust funding for the arts and culture, which may in part be related to a history of the arts and cultural production facilitating relationship re-building between

Germany's regional neighbors and the larger international world at the end of World War II. As noted in the previous chapter, this can be seen in cultural events like dOCUMENTA, whose founding mission was to use art to facilitate: the rebuilding of Germany's tarnished image; to rebuilding of Germany's relationships with its regional and international neighbors; the reopening of Germany's cultural institutions after the Third Reich era of cultural isolationism. Funding for culture and arts as a means to cultural diplomacy is also demonstrated through the history of the Goethe Institute, which generously supported the local arts scenes in Nigeria and Ethiopia in the 1960s.[90] Such a history of public funding support for the arts, and a reliance on it as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy, plays out in the present moment where an institution, officially designated as a space for integration, can become a not-quite art space.

The second important feature to highlight in Philippa's discussion of the funding disparities within cultural institutions in Berlin is how official funding mandates both open up and close off possibilities for programming within institutions. Werkstatt der Kulturen produces well-received and award-winning arts-focused events year round to reflect a plurality of cultures in Berlin and Germany. However, as Philippa notes,

> I mean we are not supposed to be an art space. Right, we *use* art, artistic forms, we use *kulturelle Praxis* [cultural practice], as I would say in German, in order to create awareness…We have a weekly concert on Friday, which is called, "World Wide Music," which is global beat music, you know, more African, Middle Eastern, fusions. And Saturday night we have "Naked Jazz" which is a Jazz evening. On Thursdays we have cinema, "World Wide Cinema" series. These are regular events happening every week. It wasn't like that before. Now let's talk about the past. The idea was to create a space where immigrants can come and show their culture.

[90] I give many thanks to Dr. Yvette Mutumba, research curator for Africa at the Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt am Main, for the lesson she provided me about the history of German cultural funding support, especially within the African continent. A more detailed discussion can be found in her dissertation, *(Re)Presentations, Receptions, Expectations: Contemporary Art from Africa and the Diaspora in the German context, 1960s–2011*, published in German as *Die (Re)Präsentation zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst in Deutschland* (Mutumba 2008).

> Now, *nobody* can produce art without money. Nobody. Not even immigrants. So basically the space was used a lot for festivities, you know? Sort of lay people who would present traditional dances from Korea, or the Balkans, or from Senegal but it wasn't an art space in that sense. It was more of a community center that was used. The space was just used. Different people would just use the space. Which is fine. We still do that. Lots of people come and rent the space and we try to help them to organize the event in such a way that it looks good and it looks professional. But it's not...that's a different concept.

Werkstatt der Kulturen is used as a space to hold events for and by the communities it is tasked to serve. Under Philippa's leadership, WdK has served various Berlin communities in a more significant way than when it was established by attempting to broaden German public awareness about the diversity of German culture. WdK has also raised public awareness about erased German histories of violence and how they bear meaning in contemporary society. One is left wondering what more work Werkstatt der Kulturen could do if it was granted access to funding for the arts in ways similar to, for example, an opera house serving a smaller audience and community.

Despite all these challenges with funding and funding mandates, Philippa captured the importance of having literal space within the city of Berlin dedicated to reflecting the plural histories and identities of Germans living in Berlin:

> You get up in the morning and you think "I want to do something that's somehow *sinnvoll*.[91] Otherwise, I'll fall back into bed!" And I do think, creating spaces is an important work. And that's what we do. We create spaces for people who need spaces, because otherwise they would just be made invisible. And that's what we do. And I think it's important to do that still.

Government support for the arts and cultural spaces opens up avenues of dialogue in public spheres that may have otherwise been difficult to institute. As testimonies found in *Farbe bekennen* demonstrated, Afro-Germans and German People of Color continue to find ways to create spaces that can hold the plural parts of themselves, regardless of institutional support.

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[91] Meaningful.

Werkstatt der Kulturen's history, especially under Philippa Ebéné's direction, shows us what can be achieved when an institution consciously works to create in public life a space for plural German identities.

The interviews in this chapter in their unique way help answer the question of "Why Berlin?" as the best place in Germany for Black people in particular, and German People of Color in general, to publically challenge practices of racism and coloniality in Germany. More than being a "poor, but sexy" city, Berlin, in the popular imagination post-1945, has been seen as a space of continual physical reconstruction. Such a notion implicitly invites all who live there to shape the city to fit themselves in ways that are not as welcome in other German cities. Being a city strongly associated with arts and culture, where one can find strong financial support for the arts, places Berlin globally in ways that encourage continual cultural reconstruction. This is because the practice of making art fundamentally is a creative process of building up, taking down, editing, adding, and changing. While this is a process of life in general, and occurs in cities throughout the world, if we focus on Germany, Berlin is the place where a convergence of post-1945 histories of funding, urban structures, and economics produce more space for marginalized people who need it.

Conclusion

On September 5, 2015 the humanitarian crisis of the Syrian Civil War caught the attention of the Western World. That day the picture of the three-year old Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, dead in the arms of a Turkish rescue worker after the boat Alan and his family were on headed toward Greece capsized, quickly circulated social media and news outlets around the world. For three years, Syrian people fled their country's civil war. Neighboring countries Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon struggled to receive and take care of the increasing number of Syrian refugees arriving to their countries. However, it took the image of a dead child to force public acknowledgement of the crisis by Western governments. The impacts of Syria's civil war had reached Europe's front door.

This turn of events also demanded that I address the discourse of migration, immigration, and integration in Europe. During the course of my research, I steadfastly refused to include these topics because I found that they were used to deflect conversations away from the issue of race and racism in contemporary Europe. Furthermore, as Rita Chin points out in her discussion of the history of discourse surrounding Turkish guest workers in Germany, political rhetoric in the 1980s introduced racialized thinking to a German public through a discourse of culture (Chin 2009: 93). Similarly, I found that talking about culture, as it related to integration, engendered a social acceptance of saying openly racist things about groups of people perceived as migrants to Germany and other parts of Europe. Furthermore, as demonstrated by the October and November 2005 French riots, and the *Strolling* series produced by Black British filmmaker, Cecil Emeke, second and third generation Black Europeans and Europeans of color were marginalized from the societies they were born into for reasons other than failure to integrate into the mainstream culture. Therefore, rather than talk about religion, or culture, or immigration, I found it best to

focus on the shape and contours of continuing ideologies and practices of race in German and European society.

However, the varied responses to the increased presence of Syrian refugees in European countries illustrated the necessity of incorporating the topic of immigration into my overall research about coloniality and race in Europe. While some governments, like Germany and Greece, welcomed (to various degrees) Syrian refugees, other countries, like Austria, Hungary, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Croatia, further destabilized the identity of the European Union by closing their borders to asylum seekers. Other countries initiated practices that echoed the history of Germany's National Socialist party which challenged the regions assertion that Europe's countries would never repeat the mistakes of the past. For example, in 2016 Denmark's parliament voted to confiscate cash exceeding $1,450 from newly arrived refugees; a law reminiscent of Germany's Nuremberg Laws which legalized the confiscation of property of Jewish residents forced into concentration camps.[92] Or, as was seen in Czech refugee camps, where officials wrote numbers on Syrian refugees forced to reside in hastily constructed securitized and privatized refugee camps while awaiting decision on their asylum applications, an act eerily reminiscent of the tattooing of Jewish prisoners at Nazi death camps.[93]

In Cologne, Germany, during 2015 New Year's Eve festivities, public reaction to, and coverage of, the reported sexual assaults of women stoked fears and heightened a pervasive discourse about the seeming incompatibility of cultures between Europeans and certain

[92] For more information, see Al Jazeera English article, "(Danish MPs Approve Seizing Valuables from Refugees - Al Jazeera English n.d.)

[93] For more information see New York Times article, "Number of Refugees Brings Outcry" (Bilefsky 2015).

immigrants.[94] This was, and is, particularly true about immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa, who are often homogenized under the religious category "Muslim." Such discourse, in turn, provided extra rhetorical fodder for ultra-conservative, nationalist, and white supremacist political parties—like Germany's newly formed Alternative for Germany Party, and France's National Front—that have gained more parliamentary seats in local and national elections in the last two years.[95]

This rise in popularity of European nationalist parties was also fueled by increased fears sparked by the recent terrorist attacks on November 13, 2015 in Paris, and on March 22, 2016 in Brussels. These violent attacks continued to fuel the arguments that by letting immigrants from certain parts of the world enter Europe, European countries are also letting in violence and terror. Such discourse, along with talk about the "incompatibility of cultures" between newly arrived refugees and European culture, signals an entrenchment of a racialized logics of culture in public European discourse. It also demonstrates even more why a critical race theory situated within European history is needed now, more than ever. What rarely made the news in the days, weeks, and months after the Paris and Brussels terrorist attacks was the reactions of Europeans of color.

A few months after the November 2015 Paris attacks, I spoke with Aicha, a good friend of mine living in Berlin. A native Afro-German Berliner in her 30s, Aicha discussed how many Afro-Germans she knew stayed in their apartments after the terrorist attacks, out of fear that they would be the targets of individual hate crimes toward "foreigners." As someone who had lived in

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[94] Some news outlets either implied, or stated, that these attackers were Middle Eastern and North African men, and were the result of increased numbers of migrants to Germany. See BBC news article (Germany Shocked by Cologne New Year Gang Assaults on Women 2016); Washington Post news article, "(Leaked Document Says 2,000 Men Allegedly Assaulted 1,200 German Women on New Year's Eve n.d.); and Deutsche Welle news article "Over 1,200 women assaulted in Germany on New Year's Eve" ((www.dw.com) n.d.).

[95] As of 2016, AfD has 104 lawmakers in half of Germany's state parliaments.

Berlin before and after 1989, Aicha discussed how the energy in Berlin to her felt very similar to the energy she felt in the early 1990s—soon after reunification—right before increased hate crimes against Black people and other People of Color began.

For many, the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe signals the failure of diplomacy to help end the current Syrian war, and the failure of policy within Western governments to adequately and humanely attend to the needs of Syrian people fleeing the conflict in their country. This moment in time, however, as reflected in Aicha's observations, and in distinctions made by European politicians, and repeated in the media, between "economic refugees" and "war refugees," is also a harbinger of the future repeating the past if Europe does not engage in a sustained critical discourse about the continuing legacies of racism in European society. If this does not occur, Europe will see an increased perpetuation of the racial marginalization—obfuscated through a discourse of culture and religion— of specific groups of people in Europe. The dynamic nature of race as a social construct indicates the need for a more specific term to talk about the issues at hand in Europe; discussing coloniality may be the most productive term by which to enter this discourse. It can better help us articulate the nuanced complexities of contemporary expressions of racial ideologies in Europe as a form of social control and exclusion. Furthermore, talking in terms of coloniality calls for a recognition of, and reckoning with, Europe's colonial past in ways that go beyond just talking about race; it also provides us with an understanding of how such histories presently impact Europe and its former colonies.

Coloniality as a term and framework de-centers and destabilizes the conversation about race and racism from popularly perceived "fixed" points in history. It allows for an analysis of how the societal structuring grammar of Western societies is dynamically maintained over time to mark new groups as disposable, and others as essential to society. Additionally, thinking in

terms of coloniality allows for a more nuanced examination of why certain groups of people in Europe are forever marked "foreign." It also allows for a more nuanced analysis of the underpinnings of recent agitations to leave the European Union—Brexit as the most recent example— that extend beyond economics.

Here, I return to my 2013 interview with Noa Ha to underscore this point further. Reflecting on the European Union, before Brexit and before the Syrian refugee humanitarian crisis in Europe, Noa shared her thoughts on the future of the EU and its impact on people of color:

> I do expect it in the next 10 or 20 years, that there will be a civil rights movement in Europe because now you have all [this] post-colonial migration coming to Europe. You have all [these] colonial subjects living in the metropoles, and I think until now, it's still this "diversity" regime, [which] is kind of calming down [all] the protests. But, if you look at the refugee protests, they're getting louder…if you look at the European borders and what's going on [there]… and I'm kind of skeptical about, what would happen to the European Union? I think at the moment, as long as we have the European Union, it's kind of *holding* it. It's also kind of preventing the nations to fall back into nationalist discourses. But if you look at the last two, three years…it's really horrifying to see that the fascists are really high [in votes]. …So you really have to go back to, what is the European Union about? And if it is all about changing the money between the rich one and the poor one? That we here in Germany are well off it's because Spain, Italy, and Greece are where they are, but nobody is talking about it in this way.
>
> And so…on one hand, I see there is…a major financial crisis coming up. I do think so. And on the other hand…many colonial subjects, like me, are kind of in a well-off position. I've chosen to critically reflect on who I am, but I also see many people who have a job and who have families and they are like, "Well, we have kind of racism but I don't want to question it." That I can understand, but still it's this privileged position. And perhaps one day if it crumbles and many people are losing their privileges then they will come out and struggle…But that's what I see that's a very big [difference] between the United States and Europe, that until now there is no civil rights movement, because there was no need to. But times have changed and to me it's also the process of decolonization because decolonization is not over. It's not over.

When Noa referenced refugee protests in our discussion, she was referring primarily to African refugees and migrants in Berlin who at the time were protesting the terms of their asylum applications and the conditions of the detention centers in which they were forced to reside.

Their grievances, protests, and challenges regarding settling into Europe society, by and large, have not captured the global mainstream media's attention the way Syrian refugees have, despite similarities in obstacles to receiving asylum in Europe. In 2016, Noa Ha's comment seems prescient in questioning what impact increased non-White immigrant and refugee movement across and into European borders would have on the European Union project.

Noa's comment also points me in the direction of questions to explore for future research, specifically as it relates to Blackness in this discussion of coloniality. In previous chapters, I briefly touched on theoretical discussions that frame coloniality as predicated on anti-Black racism where Blackness symbolized an abject position of social death. Noa's comment, however, demonstrates that this concept of social death is not fully mappable to the German, and possibly, Western European context. As Noa implies through her discussion of being a colonial subject in a well-off position, having a strong social welfare system in Germany and other Western European countries signals the reality of the social reproduction of Black life. Meaning, the social reproduction of Blackness as a space of abjection cannot fully hold true if one has, for example, a German passport that entitles one to the full range of housing, health, education, and employments services offered by the state.

Noa saw a connection between material resources and challenges to racism. In this formulation, the assault on the material and social life of Black Americans is what lead to the Civil Rights Movement. Noa sees the relative material comfort that People of Color—who she terms as colonial subjects—who hold passports from European nations, as the reason why there have not been widespread movements in Europe challenging practices of racism. She points to the decline of financial stability across Europe as the tipping point that breaks the relative silence on hierarchal ideas and practices of race within the region. I will add that it is not just this social

insecurity brought on by economics, but also its confluence with the current mass movement of displaced people from Middle Eastern countries into Europe forcing a public reckoning with an implicit and accepted racialized construction of European identity.

Returning, then, to the conversation of Blackness as social death, I argue that this concept is not easily mappable onto the German or European context because even if a Black person experiences racism in Germany and experiences being forever marked as foreign to Germany, the fact of their Blackness does not set into motion perceptions that translate into structural barriers to social protection and care. I realize that this statement may be met with forceful criticisms from Afro-Germans and Afro-Europeans. I welcome such potential challenges to this statement because it is one decidedly informed by an American perspective where readily available access to a strong public social welfare system is not assumed. Growing up within a context where public support of social services is not the norm, and is in fact stigmatized as enabling laziness; in a cultural context where reliance on public support is construed as a sign of one lacking in morals because they are poor; my above statement is informed by seeing how such divestment from public services disproportionately negatively impacts the social reproduction of Black life in ways that I did not see occurring in Germany. This points to a need for deeper work, that is both comparative and relational in nature, about the material life of Black Americans and Afro-Germans.

In this dissertation, I focused in part on the material conditions in Berlin that allow for sustained challenges there to societal racism through artistic cultural production. Moving forward, engaging in a comparative analysis of the material life of both Black Americans and Afro Germans, past and present, might provide greater insight into the conditions that allow for robust citizen engagement in working for racial social justice. The hope is that in so doing, such

scholarship would add to those already doing the work of widening further transnational dialogues between Afro-Germans, Afro-Europeans and Black Americans. Such dialogues could deepen analysis of successes of, and challenges to, anti-racist social justice work being done in both regions. For example, what valuable lessons could Black Americans learn by engaging with an Afro-German history of socio-political activism decidedly informed by women of color feminist theory?

Such transnational dialogues would also bring into sharper focus the nuances, strengths, and limits of analytically thinking about Blackness as an object of knowledge. Theorizing Blackness as an object of analysis, rather than focusing on comparative experiences and histories of Blackness, allows for a more productive analysis and critique of both notions of the Human, and contemporary structures and forms of governance informed by a global capitalist economy. However, it is imperative that we attend to the distinguishing line between how we talk about Blackness/anti-Blackness, and how it is lived. The theory and practice of Blackness/anti-Blackness often do not easily map over each other. One of the goals of theorizing Blackness as an object of knowledge is a divestment from the terms by which we define the Human, which are currently rooted in the specifics of history, geography, and culture. The ultimate aim, then, is to have an emancipatory conception of what it means to be human that does not reify a hierarchical ideology of humanity as valid/invalid, essential/disposable, free/bonded. If we are to continue working toward an emancipatory conception and practice of humanity, and a full embrace of Blackness, our theoretical work has to be cautious of the allure of universalizing theories. Instead, our work within this conceptual model of Blackness, strengthened by transnational dialogues and ethnographic research, can further create the space for holding together multiple forms and ways of being and thinking in the world.

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Fig.1. *Blackface* 2.0. Berlin Sony Center. 2012. Image: Author

Fig. 2. *Te Koop*/The Blues. Record Store. Amsterdam. 2013. Image: Author

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Fig. 3. *Really Strong. Really Good.* Viva Coffee Advertisement. Vienna. 2014. Image: Author

Fig. 4. *Sweet for the Ladies. Strong for the Men.* Viva Coffee Advertisement. Vienna. 2014. Image: Author

Fig. 5. *Ein Hauch von Afrika*/A Touch of Africa. Viva Coffee Advertisement. Vienna. 2014. Image: Author

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Fig. 7. *Batsheba at her Toilet* by Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem. Rijks Museum. Amsterdam. 2013. Image: Author.

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Fig. 8. Meinl Kaffee Vintage advertisement. Source: http://www.heartofireland.eu/drinks/coffee/meinl-kaffee.html

Fig. 9. Meinl Kaffee. Vienna. 2014. Image: Author.

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Fig. 10. Sarotti Candy. Train Station Neighborhood Advertisement. Berlin. 2013. Image: Author.

Fig. 11. Sarotti Candy old advertisement. Circa 1920s. Source: Barbara Schwarz https://barbaraschwarz.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/schipper_premium_sarotti-mohr.gif

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Les têtes de nègres devenues les "merveilleux" ou les "incroyables" à Lille
Le changement de nom ne change pas le passé colonial de la France

Fig. 12. *Tête du Negre: The Change of Name Doesn't Change the Colonial Past of France.* 2012. Source: Raphael.afrikablog.com

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Fig. 13. Bardinet's La Negrita Rum Vintage Advertisement. Circa 1920s Paris. Bought in 2014. Image: Author

Fig. 14. Bardinet's La Negrita Rum New Advermtisement. 2010. Source: https://mir-s3-cdn-cf.behance.net/project_modules/max_1200/db033314800657.562891e7524a4.jpg

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Fig. 15: Advertisements for Drindls and Lederhosen. Frankfurt. 2014. Image: Author.

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Fig. 16. *"Zum kleinen Mohr"* Kreuzberg Bar. Berlin. 2013. Image: Author.

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Fig. 17. *"Mohrenstraße"*. Berlin Street Sign. 2008. Image: Joachim Zeller. Source: http://www.freiburg-postkolonial.de/pics/2008-Zeller-Mohrenstr.jpg

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Fig. 18. Statue Seats, Dahlem-Dorf U-bahn station. Berlin. 2014. Image: Author.

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Fig. 19. Building Blackamoors. Krakow. 2013. Image: Author

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Fig. 20. *L'Entrepôt du Congo* / Congo Warehouse. Antwerp. 2013. Image: Author.

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Fig. 21. "Congo Way". Antwerp. 2013. Image: Author.

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Fig. 22. Colonial Wax Figures. Bonifacious Cornelis de Jonge (Left). Amsterdam. 2011. Image: Author

Fig. 23. Colonial Wax Figures. Toen ("Meneer") Anwar. Amsterdam. 2011. Image: Author

Fig. 24. Colonial Wax Figures. Raden Adjeng Kartini. Amsterdam. 2011. Image: Author

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Fig. 25. Ceremonial Masks. Origins unknown by Author. Royal Museum for Central Africa. Tervuren. 2013. Image: Author

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Fig. 26. Figurative sculpture. Curatorial text not provided. Royal Museum for Central Africa.Tervuren. 2013. Image: Author

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Fig. 27. *Les Anioto* Figurative sculpture. Royal Museum for Central Africa. Tervuren. 2013. Image: Author

Fig. 28. *Vuakusu Batetela Defends a Woman from an Arab.* Charles Samuel figurative group created for the Colonial Exhibition of 1897. Royal Museum for Central Africa. Tervuren. 2013. Image: Author

Fig. 29. Henry Morton Stanley Display. Revolver. Royal Museum for Central Africa. Tervuren. 2013. Image: Author

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Fig. 30. Henry Morton Stanley Display. Drawings. Royal Museum for Central Africa. Tervuren. 2013. Image: Author

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Fig. 31. Colonization and Decolonization Exhibition. Royal Museum for Central Africa. Tervuren. 2013. Image: Author

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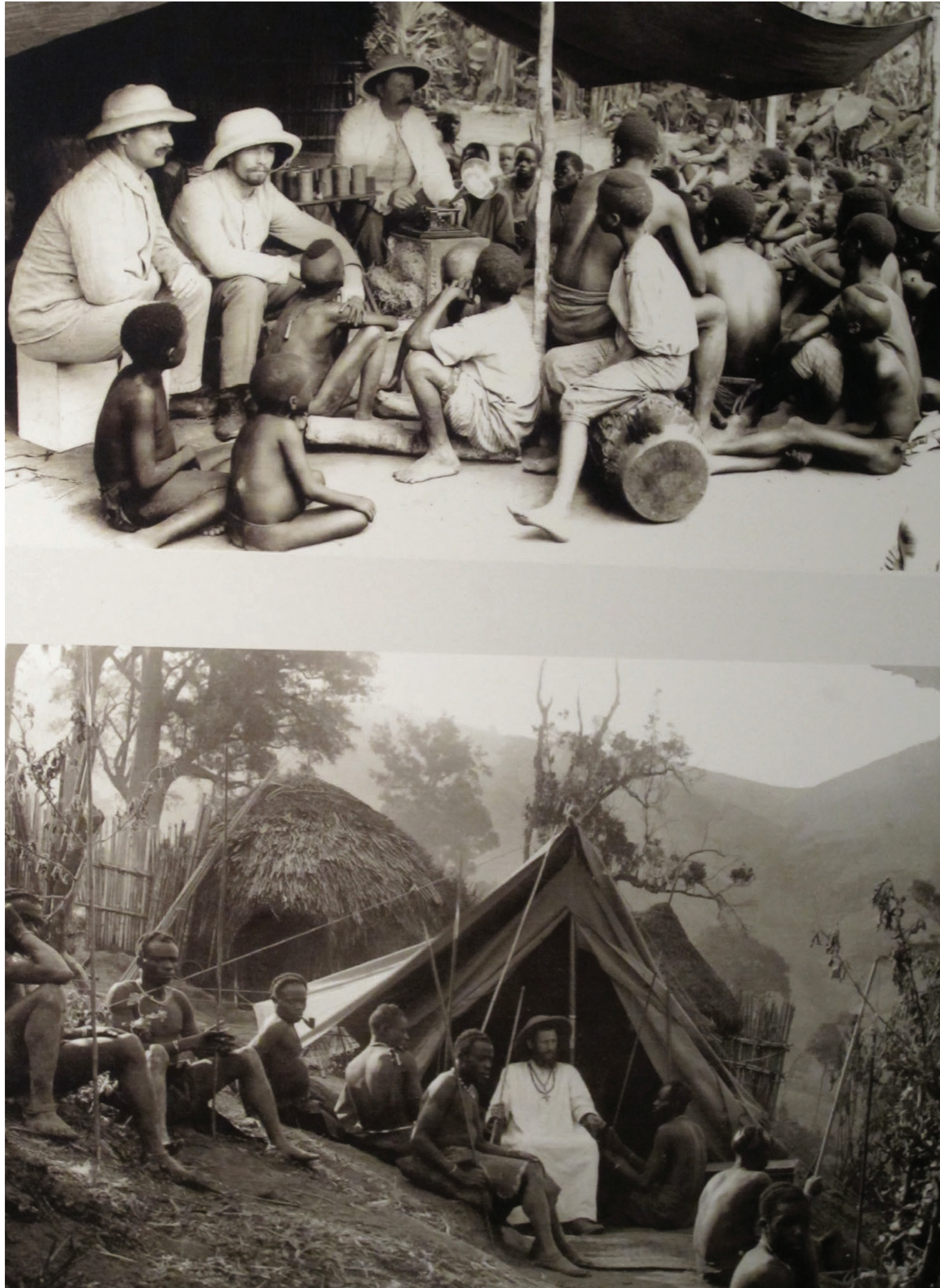

Fig. 32. Colonization and Decolonization Exhibition. Colonial Civil Servants and Missionaries. Royal Museum for Central Africa. Tervuren. 2013.
Image: Author

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Fig. 33. Family in Tempelhof Park. 2010. Image: Author

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