Locating African European Studies

Drawing on a rich lineage of anti-discriminatory scholarship, art, and activism, Locating African European Studies engages with contemporary and historical African European formations, positionalities, politics, and cultural productions in Europe.

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- African European social and historical formations
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Locating African European Studies features innovative transdisciplinary research, and will be of interest to students and scholars of various fields, including Black Studies, Critical Whiteness Studies, African American Studies, Diaspora Studies, Postcolonial Studies, African Studies, History, and Social Sciences.

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Locating African European Studies
Interventions, Intersections, Conversations

Edited by Felipe Espinoza Garrido, Caroline Koegler, Deborah Nyangulu, and Mark U. Stein
To the future, African, European, and African European children.
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This edited collection originated in a conference held at the University of Münster in September 2015, Afroeuropeans: Black Cultures and Identities in Europe V (16.–19.9.2015, www.wwu.de/AFROEU2015). It was the fifth biennial conference by the eponymous research network, and we are grateful for the support of all network members, a number of whom have contributed to this book. All involved in the conference deserve our heartfelt gratitude, most of all our amazing co-convener Ismahan Wayah, as well as the staff at the English Department, particularly Jeyapriya Foster, Markus Schmitz, and Silke Stroh. We would also like to thank all our student assistants and student volunteers: Lena Böse, Cristina Trifon-Calvopiña, Anika Gerfer, Björn Hoppe, Marco Kotwasinski, Nora Langenfurth, Jan-Christoph Maass, Ricarda Ott, Chip Rubino, Malte Schilling, Nikolas Schöneck, Noemi Schreiner, Camille Vianey, Julian Wacker, David Wilson, and Elisabeth Zimmermann. We’d also like to acknowledge the valuable comments and suggestions on an early draft of the Introduction received from the following members of the PTTS colloquium: Markus Schmitz, Silke Stroh, Julian Wacker, Cristina Trifon-Calvopiña, Theresa Krampe, and Mathaabe Schick.

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Introduction
African European studies as a critique of contingent belonging

Felipe Espinoza Garrido, Caroline Koegler, Deborah Nyangulu, and Mark U. Stein

“I am only a lodger—and hardly that.”

Ignatius Sancho ([1782] 1998, 177)

“Oh my God, I’ve done it.” I kept repeating to myself, over and over: “I’ve done it. I’ve won.” All around me the crowd is going wild. Suddenly it hits me: I am a double Olympic champion. I have gone where no British distance runner has gone before.

Mo Farah (2013, 3)

In late March 2015, the world-famous athlete and two-time Olympic gold medallist Mo Farah set a new European record at the Lisbon Half Marathon. Taking a mere 59 minutes and 32 seconds for the 13.1-mile distance, Farah bested the previous record—in place since 2001—by a whopping 20 seconds. However, by Monday evening it was apparent that Farah’s feat would be mediated through a contested, racialised lens. British newspapers of varied ideological leanings, including The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Scotsman, and The Daily Mail, moved on from Farah’s success story to the claim by the previous record holder, Spanish Fabián Roncero, that “what was broken in Lisbon is a record for Somalia” as opposed to Europe (Atkinson 2015; see also Ingle 2015b; Bloom 2015; “Mo Farah” 2015). Roncero’s remark aimed at the fact that Farah, who self-identifies as British and holds UK citizenship (Betts 2018), was born in Mogadishu and moved to Britain at the age of 8. Thus, in Roncero’s opinion, Farah could not be considered European, for nationality is immutable, as Roncero told the same paper.¹ Roncero’s challenge of the validity of Farah’s self-identification and the cogency of his nationality effectively marks Farah’s belonging to Europe as contingent. Contingent belonging is mobilised here at an individual level, between two athletes, and yet it is a strategy that draws on a structural asymmetry between these two European men; Roncero is discursively positioned to question Farah’s status as a British citizen on account of his birthplace and his race.

This example is striking not only because it suggests the centrality of essentialisation and racialisation for Europe’s dominant narrations of self,
but also because it is only one of many such instances in Farah’s career. Earlier in 2015, Farah had become involved in a similar public disagreement when his teammate, Andy Vernon, joked about being the true European champion after Farah surpassed him in the 10,000 metres in 2014 (Ingle 2015a). When Farah severed his ties with Vernon, he was called unsportsmanlike, while Vernon insisted that his own racist remarks had been made in jest. In the months before that, as Afua Hirsch has recently pointed out (2018), British Farah had “immediately become ‘Somali-born Farah’” after his coach was embroiled in an alleged doping scandal. These events involving Farah show how European publics engender and naturalise normative whiteness while subjecting people of colour, irrespective of their social status or class, to a politics of contingent belonging—a conditional belonging that is strategically granted and revoked, meted out by “white Europe” when useful to its own interests. Those who dare challenge normative whiteness and contest racism are easily disparaged as maladjusted to European culture (see Farah’s alleged lack of sportsmanship) and subjected to various forms of racial violence. In this way, Farah’s experiences are not exceptional; there exist countless similar examples of race, nationality, religion, and/or cultural origins being mobilised against individuals and against entire groups of people. Moreover, this politics of contingent belonging is wielded not just by individuals; instead, Europe’s public institutions (including media organisations, sports governing bodies, publishers, the education sector), the state, and supranational powers (the EU) also employ it. Ultimately, Farah’s example renders visible social structures that perpetuate Europe’s historically hegemonic mis-representation of itself as a place where, to paraphrase Paul Gilroy, Europe and white are synonymous (2004, xii). It betrays a deeply biased, discriminatory, and volatile episteme that governs who can belong in Europe and under which conditions.

While white supremacist self-imagination does not hold up to analytical scrutiny, it nevertheless remains a very influential European identity narrative. We use the formulation white supremacist advisedly to recognise the systemic and long-enduring exclusionary mechanisms of European social construction. These mechanisms are deeply intertwined with the epistemic and ontological violence of European imperialisms and Europe’s initiation of the Atlantic slave trade, both of which were justified with a racism that couched Europe in myths of white superiority. Historically, white Europeans have often, particularly since the colonial conquests of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, sought to construct Europe in opposition to Black “Others”, and as Philomena Essed et al. argue, this “centralisation of Whiteness in notions of belonging and the construction of the European as the universal human, marginalises Blackness in particular” (2019, v). Commenting on the context of slavery in North America, bell hooks notes how the collective power that white people historically asserted over Black people in a white supremacist society
allowed the former to be associated with an illusory dominance and to assume charge of the regime of (visual) representations—the gaze—that controls and defines (1992). A comparable dynamic has long been at play in Europe, where nativist constructions of supposedly homogeneous white societies have sought to control imaginations and representations of Europe, attempting to reproduce white people as the autochthonous dominant race while seeking to normalise the white gaze as the defining source for pronouncing on racial identities and policing racialised bodies. Today, when not marked by open hostility, debates frequently perpetuate what Fatima El-Tayeb has called an “ideology of colorblindness” (2011, xxiv). As she suggests, open racialisation in Europe is often connected with casting “Europeans of Colour” as migrants, “permanently frozen in the moment of arrival” (2014, 76). In turn, experiences of those of a second- or third-generation post-migration are rendered “peculiar” and “impossible” in their existences (2011, 167), as white European ideology does not cope with the status of someone “racially different” yet not “only just arrived”.

While the dynamics of contingent belonging can be identified in unequivocal terms in the events involving Mo Farah, they also point to ambivalence and paradox, simultaneously relying on a “rhetoric of diversity and racial inclusion” (see Thompson, this volume) and on sustained racialising and othering discourses. Thereby, though foregrounding diversity and diversity management strategies, the politics of contingent belonging can render racial as well as other kinds of difference invisible as it reinforces a flawed narrative of white homogeneity and entitlement (Kessé, this volume). Contingent belonging thus perpetuates the myth that the non-white Other is alien to Europe, fuelling anxieties and distrust towards those who are not visibly—or do not identify as—white. When appropriated in debates of migration, as is wont to happen, these politics reinscribe migration as a recent phenomenon that threatens the order of Europe. However, the Janus-faced nature of contingent belonging implies that it must account for its interests, mainly comprising intertwined nationalist and economic concerns, and make a cursory nod to multiracialism—including rendering racial diversity visible and acceptable when the need arises.

In addition to this understanding of contingent belonging as symptomatic of white hegemony, it is significant that, taken to its logical conclusion, contingent belonging has a radically de-essentialising capacity. “I am only a lodger—and hardly that,” writes Ignatius Sancho in 1779 ([1782] 1998, 177), signalling the long durée of another, potentially more empowering and resistant kind of contingent belonging that rests on self-positioning. Sancho here uses the notion of contingency from below as part of a deliberately chosen identity politics, foregrounding not only the oppressiveness of a deeply racist colonial society but also a scope for agency and self-determination by rejecting the need to “properly” belong.
in a white hegemonic society. These incompatible and yet mutually constituting forces at the core of contingent belonging form the basis of the politics of contingent belonging’s own unmaking, creating frictions that have the potential to loosen the grip of racism, and opening up spaces for pluralised and fluctuating identity narratives that challenge whiteness and nativism. Where part of strategic self-positioning, contingency can serve to counter a kind of belonging that is tied to a particular nation or community and is presented as imperative or desirable from positions of power. It counters belonging that is bestowed benevolently, or not, by state authorities, communities, and/or individuals, and commonly on condition of conforming to certain images or identities that are confining or discriminatory. In this way, contingency from below has a “defiant” (Puwar 2007, 204) potential that de-essentialises, diversifies, and resists congealed identities, thus also producing what El-Tayeb calls “peculiar”. Such strategic forms of contingent belonging thus also draw attention to the inherent instability and uncanniness of the racist compartmentalisation and hierarchisation that resides at the core of European white supremacist self-definitions, rendering impossible the certainty of perceiving Europe in unequivocally racial, nativist, and/or identitarian terms.

Following a significant body of studies that have explored the rich history of African Europeans, this collection starts from the premise that Africa and Europe have a long history of contact, albeit steeped in asymmetrical power relations. For the longest time and for a wide variety of reasons—foremost among them, European colonialisms—Europeans have made their lives in Africa while Africans have made their lives in Europe. Indeed, the rich, intertwined histories of migration, transmigration, and colonialism in and across the Mediterranean go right back to antiquity, signalling a level of diversity and complex power relations that are being gradually re-discovered (Zuchtriegel 2018; Isayef 2017; Garland 2014; Malkin 2011). The customary homogenisation and whitening of these African European histories is a good example of Achille Mbembe’s more general observation that history has largely been written from a Eurocentric point of view, with the Global North wielding an “unparalleled hegemony” (2017) in defining categories of thought, especially around human mobility. Accordingly, in the archives, Europeans appear with epithets such as adventurer, discoverer, explorer, missionary, and educator; today, there are new epithets, including aid worker, donor, volunteer, philanthropist, expatriate, and investor, which, though semantically different, still retain celebratory, superioristic, and saviourist connotations. We point to these histories and entrenched rhetorical strategies that draw on the language of conquest, exploitation, extraction, and empire in order to flag the countervailing forces that aid white nationalism. These kinds of rhetorical strategies are central to the politics of contingent belonging, a politics that hinges upon the denial of both the multiple, complex histories of African
Europeans and the knowledge proffered by decolonial thinking while it also systematically excludes and discourages awareness of Europe’s imperial histories. Crude simplifications along binary lines and decontextualisations also play a central role. In Farah’s case, belonging is repeatedly situated between the poles of “European” (or sometimes: “British”) and “Somali”, significantly misrepresenting both his biography and the politics of national belonging and unbelonging in the Horn of Africa. In his autobiography, Farah not only stresses that he moved to Djibouti with his family at the age of 4 but also nuances and recontextualises his upbringing and identification as Somali:

It’s been written that I was born and raised in Somalia. Strictly speaking, this isn’t true. While I was born in Mogadishu, the capital in the south of the country, I spent the early part of my childhood growing up in Somaliland, the area to the north of the country[,] and although it’s not recognised by the UN, to all intents and purposes, Somaliland is an independent country and claims ownership of land roughly the size of England. Somaliland has its own currency—the Somaliland shilling—it’s own police force, and its own capital, Hargeisa. It even has its own flag (horizontal green, white and red stripes with Arabic script across the top bar).

(2013, 7–8)

In drawing a distinction between Somalia and Somaliland, Farah invites us to understand history in differentiated terms, including the complex geopolitical (re)configurations of power around European colonial borders. Drawing our attention to the unfinished process of decolonisation, he requires us to note borders that continue to shift irrespective of regional and cultural identities, making forced diasporic movements inevitable. Farah further points to the need to resolve conflicts resulting from borders instituted solely to fit Europe’s interests, which continue to preclude cohabitation, free movement, and equitable sharing of resources on both a regional as well as a global scale. He invites us to see how subjectivities and rules governing current mobility, belonging, and citizenship cannot be separated from Western powers’ balkanisation of the globe. For instance, inasmuch as struggle over territory in Somalia involves both local and international actors, the conditions for the region’s instability, and in fact the multiple borders that Farah’s biography criss-crosses, can be traced back to Somalia’s dispossession by European colonial powers:

In 1886, Great Britain established a protectorate in northern Somalia, installing a system of indirect rule. By 1900, France had claimed French Somaliland (current-day Djibouti) and Italy had established a colony in the South, while Ethiopia expanded eastwards to assert sovereignty over the ethnically Somali Ogaden region. Italy established
a colony in southern Somalia, with direct administration, Italian settlers, and, from the 1930s, elements of fascism. Britain’s colony in Kenya, meanwhile, claimed ethnic Somali areas in the north (today’s Northern Frontier District of Kenya, or NFD).

(Arieff 2008, 64)

What is at stake, therefore, is not primarily individual identities and forms of belonging, as in the case of Farah, but also their entanglement in historical and systemic processes that are rooted in imperialist dynamics. Farah’s autobiography is an important intervention not least because press reports customarily omit the history of European imperialism, its contribution to displacement, and the creation of precarity in countries that migrants are compelled to leave behind. Challenging European politics of contingent belonging, including how discursive and, as a corollary, material power is wielded over marginalised others, continues to be central to African European scholarship. It is because of this, and because African presences in Europe have made social, cultural, economic, and spiritual contributions to the very fabric of Europe for millennia, that Africans in Europe must not be reduced to victimhood. Instead, just as the consequences of Europe’s colonial endeavours in Africa need foregrounding in European discourses, the critical contributions made to these discourses and societies by African European scholars and activists are in need of further mainstreaming. Accordingly, the work collected here is part of a larger project intent on locating African and Black knowledges and experiences squarely within research and public discourses on Europe, engaging with the agents and institutions producing such knowledges.10

It is for this purpose that we consider African European studies not primarily as an academic discipline (although it is that, too) but rather as a diverse set of practices—by artists and writers, activists and students, academics and experts, and many others—whose projects and aims are often inspired by countering and contesting forces of contingent belonging in a variety of contexts. At a conference on this topic, held in Münster in 2015,11 Black and white mothers and fathers spoke about raising children of mixed parentage; Muslim university students discussed their attempts to decolonise and make relevant their syllabi; political activists described their demands, strategies, and aims; writers, artists, and filmmakers discussed the production and reception of their work—all sharing their knowledge with conference delegates. Many of the papers collected in this volume originated at this conference, while others have been specially commissioned; all share the view that knowledge production comes in a wide variety of forms and idioms, often contesting the notion that its legitimacy is dependent on academic validation. Academic knowledge production in Europe gives rise to a specialised set of viewpoints and approaches, and these frequently, and structurally, reproduce mechanisms of (racial) exclusion
Introduction

(cf. e.g. Arghavan et al. 2019; Arday and Mirza 2018; Gabriel 2017; Palmer 2016; Peters 2015; Aslan 2017; Machold and Mecheril 2013, Kilomba 2010, 25–38). When this collection thus seeks to deepen cooperation and conversation between contributors of different backgrounds and across institutional lines, this is not least because, as Karim Fereidooni argues here, the vast majority of white researchers in Europe are complicit in the perpetuation of racial bias. In a recent roundtable discussion on race, class, and gender imbalances in German academia, Kien Nghi Ha spoke of the European academy’s “policies of externalisation”, by which analyses of racism target a wide range of extra-academic contexts without engaging with the fundamental biases of knowledge production that underlie the university (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2016, 162). As Ha stresses, the very objects of study—what is deemed relevant or problematic, what is regarded worthy of academic debate—are still filtered through the lens of white subjectivity, a lens that is itself both informed and formed by the pervasive power structures of coloniality (162; cf. also Kilomba 2010, 27). The work of activist and academic Emily Ngubia Kessé (e.g. Kuria [Kessé] 2015 and in this volume) drives home the extent to which the German university system, including its structures and staff, perpetuates racism; learning about the experience of Britain’s first Black and Minority Ethnic Students’ Officer, Shanell Johnson, enables a perspective on the entrenched mechanisms of racial exclusion at work in an academic setting that fashions itself as fairly diverse. Inspired by practices in Black studies, diaspora studies, and related fields (e.g. Andrews 2018; BDG Network 2018; Small 2018; Glynn 2016; Diedrich and Heinrichs 2011), and strategically blurring the boundaries between academia, art, and activism, this publication seeks, among other things, to contribute to the ongoing process of critical reflection and assessment on academia in different national contexts.

Since the conference in Münster in 2015, the socio-political landscape in Europe has shifted. While contingent belonging, racism, and white supremacy are deeply ingrained in European societies, there has been a resurgences of a more flagrant form of populism that has become increasingly normalised and legitimised. From Marine Le Pen to Viktor Orbán, from FPÖ to Vox, an increasing number of well-connected individuals, movements, and parties are hankering after pernicious fictions of a white Europe (cf. also Small 2018, 91–96). Yet it would be a misconception to position the politics of contingent belonging, which are clearly energising these hankerings, as the exclusive property of the political right. These politics are supported across the political spectrum. Italy’s former government is a pertinent example here, a short-lived coalition between the right-wing populist “League” and the centre-left “Five Star Movement”, which has become notorious for its populist, anti-European, anti-immigration, and anti-intellectual stance. Paradoxically, the leader of the Five Star Movement, Luigi Di Maio, who also served as the Deputy Prime Minister of Italy, recently and publicly condemned France
for neocolonialism—for exploiting and creating precarity in 14 African states, thereby forcing citizens of these countries to migrate to Europe. This admission of French neocolonial practices by a high-ranking European official signals the extent to which populist anti-migration leaders, who regularly pursue racist and anti-immigrant politics, will appropriate discourses of decolonisation in order to discredit political rivals and gain power at home. While Di Maio’s comments are not made with Africa’s interests at heart, they draw attention to the long-standing neocolonial power structures wielded in Europe, and not only by France. Neocolonialism, which Kwame Nkrumah (1965) characterised as “the last stage of imperialism”, continues to influence European political and economic interest in Africa, and Di Maio’s comments ultimately draw us to understand the longevity of these structures and their continuing effects.

It is in direct response and resistance to such current politics that this collection pursues inquiries and analyses, perspectives and stories that add to a canon of academic work questioning the validity of imagining a white, culturally homogenous, neatly delineated Europe. It participates in a counter-discursive movement that, at its very core, seeks to undermine binary conceptions of “Africa” and “Europe”. Given the long history of this counter-discursive project in activism and scholarship, and the diversity of its actors, the title of this collection refers neither to a precisely defined field nor to a single and clearly identifiable group of writers, thinkers, or activists; it refuses a generic disciplinary location. Instead, the collection treats African European studies as a generative space of critical exchange as well as an analytical framework that serves to articulate and investigate African European configurations where and when they arise, as regards their racialised and racist underpinnings, histories, political potentials, and contingencies.

*Locating African European Studies* builds on a rich lineage of anti-discriminatory work and active terminological alternatives, including Black, Afropean, Afroeuropean, and Black European, each with its distinct implications, applications, epistemological positions, and histories of emergence. All have travelled widely across activist discourse and public and virtual spaces, as well as academic contexts (e.g. Otele 2020; Rastas and Nikunen 2019; Beezmoohun 2016; McEachrane 2013; Brancato 2011, 2009; López 2008; Innes and Stein 2008; Arndt and Spitzczok von Brisinski 2006). “Afroeuropean”, for instance, has often implicitly (and at times, explicitly) been employed to refer to first-generation migrants who begin to negotiate their positionalities within the cultures of European nation states (cf. Thomas 2014). Reflecting on other meanings and possibilities as well, the contributors to this volume use a variety of terms and concepts: while some, like Elisa Joy White, actively engage with the term “African European studies”, others use Afroeuropean (Vinuesa, De Witte), Afropean (Pitts), or Black European (White),
depending on their approach, focus, and research context. African European studies is also a decidedly transdisciplinary (rather than interdisciplinary) project, with transdisciplinarity aiming at changing the contours and contents, as well as the aims and methods, of individual disciplines. Diaspora studies, postcolonial studies, Black studies, African studies, and Afro-Pan-Africanism are the most central reference points. This multiplicity of disciplines, voices, and terms again underlines that *Locating African European Studies* cannot be thought of as a comprehensive, in colonial parlance, “survey” of a field but as one of many platforms that allow for multiple negotiations and expressions of particular questions, issues, and politics.

Diaspora studies engages with all aspects of the lives of dispersed populations who have suffered slavery, exile, expulsion, or persecution in the contexts of war, racism, nationalism, or other forms of victimisation. It draws attention to both long-term structural inequalities between diasporic and non-diasporic populations and to the relegation of the logic of the nation state through enduring translocal collective affiliations. Diaspora is a multifaceted, protean concept upon which several disciplines rely in order to grapple with cultural formations and identities that cut across time and space. As such, diaspora studies’ critical impetus, conceptual apparatus, disciplinary protocols, and research aims have a bearing on African European studies, drawing attention not least to current forms of migration both to as well as within Europe. Furthermore, as Jacqueline Nassy Brown has succinctly outlined, “Black Europe” itself comes to light as a diasporic formation, for example in the United States (2009, 203), a reality that is further demonstrated by Christel N. Temple’s chapter on Afro-German families in the US.

Postcolonial studies is also of great relevance, as it foregrounds the continuing workings of colonial power relations and power-knowledges in the present, providing one of the vital historical perspectives referred to above. While postcolonial studies has now been disseminated across a range of academic disciplines, tackling a variety of colonialisms, the field originated in literary and cultural studies and the field of history, frequently retaining its original focus on specifically British colonialism and its complex legacies. Such a focus remains a highly relevant one; think, for example, of the very recent Windrush scandal in the UK (where members of the Windrush generation were denied healthcare, detained, and in some cases even deported on the grounds that there was no proof of their residence, despite the fact that they had lived and worked in the UK for decades). And yet, African European studies can serve as a catalyst for opening the postcolonial field, stimulating more research, for example, on the colonial engagements of other European countries. German colonial endeavours and atrocities committed in Africa are but one example, with colonial crimes in Namibia, the role of cities such as Hamburg in and for colonialism (e.g. “Unser Afrika” exhibition in
Hamburg, June–July 2018), and the onset of re-patriating artefacts and human remains being indicative areas of continuing, urgent engagement. (See, for example, the project “Koloniales Erbe” at the Berlin-based Akademie der Künste.)

Instead of focussing primarily on empire and its long-lasting consequences, as does postcolonial studies, Black studies engages with the discrimination against and empowerment of Black people as well as seeking to bring about structural changes in hegemonic white academic institutions, particularly in a US context. It explores approaches of knowing and representation, politics and perspectives, that are appropriate to Black experience. Rejecting a dichotomous construction between African European studies and US Black studies, African European studies recognises the study of Black experience as a transnational experience with local (sometimes national) manifestations (see also Cummings, this volume). Thus, African European studies advocates for a research agenda acknowledging the existence of solidarity politics that transcend borders, such as historical collaborations between Afro-German scholars and their US counterparts, a history partly elaborated on in this volume by Marion Kraft. Clearly, in doing so, research in African European, Black European, or Afro-European studies ultimately grapples with issues of representation and positionality similarly found in US Black studies, as Peggy Piesche, in conversation with Nicola Lauré al-Samarai, indicates with respect to Black German studies:

In many works that are part of a fast-growing body of research[,] discussions of what is generally referred to as the “Black German experience” are often based on hegemonic historiographies, which narrate a collective Black German history and presence without the agency of the actual protagonists.

(Piéche et al. 2017)

Piesche further demands “a comprehensive critique of individual and collective positions of respective speakers in relation to research and impact” and warns against the “violent assumption that any experience can be analysed by anybody” (2017). Understanding positionality is important, as positionality changes the authority and legitimacy with which one may speak about, or contribute to, African European debates, cultural productions, and experience.

African European studies locates itself in the crucible of decolonial practices advocated in disciplines such as Black studies. It is also informed by African studies and can especially draw on critiques that challenge the dominance of white Africanists in African studies. As calls for decolonisation spread everywhere, African European studies starts from the premise that whiteness needs to be demythologised (cf. Mbembe 2015); hence, the field should critique and dismantle the structural
and historical conditions that enable white scholars to dominate knowledge production and reinscribe the West as the centre of knowledge. While approaches such as Afropolitanism are relevant to African European studies, it is vital to be aware of and draw on critiques found within African studies of how such concepts easily lend themselves to co-optation in dominant Western neoliberal narratives. When Afropolitanism is used in debates of migration, there is a danger of foregrounding experiences of “successful” cosmopolitan transmigrants who criss-cross borders effortlessly while forgetting that the privilege of traversing borders is not available to everyone.

Disseminating knowledge relevant to African European studies, adding to the spaces in which debate may take place, and thereby contributing to a process of enhancing visibility and presence of African European knowledge and experience in European discourses are key concerns of this volume, whose contributors are speaking to different European contexts. As conference conveners and editors, it is our primary concern to create a space for interventions, intersections, and conversations on a variety of key issues and a range of African European contexts, e.g. British (Adebayo, Batra, Cummings, Leetsch), Dutch (de Witte), Finnish (Rastas), French (Thompson, Koegler), German (Aitken, Temple), Spanish (Borst, Vinuesa), and Soviet/Russian (Matusevich). While these contributions engage with specific national frameworks, they are ultimately not bound by the concept of the nation state nor by the idea of Europe as a closed-off, postnational political entity. Instead, like the field itself, they are marked by translocal and transnational negotiations, with significant implications at the methodological level. The contributions to this volume also variously (but not unanimously) reflect on different meanings, objectives, and possible contours of African European studies. They historicise particular approaches and engage various methodological foundations without, however, totalising African European experiences and textualities. Thus, contributors explore different possible meanings and politics of “African” and “European” and investigate African European representations in different media, including literature, film, and music. A wide range of cultural and political engagements is studied here, often combining academic enquiry, activism and negotiating processes of discrimination, resistance, identification, and affiliation. While comprising approaches from literary and cultural studies (Borst, Essame, Pirker, Knudsen), queer studies (Batra, Cummings), history (Aitken), and sociology (Thompson), this collection also draws upon artistic and activist epistemologies, be they related to photography (Pitts), literature (Adebayo), or migration and citizenship (Koegler). The collection also gives space to important self-reflection and criticism, as the consideration of a commingled Africa and Europe is by no means a straightforward or uncomplicated project. This is particularly true where knowledge production is concerned: Do university structures, for example, allow the degree of decolonisation that many activists, students,
and scholars are calling for? Does the frequent focus on, for example, Black British literature in academia ultimately reproduce existing imbalances by strengthening an already-prominent research area while silencing other contexts and their (dis-)contents (cf. G. Vinuesa in this volume)? What about the linguistic power differentials in which a collection produced for the anglophone market is necessarily implicated? How can individual researchers, activists, and editors negotiate these structural and conceptual imbalances with responsibility and integrity? It is the hope of both the editors and contributors that this collection can contextualise and help better understand these questions. Whether directly prioritising African European interconnections across different spaces or focussing on particular contexts of experience and knowledge production, whether directly tackling discrimination or engaging in debates on aspects of African European scholarship, literature, and culture, the chapters gathered here point to and seek to link up with a vibrant as well as committed research community that will continue to leave its marks on knowledge production in years to come.

Overview of chapters

Seeking to promote exchange between academics, artists, and activists, *Locating African European Studies* follows a three-pronged approach: (1) there is a focus on processes of transformation and the exploration of political, cultural, and academic interventions; (2) there is an emphasis on intersections between different forms of oppression, between different geographical spaces, and between different spheres, from public to private, from activist and artistic to academic, from informal to institutional; (3) there is a concern with the interconnections between different agents in African European studies and their conversations beyond disciplinary confines. These represent different inroads into the various plains and fields that can be conceptualised as African European studies.

African European studies is a vibrant field generated by and responding to an array of historical and contemporary configurations relating Africa and Europe. Considering the field’s significant dynamism, attempts at fixed definitions of African European studies would be premature as well as counterproductive, potentially interrupting an important and ongoing process of formation. This volume on *Locating African European Studies* is concerned with theorisation and trans/disciplinarity as well as with matters of critical practice. Framed by this introduction and an afterword, the volume comprises twenty-one chapters, which are divided into three parts: Part I is centred on social and historical formations, Part II engages with cultural production, and Part III focusses on decolonial academic practice.
Part I: African European social and historical formations

The chapters of this first section are concerned with the societal landscapes of AfroEurope, their changing histories, and modes of resistance. In the opening chapter, “‘We have to act. That is what forms collectivity’: black solidarity beyond identity in contemporary Paris”, Vanessa Eileen Thompson considers how to navigate a supposedly “race-less” discourse and space when the act of identifying race as a category of subordination risks being disqualified as communitarian against the background of Republicanism held up as an abstract universal. What kind of collective subjectivation processes are taking place against the background of spatial–racist subordination, and which conceptions of black solidarity are mobilised? This chapter explores such questions by drawing on findings from long-term critical ethnographic activist research with a predominantly black collective from the outskirts of Paris and through a critical engagement with theoretical conceptions of black solidarity. It explores a form of black solidarity that does not reside in identity constructions yet takes seriously the epistemological frame of lived experiences of antiblackness. Caroline Koegler’s chapter, “Village du monde? (Fortress) Europe, the ‘Jungle’ of Calais, and the African European paradigm”, is an inquiry into the politics of reading urbanism in the dismantled French refugee camp, the “Jungle”. The chapter critically analyses the “Jungle’s” diverse representations as, among other things, a village du monde or as a temporary, “ungrievable” (Butler 2009, 2015) camp of migrants, contextualising the debate with regard to the rhetoric of a “fortress Europe”. In doing so, it investigates potential exclusions underlying the African European paradigm. Taking recourse to works by Achille Mbembe, Judith Butler, and Michael Agier—and thus situating “performing the urban” as a claim not only to urbanity (“city”) but also, implicitly, citizenship (humanity, security, dignity)—Koegler situates readings of urbanity in the “Jungle” as politicised, politicising, and contested.

Marleen de Witte’s chapter, “From bokoe bullying to Afrobeats: or how being African became cool in black Amsterdam”, explores contemporary West African popular music and dance in relation to the shifting articulations of blackness and Africanness between Dutch Afro-Caribbeans and Ghanaians. Based on anthropological research in Amsterdam, de Witte situates the trend towards African self-identification at the intersection of the global circulation of African urban popular culture and addresses how Afrobeats and Afrodance allow young people to connect with and express African roots. The practices of self-styling and the current process of “rebranding Africa” contest the marginalisation of Africa and Africans in dominant Eurocentric narratives and also reassert the relevance of Africa(ns) in an emerging black Europe, insisting on the distinctly African contribution to the larger project of black emancipation currently under way. Remaining in the context of anthropological research and
diasporic identities, Anna Rastas’ chapter on African diaspora communities and cultures in Finland focusses on a 2015 exhibition at the Finnish Labour Museum Werstas. The African Presence in Finland occurred as the action phase of a research project that had been planned and organised in collaboration with several diaspora communities as well as community leaders, researchers, activists, artists, and others. “Involving diaspora communities through action research: a collaborative museum exhibition on the African presence in Finland” analyses how the exhibition project enabled the examination of theoretical questions concerning research on African and black diasporas in Europe, including those focussing on African diaspora formations in a Northern European country with a relatively short history of migration from Africa and its global diaspora. The project also provided new knowledge of the African diaspora communities’ contributions to Finnish society and culture. In a similar vein, but from a personal perspective, Diran Adebayo reflects on his relationship with continental Europe as a youth before then considering the black British cultural ecology in the years since the landmark Macpherson Report of 1997. In his chapter, “The footman’s new clothes”, Adebayo inquires whether aspects of European Enlightenment thought, its “best face”, might be harnessed to help move both a Europe that is currently being culturally contested and the work and presentation of Afro-European artists, activists, and other cultural practitioners in more fruitful directions. Noting the challenge posed to multiculturalism by the ascendant British majoritarianism, Adebayo questions the emphasis politicians place on “cohesive” societies, arguing instead for the development and dissemination of a “minority-majority consciousness” more aligned to global trends and undercurrents.

The next three chapters focus on interconnections between North America and Europe, beginning with Marion Kraft’s reflection upon her edited volume, Kinder der Befreiung: Transatlantische Erfahrungen und Perspektiven Schwarzer Deutscher der Nachkriegsgeneration (Kraft 2015), in which she discusses the importance of memory and postmemory in connection with Black German autobiographical writings. After a short overview of the history and present situation of the Black diaspora in Germany, “Transatlantic connections, memory, and postmemory in Afro-German biographies” examines Black German (auto)biographies published in the 1990s. Focussing on the biography of Bärbel Kampmann, a Black German teacher, psychologist, and activist, the chapter draws out the complex interplay of history, memoirs, life writing, and storytelling. This chapter reads her story as both an expression of a collective memory and as an articulation of a contradictory and diverse cultural heritage. Juxtaposing Kampmann’s narrative with the autobiography of Daniel Cardwell, a Black German sent to the US for adoption, Kraft engages with and complicates diverse definitions of homeland and exile. Christel N. Temple’s intergenerational study of Afro-German transnationalism works with autoethnography and contemporary critical scholarship to explore
Afro-German heritage. Traditionally, the United States is not a site from which narratives of Afro-German post-WWII experiences emerge; this study writes back against this omission, itemising the ethnography, cultural memory, and identity experiences of a particular lineage’s distinct Afro-German cultural specificity, which is based on the development of several generations as simultaneously German and African American in a US setting. In expanding the assumptions of Afro-German transnationalism, “Practicing autoethnography: transnational Afro-German heritage” resituates Afro-German identity, its heritage and dimensions of migration, and its interracial, biracial, and multicultural implications in both the US and the West. While cultural memory is found to be relatively stable, identity and kinship prove to be more fluid, indicating that transatlantic transnationalism can pluralise Afro-German identities. Maxim Matusevich’s chapter turns to African American artist and human rights campaigner Paul Robeson, whose political life was to a significant extent defined by his close association with the Soviet Union. “‘Zog Nit Keyn Mol’: Paul Robeson’s tragic love of Russia” suggests that, from his very first visit to the country in the mid-1930s, Robeson developed an abiding affection for the first socialist state and its people; seeing the former as his close political ally, he felt the latter constituted his most cherished and appreciative audience. Robeson’s political commitments became problematic in the US context at the height of the Cold War, with the rise of the Red Scare, yet he never wavered from his support of the Soviet Union and never modified his stance to account for the revelations of Stalin’s crimes. Even after it came to light that some of his close Russian Jewish friends had perished in the purges, Robeson found it difficult to condemn the regime that he viewed as essential to the emancipation of oppressed populations of colour.

Part I closes with another historical study, “Forgotten histories: recovering the precarious lives of African servants in Imperial Germany”, in which Robbie Aitken employs records from the newly digitised Hamburg Passenger lists, drawing on information regarding 277 Africans who arrived as personal servants in Imperial Germany between 1884 and 1914. He seeks to capture elements of the experiences of this highly mobile, transient group that has left few traces in the historical record and that, as a consequence, has been to date largely ignored by scholarship. Focussing on the experiences of servants whose lives traverse Africa and Germany, the chapter provides insights into the impact of transgressing the global colour line. It examines moments in which servants’ lives became visible—often moments of crisis, such as when servants broke from their masters or were abandoned by them to their own fates. These cases came to the attention of local, colonial, and welfare institutions as well as local newspapers, helping to shape German authorities’ views regarding Black migration from the colonies in general. The chapter also highlights the opportunities that recent digitisation projects have created for recovering
elements of the historical experiences of even the most transient Black visitors to Europe.

**Part II: African European cultural production**

Part II focusses on writing (esp. novels, poetry, and new media) and visual culture (film and photography)—on the reading strategies they require, on the interventions this cultural production exemplifies, and on the effects they wield on interpretive communities. With “Opening homes, opening worlds: African European spatial interventions in Helen Oyeyemi’s fiction”, Jennifer Leetsch traces different forms of African European belonging. Oyeyemi’s novels *The Opposite House* (2007) and *White is for Witching* (2009) draw together discourses about national identity and diaspora within the architectural space of the house. Initially internal, domestic, and exclusionary spaces, Oyeyemi’s homes become places filled with a plethora of diasporic identity constructs. In rendering the home unhomely and in de-nationalising the nation, the texts give way to other forms of belonging fashioned by the female voices that emerge from the narratives as well as their relationships—be they sexual, romantic, or familial, heteronormative or queer. Leetsch thus pits the construction of explicitly diasporic, African European spaces against a more affective geography of practices of love and desire. Next, Eva Rask Knudsen asserts that Afropolitanism is born out of a global age of increased mobility and transcultural interaction, inquiring how conventional ideas about home and belonging as singular and site specific impact the figure of the Afropolitan, who commutes between cultures, nations, and continents. “Afropolitanism and mobility: constructions of home and belonging in Sefi Atta’s *A Bit of Difference*” argues that there is a need to uncouple home from belonging, as Afropolitans may feel at home in many different locations without necessarily feeling that they genuinely belong to any or all of them. Despite her expertise in the ambivalent politics of relocation, Atta’s protagonist, Deola, seems caught up in a state of personal indecision and longing for home—for a *homing of the self*.

Focussing on two collections by black British queer poets, Kanika Batra’s “Black British queer intersectionality: from Labi Siffre’s *Nigger* to Dean Atta’s *I am Nobody’s Nigger*” suggests an inextricable connection between sex and style that allows the expression of an uninhibited blackness and queerness. Refusing shame, blame, and secrecy, the poets and their personas simultaneously delight in real and virtual sexual experiences while offering a critique of racism, sexism, and misogyny within hetero- and homosexual relationships. Batra argues that Siffre’s and Atta’s collections draw on a poetics of intersectionality that sustains the potential of queerness as a politics of inclusion. Similarly focussing on poetry, Julia Borst’s “Voices from the Black diaspora in Spain: on transcultural spaces and Afrospanish identity constructions in poetry” examines the ambivalent
subject positions of voices of the Black diaspora in Spain. Such diasporic liminal and transcultural identity constructions, Borst argues, challenge the stereotyping of Afrospaniards as outsiders and thereby give rise to forms of multiple and decentred belongings. Engaging critically with labels such as “Afrospanish” and in dialogue with Afroeuropean and post-colonial studies, this chapter situates itself within Spanish literary and cultural studies. Drawing on the poetry of Agnès Agboton and Abdoulaye Bilal Traoré as well as various weblogs and song lyrics, Borst demonstrates how different types of texts successfully confront exclusionist narratives of Otherness by evoking complex networks of belonging and articulating dynamic movements of continuous re-positioning.

**Eva Ulrike Pirker** engages with Amma Asante’s film, *Belle*, which constructs a problematic fictional narrative around Dido Elizabeth Belle’s historical presence—an exceptional presence about which more reliable information has yet to be acquired. The chapter charts how the film successfully created an illusion of authenticity that has been widely consumed and additionally fuelled by reviewers and history educators. “Adapting contested histories: the film *Belle* (2013) and its politics of representation” interrogates a culture that foregrounds mythologies to the detriment of debates about historical responsibility in the context of the Black diasporic experience. Offering a close reading of the film’s strategies of the narration, aestheticisation, and authentification of an almost lost (hi) story, Pirker also articulates the need for a valorisation of responsible collaborative, transdisciplinary, and transnational archival research and of debates that acknowledge the importance of ambivalence, complexity, and sometimes controversy. In “Returning the colonial gaze: the black female body in Angèle Etoundi Essamba’s photography”, **Jeanne Essame** examines the interventionist potential of the work by Amsterdam-based photographer Essamba vis-à-vis the exploitative gaze to which slavery and colonialism have historically subjected the black female body. Using Freida High Tesfagiorgis’ concept of Afrofemcentrism, Essamba’s work is read as a counterpoint to the scientific discourse that has legitimised the visual dissections and denigrations of black women’s bodies throughout Western culture. Essamba’s reclamation of the black female body by the underscoring of its strength, femininity, and complexity constitutes a political and social engagement in the museum and in art history, spaces where, as subjects and objects, black women have suffered a long history of marginalisation. Combining the study of visual culture with an assessment of historical racisms, this chapter provides a significant contextualisation of Essamba’s Cameroonian–Dutch art that goes beyond aesthetic content and produces an African European counter-discourse. Part II closes with a second essay on photography: “The Afropean gaze: through a decolonial lens” underscores the connections between colonialism and photography and explores how **Johny Pitts**’ own photographic practice seeks to subvert some of the medium’s problematic elements. Having
grown up in the multicultural hinterlands and disappearing landscape of the north of Britain, Pitts argues that the preservation of Black European culture through visual documentation is an essential task—one that demands an alternative philosophy and methodology so as to work as a counter-current in the stream of Western observers hunting “the other”. Pitts concludes that taking images of one’s own Afropean community requires a heuristic approach, with one foot in and one foot out of both the photographic tradition and the community being documented.

Part III: Decolonial academic practice

Part III opens with a dialogue between academics and activists that engages with the current movement sweeping across campuses to decolonise academia and the syllabus. Given the collection’s underlying interest in further establishing African European studies in the academy, it is key to address the limitations and problems that institutional contexts harbour, including racism, marginalisation, and precarity. African European studies is well-positioned to critique these institutional contexts, demanding constructive change and revision, as signalled by the participants of the roundtable “Why isn’t my professor black?” Held at the fifth biennial Afropean studies conference in Münster, the roundtable is inspired by a previous discussion of the same title that took place at University College London (UCL) in 2014 (Arthur et al., 2014; cf. also Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2016). Chaired by Susheila Nasta, the Münster discussion featured, among others, UCL’s first Black and Minority Ethnic Students’ Officer Shanell Johnson as well as Karim Fereidooni, Emily Ngubia Kessé, and Vanessa Eileen Thompson. Three statements point to overlapping academic and activist practices and the importance of both resistance and coalition building to effectively counter institutional racism. Karim Fereidooni poses the question, “Why are there so few Black professors and professors of Color in Germany?” He points out that the university system is, inter alia, structured by racism and that knowledge tainted by racism has been produced and reproduced in it for centuries. In consequence, the university career paths of Black people and people of Color in Germany are blocked because of racism, both institutionally and individually, while the university landscape has been predominantly shaped by white people. Fereidooni makes the point that white German professors and, indeed, entire hiring committees can help remedy this problem by critically questioning their own complicity in adopting mechanisms and upholding practices that privilege white scholars. In her statement, Vanessa Eileen Thompson addresses the shift “From ‘Why isn’t my professor black?’ to ‘Black Lives Matter’ and beyond the academy”. In the context of the struggles to decolonise the university that have gained increasing attention in the last decade, internationally as well as within
Europe (and Germany, specifically), Thompson offers a critique of diversity politics. Reflecting on the conditions under which black lives are allowed to matter in academia, Thompson argues that the question “Why isn’t my professor black?” has to be answered in a direction that renders the question itself unnecessary. The roundtable concludes with “Decolonising diversity”, in which Emily Ngubia Kessé critically examines the concept of diversity and reveals how its current use within German universities is at odds with its origins in civil rights movements and anti-racism work. Her discussion is centred on the assertion that German universities are essentially white and therefore racist institutions. She finds racism evident on three levels: in the narratives that are produced as knowledge, in the conceptual framework where bodies of Colour are made absent, and in the very architecture of these institutions—how they are named and adorned.

In her chapter, “Structures of dis/empowerment: my year as the UK’s first Black and Minority Ethnic Students’ Officer”, Shanell Johnson shares her experience of structural racism in the British education system and university student governance. Her position at University College London (UCL) set a precedent for universities across the UK, and the effects of her campaign have had repercussions the effects of which remain until today. Though the position itself, introduced by UCL’s student union, is indicative of a step forward, the subsequent journey was riddled with difficulties and contradictions, multiplying the challenges present in processes of addressing inequalities. Johnson relied on long-term action, instead of short-term trends, in order to implement lasting change. With her appointment being limited to only one academic year, she was compelled to find change-makers among the university staff and a network of people willing to struggle for longstanding transformation in the academy. The next chapter, by Ronald Cummings, continues with the question of how interventions to reform research and teaching can be at once liberating as well as restrictive. “On the (im)possibility of black British queer studies” sketches three main points of intervention, tackling, first, the ways in which questions of queerness have remained marginal to recent black British studies interventions in the UK—a debate that has both limitations and also significant potential. The concept of (im)possibility allows Cummings to highlight this duality, marking the necessity of these interruptions and interventions regarding the constitution of black studies, both generally and in Britain specifically. Second, the obscuring of black British queerness in transatlantic articulations of black queer studies is addressed, noting how this has occurred in key critical anthologies. Third, Cummings suggests that the emergence of and a case for black British queer studies cannot be constituted solely in relation to the nation-state as its singular site of orientation; rather, the field is also already embedded in transnational debates about the formation of black queer studies. As such, its interventions must be multiple, multidirectional, transnational,
and transatlantic. “Negotiating Afroeuropean literary borders: the inclusion of African Spanish and African British literatures in Spanish universities” focusses more specifically on syllabus reform in the context of the growing interest in African British literature and the near absence of African Spanish literature on the higher education syllabus. Maya G. Vinuesa links this near absence with the erasure of the African presence in Spanish historiography and, with the help of a survey, critically engages with African British texts and authors taught in literary and translation studies. The high proportion of English language and literature degrees may account for the prevalence of African British literature as compared with other Afroeuropean literatures. A stronger focus on diversity in literary and translation studies and more effective communication between academics, activists, and publishers are vital in order to create more space for other Afroeuropean literatures at Spanish universities and beyond. Part III closes with Elisa Joy White’s examination of the emergence of African European studies and Black European studies as fields of study in tandem with the recognition of African European and Black European communities. To explore the trajectory of the fields, the following questions are posed: Who gets to study Black Europe? How does Black Europe actually get studied? Who is studied? “Beyond emergent: creating, debating, and implementing African European studies” addresses the institutionalisation of a field of study, modes of embedding the field in academia, and the reciprocal relationship between creating fields of study and community-making. These questions are examined and exemplified through a consideration of debates about the placement of African European studies within and beyond Europe, a case study of the emergence of African diaspora and Black communities in the Republic of Ireland, and the pedagogical experience of university students in a Black European studies class in the United States.

The afterword by Jamie Schearer-Udeh brings this volume to a close. Schearer-Udeh stresses the various pressures that people of African descent encounter in Europe today and directs her readership to critically examine their own positionality in these dynamics. Emphasising that experience varies where it intersects with specific identity markers in addition to race, Schearer-Udeh notes how “Black women*, Black trans* and gender-non-conforming people, Black disabled people, Black working-class people, Black men*” are currently confronted with public devaluation, dehumanisation, delegitimisation, and criminalisation. And yet, socialised into pursuing particular life-paths that are marked by “wealth, whiteness, non-disability, straight love, and a body that is cis-gendered”, Schearer-Udeh reminds her readers that “each of us inhabits [the centre] at different times”. Schearer-Udeh thus calls on readers to disentangle their “own complicity in the system that produces oppression”, which she complements with an appeal to change the dynamics of cultural reproduction in order to transform society.
Notes

1 Roncero is quoted by The Guardian as saying, “For me, an athlete who was born in Kenya is Kenyan and one born in Somalia is Somali forever, and that is the opinion of the people with whom I speak …. Besides, I am convinced that 95% of athletes still feel nationalised by their country of origin” (Ingle 2015b).

2 Our understanding of the politics of contingent belonging complements a number of scholarly contributions that have been made on the theme of a “contingency” or “contingencies” of belonging—e.g. to a nation, a generation, a peer group, a gender—in a range of disciplines, from citizenship studies to psychology and communication studies to ESL pedagogy. Notable in particular is Jasbir K. Puar’s study Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times (2007), which speaks to the post-9/11 context of increasing anti-Muslim racism in the United States. It discusses the selective inclusion of some, particularly white, queer subjects into the imagined community of the US nation (“homonationalism”) that simultaneously produces non-includable others who are orientalised, racialised, and criminalised (e.g. Sikhs, Muslims, and Arabs). However, Puar also uses what she calls “contingencies of belonging” in the context of queerness (not “includable” or “non-includable” queer subjects), with queerness haunting clearly delineated identities and identity politics. Thus rendering belonging contingent, queerness attains a de-essentialising, diversifying, and resisting (“defiant”) force. It is these two poles of contingent belonging—one top-down marginalisation and essentialisation and another that is connected to individual agency and resistance—that we make fruitful for our own understanding of the politics of contingent belonging and how it operates in Europe today. Puar’s work has inspired a range of inquiries into similar, largely queer-related phenomena (e.g. Fischer 2016, Cummings 2012) that work specifically with the notion of contingent belonging. In a different way, Eure Heimat ist unser Albttraum (Aydemir and Yaghoobifarbah 2019) can also be read as an engagement with the politics of contingent belonging.

3 Similarly, “Yannick Noah, the French Open tennis champion who at one point seemed set for world domination, became Camerounais when the dream expired” (Hirsch 2018) and French author Calixthe Beyala “was described as a French writer when at the height of her success, but suddenly went back to being an ‘African’ writer when she was accused of plagiarism” (Brancato 2009, 27). If we expand the discussion beyond the African European focus in order to suggest that it has repercussions beyond this perspective, Mesut Özil’s example serves to expound this problematic as well: Özil was a key player when the German team won the 2014 World Cup, but he resigned from the national football team after Germany’s premature World Cup exit four years later. “I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose,” he explained, which suggests that the Turkish-born player shares the experience of contingent belonging (Hirsch 2018).

4 Our understanding of whiteness is informed by critical whiteness studies, drawing, for instance, on the work of Richard Dyer (1997), who sees whiteness as a position of power secured by an imagery that non-racialises white people as a human norm—i.e. as just people—while racialising all others. In this sense, naming whiteness acts as a counter that racialises white people in an attempt to dislodge them from a position of power, opening up spaces for engaging with particular interests.

5 The mechanism behind such a mere “language of diversity”, as Sara Ahmed calls it, “posits difference as something ‘others’ bring to the nation, and as
something the nation can have through how it accepts, welcomes or integrates such others” (2007, 235).

6 In his letter, Sancho laments “the British empire mouldering away in the West—annihilated in the North”, while concurrently asserting, “for my part it’s nothing to me—as I am only a lodger—and hardly that” ([1782] 1998, 177). Gravely dispirited about the prior loss of the American colonies and the decline of the British empire in the West Indies, Ireland, and elsewhere, Sancho’s unconditional identification with Britain seems palpable. In fact, his own contingent belonging and experience of limited support apparently possess an English quality: “We fought like Englishmen—unsupported by the rest” (176). However, the paradox of an express identification with the imperial forces (“we”) counterpoised with an explicit disidentification (“lodger”) draws attention to a conscious and controlled fluctuation of identities that underscores Sancho’s effective, subversive response to the politics of contingent belonging. Writing under a “state of interdiction”, as Markman Ellis has put it, the eighteenth-century public intellectual, born in Africa, enslaved in Britain, one of the first African Europeans to vote in a British election, has left us, with his posthumously published letters, not only “narratives of resistance” (Ellis forthcoming), but also an important resource for historicising the politics of contingent belonging.

7 Puar writes: “There is no entity, no identity, no queer subject or subject to queer, rather queerness coming forth at us from all directions, screaming its defiance, suggesting a move from intersectionality to assemblage, an affective conglomeration that recognizes other contingencies of belonging (melding, fusing, viscosity, bouncing) that might not fall so easily into what is sometimes denoted as reactive community formations—identity politics—by control theorists” (2007, 204; emphasis ours). As indicated in a previous footnote, in our conceptualisation of contingency from below, we use this notion of queerness as “defiant” and as rendering visible other contingencies of belonging.

8 Peter Fryer’s Staying Power (1984) convincingly argued for an unbroken history of African presence in Britain, pointing out that the African contingent in the Roman imperial army in Britain predates the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons (1ff.); furthermore, an ever-increasing amount of studies have explored the rich history of African Europeans. Most accounts focus on national histories of African Europeans, with the exception of Olivette Otele (2020). For examples of national studies see e.g. Gretchen Gerzina (1995, 2003), David Olusoga (2016), Miranda Kaufmann (2017), and Hakim Adi (2019) (regarding Britain); Tina Campt (2005), Heide Feurenbach (2007), Eve Rosenhaft and Robbie Aitken (2013, also Aitken and Rosenhaft 2013), and Honeck et al. (2013) (regarding Germany); or Noël (2011–2017), Peabody and Stovall (2003), and Keaton et al. (2012) (regarding France); and Matusevich (2007) as well as Tseptyakov and Apenko (2009) (regarding Russia). See also Adebajo and Whiteman (2012), Anim-Addo and Scafe (2007), and Clark Hine et al. (2009).

9 As Garland suggests, “It has only been over the past century that the international community has attempted to regulate migration and define those who should be accorded the special title of ‘refugees’. […] In the ancient [Greek–Roman–Carthaginian] world, by contrast, displaced persons weren’t even a statistics. Though a few migrant groups caught the headlines, often due to the Odyssean circuitousness of their wanderings, the majority disappeared without a trace once they had severed ties with their homeland” (2014, xv). Isayef’s more recent, highly innovative study builds on the similar premise that “a high level of human mobility was not exceptional among ancient Mediterranean
communities” but was, instead, “built into the way that society functioned”, both at the private level and at the level of state-led colonial endeavours (2017, 3–15). (For engagement with these histories at a literary level, see e.g. Stroh 2015.) Indeed, these histories are being written forward into the future (Gilroy 2019). As Gilroy writes, “Perhaps those habits could be altered for the better by the agonistic attachment of settler populations to the idea of Europe which would have to be reworked to include the inescapable fact of its creole future.”

10 The project of locating African European and/or Black perspectives in imaginations of community, in public discourses, and institutionalised contexts such as academia has a by-now-long history. In Black German studies, for example, scholars have long embraced the programmatic contestation of a “white Germany” and have documented Black Germans’ diverse contributions to history and culture. The field has been driven not least by the notion that, “were white scholars of German studies to embrace these positions, they might find it necessary to reconceive German history and culture in ways that extend far beyond merely understanding Black Germans as a small niche population”. A central part of this is “helping Germans to look beyond their own boundaries, situating Germany’s treatment of race and peoples of color within the larger framework of a comparative examination of such practices within countries like and unlike itself” (Lennox 2016, 2). Both the conference that was held in Münster (see below) and this volume are contributions to this process.

11 *Afroeuromenians: Black Cultures and Identities in Europe* V, the fifth biennial conference by the eponymous research network, was held at the University of Münster (16.–19.9.2015), convened by Ismahan Wayah and the four editors of this volume: www.wwu.de/AFROEU2015.

12 Di Maio’s comments were widely reported by the press (e.g. “France Summons Italian” 2019).

13 Hansen and Jonsson (2011) go so far as to position the power imbalance between Africa and Europe as foundational to the project of the EU.

14 Famously, in spring of 1984, Audre Lorde spent three months at the Free University of Berlin, teaching and working with Afro-German women. Some of the results of these collaborations are documented in May Opitz [Ayim], Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schultz’s landmark anthology, *Farbe bekennen* (1986), translated into English as *Showing Our Color* (1992).

15 Our contributors work from distinct perspectives and inhabit different positionalities, which is reflected, among other ways, in their choice of critical terminology. We have deliberately preserved these terminological preferences and spellings across the various chapters of this book. The same variety is also reflected in this second part of our introduction, which engages with the chapters found in this volume.

16 An English translation of her collection, entitled *Children of the Liberation: Transatlantic Experiences and Perspectives of Black Germans of the Post-War Generation*, is forthcoming.

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practice of the BAN does not restrict itself to the commonalities of lived experiences but further and more importantly comes into being as a doing and unfolds its dimension of collectivity through the power that emerges out of acting in concert and conviviality.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have first contextualised the workings of race and racism in France against the backdrop of French Republicanism and have sketched out historical snapshots of black resistances within French Republicanism to demonstrate the multiplicity of employments of race and blackness at work within black political projects. I have then discussed a conception of black political solidarity by drawing upon my ethnographic work with the urban grass-roots movement Brigade Anti-Négrophobie. This conception is not grounded in forms of thick black collective identity but rather bound to the creation of black solidarity on the basis of lived experiences of anti-blackness; shaped by the urban fabric of everyday conviviality, it still enhances a form of collectivity. I have argued that it is rather a collectivity of action and not the sameness of thin identities that shapes black collective solidarity, though thin blackness plays a crucial role in the political project of the collective. This form of solidarity, developed in dialogue with Shelby’s theory of black solidarity and Arendt’s notion of acting in concert, allows for bridging conundrums between the particularism of (thick) identity politics on the one hand and forms of abstract universalism, which reproduces the workings of racism by detaching from notions of race, on the other, thus providing a novel approach to debates on anti-racism.

Other recent black political transnational mobilisations, such as the multi-racial Black Lives Matter movement also demonstrate that black politics are not in need of (thick) black collective identities. Rather, they achieve their power through black collective solidarity. This solidarity must be consistently grounded on the lived experiences of the most vulnerable and resisting black subjects, as, indeed, all black lives matter.

Notes

1 I conceive of black first and foremost as a socio-political category for people of African descent (recent or historical) who are racialised as black and experience anti-black racism; this thin definition of black allows for the inclusion of a broad range of experiences of anti-black racism (Ndïaye 2008; Shelby 2005), however it has manifested, changed, and developed since colonial enslavement and colonialism, as well as the manifold forms of resistances, struggles, and political cultures that grow out of these experiences. Of course, black people are neither a unified group nor a monolith, but diverse. Following the work of Stuart Hall, I understand blackness and black experiences to be always in
flux and shifting, never static or singular (Hall 1990, see also Brown 2015, 8),
existing in various forms as cultural, social, and political identities in France
(and beyond) alongside various other identifications, of which some are
articulated through emphasis on African and Afro-Caribbean descent.

2 Article 14 of the *Constitution Impérial d’Haiti* states, for instance, “Haitians are
now to be understood under the generic name of blacks” (Dubois *et al.* 2013,
64).

3 This political version of blackness is often marginalised in studies on forms of
blackness in the French Republican context, which frequently locate the first
employments of blackness as a counter-discourse in the beginning of the twen-
tieth century (see, for instance, Célestine and Fila-Bakabadio 2015).

4 It was at the beginning of the 1930s, that the *Négritude* movement of black
French-speaking intellectuals emerged in Paris, where its founders Léon-
Gontran Damas, Aimé Césaire, and Léopold Sédar Senghor, all of whom have
come to the European Metropole as university students, crosscut with the rep-
resentatives of the Harlem Renaissance. Although the *Négritude* movement is
often (over-)represented as a male movement, it is important to stress that
various black women such as Suzanne Lacascade, Jane and Paulette Nardal,
and Suzanne Roussy-Césaire were active in the movement as part of the van-
guard, poets and political thinkers (Sharpley-Whiting 2002). The aim of this
movement was to understand and explain the conditions of black people
under French enslavement and colonialism as well as to struggle against colo-
nial racism, also by employing a positive representation of black collective
culture and by practices of code-switching.

5 This was partly related to the fact that Caribbean migrants were formal citizens
in France, and because their migration was managed by the internal migration
programme BUMIDOM (*Le Bureau pour le développement des migrations dans les
départements d’outre-mer*, Bureau for Migration from the Overseas Departments)
they did not experience the same legal restrictions as migrants from the West
of Africa.

6 These interventions were often followed by mass-deportations by the Ministry
of the Interior (Germain 2016).

7 The quote is my translation of Guerlain’s remarks, made on the television
channel France 2 in October 2010. As I do not want to reproduce the violent
n-word here, I use the euphemism.

8 In order to understand which role blackness played here, I have turned to the
conceptual differentiation between thick and thin blackness introduced by
Tommie Shelby (2005). The crucial difference between thick and thin col-
llective identities is that thick identity conceptions are based upon shared
matters of, for example, common ancestry, cultural values, and habits or on
cultural conceptions that emphasise shared beliefs, values, conventions, forms
of life, traditions, and practices. Thin conceptions speak to categories within a
socially imposed classification regime that constructs and marks racialised indi-
viduals as inferior (Shelby 2005, 214).

9 The reality of black heterogeneity has especially been emphasised by black
feminist and queer theorists who engage with the multiple axes of oppression
enshrined in anti-blackness. They work to confront dominant epistemologies
of black thought through being attentive to the heterogeneous epistemologies
of blackness alongside what Michelle Wright calls “spacetime”—that is, the
inextricable relation and contingency of space and time with regard to how
blackness is configured (Wright 2009).

10 Taking the call for the heterogeneity of black identities as well as black episte-
mologies seriously goes beyond the mere stating of difference, what Michelle
Vanessa Eileen Thompson

Wright has termed “Black liberal humanism” (2009), and depends on a critical interrogation of the dominant versions of blackness, which tend to conceal others.

I am fully aware of the various forms of anti-blackness at play in the work of Arendt (see also Gines 2014). I approach her work here through what Gayatri Ch. Spivak calls “affirmative sabotage” (Spivak 2012), a methodology that especially characterises Frantz Fanon’s work (1963, 1967).

She detaches from the realm of common experiences as grounds for solidarity because, according to her, sameness cannot be the basis for any political action.

References


citizens remain closed to refugees and where, indeed, authorities use violence and harassment to dissuade crossings and assemblies. In other words, if Europe is sometimes pictured as a utopian village du monde of sorts, a transnational community that provides a home to people of different nations, languages, and cultures beyond the concept of individual borders, then events such as those in Calais are an uncomfortable reminder that this village du monde is based, at its very core, on an uneven understanding of who counts as human and whose life is grievable. In this context, the notion of a “caged Jungle” (above) gains an ominous relevance, encapsulating the precarity, i.e. lack of privilege and grievability, of those halted in their passing and of suffering in the process. The caged Jungle and fortress Europe emerge as an uncanny pair, forceful reminders of some of the not-so-noble epistemological and ontological underpinnings of European citizenship. Research under the banner of the African European paradigm can help bring to the fore these underpinnings. It can function as a moral reminder of Africa and Europe’s joint histories, presences, and futures as well as their people’s shared humanity and grievability. Indeed, it can help suspend the very dichotomies on which both fortress Europe and caged Jungle rest. For this purpose, however, it is crucial to think about African European’s own malleability and the porosity of its own boundaries.

Notes

* This chapter recontextualises and develops further parts of my arguments made in a previous article, “Precarious Urbanity: The ‘Jungle’ (Calais) and the Politics of Performing the Urban”, published in Postcolonial Text in 2017. Thanks go to Cecile Sandten, editor of the special issue “Representing and Narrating Flight, Refugeeism, and Asylum”, and to Chantal Zabus, the journal’s editor, for granting my request for republishing passages of this earlier version.

1 For a discussion of the term Fortress Europe, see Sara Marino and Simon Dawes’ “Introduction to Fortress Europe: Media, Migration and Borders” (2016). While the term has been used to various, at times contradictory, effects across the political spectrum and for a long time, i.e. by right-wing commentators to validate a maintaining or strengthening of European borders since WWII, I utilise the currently more common, critical understanding of it, which shines light on the problematic measures taken by European institutions and countries seeking to close Europe off from immigration. I also understand Fortress Europe as encapsulating the neo-colonial discourse that often informs validations of EU border policy.

2 See e.g. the workshop “Continental Shifts, Shifts in Perception”, which took place at London’s Senate House in 2013 (www.historyworkshop.org.uk/afroeuropens-iv-black-cultures-identities-in-europe/); see also Thomas’ Afro-European Cartographies (2014, 8).

3 I use the term, like others (Davies et al.), in inverted commas in recognition of its emergence and also the problems, generally, of bulk expression. I discuss the term “Jungle” further below.
In my study, *Critical Branding: Postcolonial Studies and the Market*, I define brand narratives as narratives that forcefully, and sometimes purposefully, intervene in and/or reproduce what I call symbolic valuation regimes. Branding, a practice that arises in any social context (i.e. not only in strictly business-related ones), is understood as a politicised practice of meaning-making through the valuation of selves, others, ideas, bodies, organisations, products, etc. (2018).

Care4Calais publishes regular updates regarding this on its website.

Similar risks existed inside Dunkirk’s refugee camp (Townsend 2016), but have also been reported from refugee camps around the world. Mostly, it is children and women who are forced to offer up their bodies to traffickers in return for blankets, food, or the offer of passage.

“Multicultural, solidary, ecological, dynamic, sympathetic but also dirty, chaotic, and ill equipped, the jungle of Calais was not born from a utopian ideal but from this mixture of chance and necessity that gave rise to all the great cities of history. The jungle is the village of the world, the district of humanity, the forum of the societies” (translation mine).

As Agier argues with Foucault’s concept “heterotopia”, particularly with the concept of a heterotopia of “crisis” and “deviation”, “by fixing them [the refugees] and gathering them collectively, these other spaces [heterotopias] turn their occupants into permanent deviants, abnormals who are kept at a distance” (2011, 182). Lewis (2016a, 21) also observes this parallel.

My approach is influenced by Judith Butler’s concept of embodied performativity according to which people’s continuous repetitions of “performative acts” uphold entire social systems of normative (gender) conventions. As outlined in several works, including *Bodies that Matter* (2011) and Butler’s latest *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), it is only when people are seen to reproduce normative systems that they will be acknowledged as valid lives or bodies—indeed as human beings—and it is only then that they will become visible in the public “sphere of appearance”, which awards legitimacy and safety (2015, 41). The inverse also applies: those that do not reproduce normative forms of intelligibility are rendered precarious and vulnerable, subject to criminalisation, harassment, even death. For a discussion of Butler’s move from gender performativity to a more general perspective on matters of social inclusion and exclusion, see my review of *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* published in *Symbolism* (2017).

For Mbembe’s necropolitics, restriction of movement is central and applies to the “Jungle” without a doubt. A qualification needs to be made regarding the Foucauldian compartmentalisation and intricate organisation of space, which also feature strongly in Mbembe’s theory and which become a prime source of exercising control over people. Indeed, the “Jungle” was relocated (“new Jungle”) in 2015 in order to increase control, forcing migrants from several smaller camps to cohabit in one space. French authorities then also set up an area with 1,000 shipping containers; however, this attempt at regulation was largely unsuccessful, as migrants resisted leaving their tents. Living in the containers would have meant more intense policing, collection of fingerprints, and a curfew between the hours of 7 pm and 7 am (BBC 2016).

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US and Jamaica: hip hop culture, basketball, Bob Marley as icon of coolness and political conscience. Africans didn’t have such cool, iconic figures—only images of starving Ethiopians and ethnic slurs comparing Africans with stinking fish. So, being African was not cool. Today, it is cool to be African, and the Bijlmer has become a place where Africa is hot and happening, reinvented as a source of pride, pleasure, and empowerment by young black people in search of who they are.

This new delight in the funk and vibe of Africa is clearly part of a broader, transnational revitalisation of African pop culture as an aesthetic style that connects young urbanites across Africa and the African diaspora. This global celebration of African style and aesthetics has been criticised for its crude cultural commodification, neo-liberal underpinnings, and lack of political consciousness, in particular in discussions about Afropopulism. Indeed, some of the sonic, visual, and verbal aspects of these new musical developments might also generate stereotyping and exoticising effects regarding ethnicity and gender construction, resulting perhaps in new forms not only of empowerment, but also of exclusion. In the context of Europe’s racialised power structures and intensified waves of racism and xenophobia, however, it is important to stress that the movement of “rebranding Africa” not only contests the marginalisation of Africa and Africans in dominant Eurocentric narratives; it also reasserts the relevance of Africa(ns) in an emerging black Europe, insisting on the distinctly African contribution to the larger project of black emancipation currently under way.

Notes

1 Funded by the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), my research project “African by Design” explores the convergences and divergences between the renewed interest in African roots among Afro-Caribbean Dutch and the ways in which Ghanaian–Dutch youth engage with their African origins. Special thanks to my research assistants Gladys Akom Ankobrey, Rita Ouedraogo, and Dzifa Gomashie for their research contributions to the project and their comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

2 The hyphenated category of Afro-Dutch has recently grown in usage, especially among Afro-Surinamese Dutch, as a label of self-identification for all African-descended Dutch people, but is also contested by some of them.

3 This is a common term often preferred over the term “black”.

4 Hiplife is a popular music genre in Ghana that emerged in the 1990s and mixes hip hop beat making and rap lyrics with Ghanaian Highlife music, reggae, proverbial speech, and Akan storytelling (Shipley 2013a). Its Nigerian version is also known as Naija Beat. In 2011, Ghanaian–British DJ Abrantee coined the term Afrobeats so as to popularise this music in the European mainstream.
References


on development cooperation and peace-building projects in their (forebears’) former countries. Among Somalis, who constitute the largest group of Africans in Finland, the older generation especially preferred to call themselves Somalis, not Africans or black. However, their communities and the dozens of Finnish Somali associations were linked to the African and black diasporas through anti-racism activities. The younger generations, who were born or grew up in Finland in immigrant families, nurtured their ethnic identifications but also made space for blackness as a collective racialised identity, joining with other non-white Finns of African descent and other racialised minorities.

Reliance on ethnic or other predetermined categorisations characterises the design of many studies on immigrants and racialised minorities. Through examples from the African presence in Finland exhibition project, I have instead attempted to show how using collaborative methods can avoid what Brubaker (2002, 164) calls “groupism”, or the “tendency to take groups for granted in the study of ethnicity, race and nationhood”. The diversity and the rapid transformations within African diaspora communities in Europe can be better understood when people are invited to participate in knowledge production about their lives and communities and are allowed to perform and discuss their multiple identifications and activities as transnational diaspora subjects.

Collaborative action-research methodologies emphasising the political dimension of the research and the agency of people as Finnish citizens or residents and as racialised diaspora subjects enabled a move from asking people about their identities to exploring the places of diaspora cultures and the complex processes of local diaspora formations. By these places, I mean the social spaces in which questions related to racism and the cultural, political, and other flows of the global African diaspora (Zeleza 2009) are articulated and (re)negotiated. I argue that research on these processes is needed to identify and understand the on-going cultural transformations (e.g., Rastas 2018) in European societies caused by immigration and the rapidly growing numbers of African/Afro-/black Europeans who can no longer be categorised as immigrants.

Notes

1 My role as an outsider categorised as a white Finn was evident, although questions related to racism and Africa(ness) are important to my personal life, family ties, social networks, and work history. A good network among diaspora communities was a precondition for the project.

2 I continue to analyse the research materials produced during the exhibition project in my on-going project “Rethinking diasporas, redefining nations: Representations of African diaspora formations in museums and exhibitions” (2015–2020, funded by the Academy of Finland) by comparing African diasporas and their representations in various European countries and the United States.
3 Museum management also agreed to apply for funding for the project. Various workshops and the salaries for a museum lecturer and a doctoral student working on the project at the museum were funded by grants from the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and the Kone Foundation. Some participants received grants for producing exhibitions materials and new archives and collections projects.

4 The members of the exhibition team appointed by Werstas were collections head Ulla Jaskari, museum educator Hanna Yi-Hinkkala, visual designer Kati Lehtinen, and Uyi Osazee, a PhD student hired to work for the exhibition project, along with myself. Just before the opening of the exhibition, Wisam Elfadl joined the team as a museum educator.

5 Their names were displayed at the exhibition but cannot be listed here.

6 This excerpt is from the introductory letter.

7 This excerpt is from the introductory letter.

8 Nearly 20 researchers, including doctoral and master students, contributed to planning and organising the project.

9 The logo, which is aimed at challenging common, stereotypical depictions of Africans and black Europeans, can be found at the bottom of the first page of the education package for schools (see Werstas 2016).

10 For example, European Union funding enabled much of this project but also forced the opening of the exhibition six months earlier than planned, which caused many changes and omissions in the manuscript.

11 An evaluation of the research as a museological project is underway. My involvement necessitated an outsider’s gaze, which was provided by Lorena Sancho Querol (2015), who studied this exhibition project in her own research project.

12 To my knowledge, this rule was followed, with only a couple of exceptions I cannot explain here.

13 For more information on the exhibition and the development of the manuscript during the project, see Sancho Querol (2015) and Rastas (2016).

14 These included short films by Somali-based film director Naima Mohamud and the documentary Minun Helsinkini/My Helsinki/Waa/Magaaladedii Helsinki, which was produced by Helena Oikarinen-Jabai and Sami Sallinen and made by young men Akram Farah, Hassan Omar, Jabril aka Dice, Mohamed Isse, and Ahmed Muhamed about their lives in Helsinki. The radio documentaries were made by Leena Peltokangas for the Finnish Broadcasting Company in 2010.

15 Mourides are Muslims who belong to one of the largest Sufi brotherhoods in Senegal. Mouride organisations and prayer circles operate in nearly all of the world’s major cities. The section on Mourides was planned by Marjatta Peltonen and the group of Senegalese Mourides whom she studied in Helsinki.

References


Involving diaspora communities through action research


multi-pronged, strategic approach. Of course, we must continue to “call” racism where it needs to be called, but we need as well to defamiliarise; to shake people out of their understandings and otherings; to disrupt the tariffs to better illumine; to disrupt majoritarianism by moving more dexterously around that majority–minority matrix.

Notes


1 I’m thinking of the comments Mark Sealy, artistic director of the black photographers collective Autograph, made during the 2014 protests against the Barbican’s racially controversial Exhibit B exhibition: “Since the 1980s, it is progress zero. Our institutions have failed to bring about change – whether it is academia, the Macpherson Report or funding policies – [black] people feel absented from power, authoring and having a voice” (Farrington 2014). And, in a 2015 interview, comedian Lenny Henry spoke of there having been 29 initiatives at the BBC alone in the last 15 years to achieve ethnic diversity in editorial staffing, “and the numbers are actually going down” (“Black Actors” 2014).

2 In Angelou’s poem, the stanzas appear in the reverse order with another stanza in between.

References


discursive reflection I deal with in one of the closing chapters of the book *Kinder der Befreiung*. There I argue that having African ancestors does not automatically mean that Africa constitutes a frame of reference for self-definition and identity, particularly if there is no direct contact with African families, which holds true for most of the generation that is at the focus of this study. Rather, a conscious acknowledgement of the African origin, which may in some cases be separated by generations, is not so much based on the maintenance of cultural traditions as on the political decision of being part of a worldwide Black community. This is particularly evident in Bärbel Kampmann’s story; her voyage to Africa is a political and historical claim of the long-missed other part of her equation, and in the imagination of the gathering of her African and African American ancestors it is transformed into a spiritual journey, a return to her roots. This reconciliation with the past does not mean eschewing the present, nor does it lead to the neglect of her white German heritage. Rather, it empowers her political struggles in the society in which she was born and raised.

Keeping Bärbel Kampmann’s story and other life writing alive aims at the deconstruction of power structures in historical discourses and is directed towards a new definition of transnational Black identities and further developments of cross-cultural coalitions. Such coalitions have been formed in Germany over the past 30 years, in organisations like the ISD and in various exchanges with Black communities in Europe, in African countries, and in the US. It is in this context that the use of the concept of memory and postmemory can add to a further understanding of the diversity of Black people in Europe, and in Germany in particular. Their stories are neither a “single story”, nor isolated accounts—they are expressions of a multiple individual and collective experiences, and they ought to be remembered. As Tracey O. Patton asserts: “It is in the process of meaning-making where memory and postmemory can be used as cognitive tools to challenge the hegemonic hierarchies often supported by language, thought and interaction” (2015, 197). The interaction between the different texts collected in *Kinder der Befreiung* follows a call-and-response pattern in which hegemonic hierarchies are deconstructed and history is re-constructed from individual and collective perspectives of a minority whose stories have long been ignored.

Notes

1 “Black”, “Black German”, “Afro-German”, “African Diaspora”, or “Black Community” are related terms that are in common use in Afro-German discourses.
2 An English translation, *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, was published six years later (Opitz et al. 1992).
3 These comprise autobiographies by Daniel Cardwell (2013), Jimmy Hartwig (2010), and Doris McMillon (1985), as well as Bärbel Kampmann’s biography (Gerunde 2000).
References


Notes

1 This half-sister’s only daughter (my mother’s first cousin) migrated to the US in the 1990s, later married a Afro-Guyanese–American (Caribbean), and now has two Afro-German/Afro-Guyanese/African American children. Some of the discourses about the Afro-German participation in the fabric of America are covered in Eva Boesenberg’s essay on “Reconstructing ‘America’” (2011).
2 This demarcation between Germanness and Afro-Germanness is not the same as Reinhold Steingröver’s observation that “later stories seem to downplay race as a determinant” (2010, 287) in his analysis of shifted approaches.
3 Heide Fehrenbach in “Afro-German Children and the Social Politics of Race after 1945” estimates that Afro-German children numbered only around 5,000 by 1955 (2006, 226).
4 This presentation of the cultural parameters of African American Afro-Germans advances and specifically informs the issue posed by Marilyn Sephcole, that “[t]he culture they [Afro-Germans] have usually internalized is the German one” (1996, 15).
6 I borrow my understanding of this category from Kwame Nimako and Stephen Small’s “Theorizing Black Europe and African Diaspora” (2009).
7 This category is inspired by Leroy Hopkins’ discussions of cultural naming (though not personal naming) and what emerges as literary and visual storytelling. See his “Inventing Self” (1996).
8 This is a parameter of the Afrocentric paradigm that Molefi Asante explores in Blackshire-Belay’s volume (1996).
9 See Damani Partridge’s “Exploding Hitler and Americanizing Germany” (2011).
10 See websites such as www.gitrace.org/, home of an organisation that helps children trace their American GI fathers of any ethnic background.
12 Tina Campt, in the final chapter of Other Germans (2004), frames the possibility of memory with specific interest in differences between Black Germans being raised by either a White or Black parent and within or without Germany.
13 See Tina Campt’s “Pictures of ‘US’”, in which the author asks, “What role can photography play in apprehending who black Germans are, both as individuals and as part of the diaspora more broadly?” (2011, 141).

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Christel N. Temple


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hope and dignity—though it also destroyed the lives of the millions of innocents, including some of his closest friends. Here lies the tragedy of Paul Robeson, a great man and artist whose despair over the indignities borne by black American citizens and the victims of imperialism combined with his profound affection for the Russian and Jewish cultures to present him with a torturous moral dilemma that he ultimately failed to resolve.

Notes

1 During his 1959 trip to Russia, Robeson once again sang in Yiddish at a Moscow concert marking the centennial of the writer Sholem Aleichem (“Robeson” 1959, 38).
2 This we know from Robeson’s unpublished notes, entitled “Machine Man; Need Whole Man” (Robeson, Jr. 2001, 244). For a comparative exploration of Russian and African American folk traditions, see Peterson 2000.
3 For these sentiments, see, for example, Robeson 1950a and 1950b.
4 Numerous eye-witness accounts can be found in Boyle and Bunie 2001; cf. also Mattuevich 2010.
5 For Pauli’s own account of his stay in the Soviet Union, see Robeson, Jr. 2001.
6 Padmore examined his own ideological transformation from a committed Communist to Pan-Africanist in his memoir (1956). It is also true that Du Bois would eventually overcome his scepticism and embrace the Soviet Union and staunchly defend Paul Robeson against the accusations of disloyalty hurled at the actor during the McCarthy years (see, for example, Du Bois 1968, 1950).
7 For accounts of the purge by African American memoirists, see Smith 1964.
9 A point made at some length by Robert Robinson in his memoir, published upon his return from a 44-year stay in the Soviet Union: Robinson and Slevin, Black on Red: A Black American’s 44 Years inside the Soviet Union (1988), 313–317.
10 Peculiarly, chunks of this speech, which Robeson gave when he was awarded the Stalin peace prize in 1952, found their way into his eulogy to Stalin, published in the commemorative issue of Pravda on the occasion of Stalin’s death (Robeson 1953).
11 At least that’s the impression one gets from perusing his son’s memoirs (see, for example, Robeson, Jr. 1989, 2001).
12 The great composer Dmitri Shostakovich was particularly disdainful in his account of the Robeson/Feffer episode. In a posthumous memoir, published in the West, Shostakovich presents Robeson as Stalin’s willing dupe. The reality was probably slightly more complicated (Shostakovich 1979, 198–199).
13 For more detailed accounts, see Bentley 1971.
15 Also see another similar and similarly affectionate letter, “Letter to Paul Robeson from the Students of the 10th Grade of Girls’ School No. 29 in the City of Oryol”, 1953.
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and increasingly stable, networked Black community (Aitken and Rosenhaft 2013).

Notes

1 The Staatsbibliothek Berlin provides a list of digitised German historical newspapers: http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/web/, last accessed 14 September 2017. The Hamburg Passenger Lists provide a wealth of information. The digitised lists comprise documents in the file 373–7 I, VIII (Auswanderungsamt I) from the Staatsarchiv Hamburg. They are available through the subscription website ancestry.com.

2 This chapter builds on a wider study into African migration to Germany pre-1914, which is informed by a database with information on 1094 African visitors. On the study and the methodology employed, see Aitken 2016.

References


Passenger List (PL—Various), Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 373–7 I, VIII (Auswanderungsamt I).


writer and employed in *The Opposite House* and *White is for Witching* traces the boundaries surrounding concepts such as nation and home only to engage in processes of overstepping these thresholds in acts of crossings, encounters, and fracture. Through writing and performing love and desire, the novels redraw the boundaries of defining the home and of sharing a world. Ironically, both Oyeyemi’s novels first have to destroy, intercept, or refuse the space of the home/house in order to initiate new forms of community and togetherness—to make space for more inclusive and open relationalities. Pheng Cheah argues that, “without the openness of the world, nothing can take place. […] It is the original openness that gives us accessibility to others so that we can be together” (2016, 18). In focusing on *being together*, both novels discussed above take part in a process of opening their spaces of home, of opening up their worlds.

Notes

1 Santería is a syncretic religion, forged in sixteenth-century Cuba when West African slaves were forced to give up their native religions and convert to Catholicism and resorted to merge their gods with Catholic saints, thus producing a hybrid and intermingled new form of religious beliefs (cf. Barnet 2001): “On arrival, the Orishas became beloved in secret. Slaves had to be Catholic and obedient or they’d be killed. […] The gods hid among the saints and apostles and nobody perceived them unless they wanted to; it didn’t take as much as people had thought for Catholicism and Yoruba to fuse together” (Oyeyemi 2007, 24).

2 English and white Miranda, one of two female protagonists, suffers from an eating disorder called pica—the desire to eat non-nutritive substances such as paper, dirt, or metal. Miranda’s main choice of non-food item is chalk, and she thus consumes the chalky earth of Dover upon which England is built.

3 With this, the novel consciously refers to the fact that, prior to the establishment of detention centres in the UK, many local rooming houses and hotels in seaside towns like Dover were utilised by the government to house asylum seekers awaiting processing. This unavoidably led to tensions and was accordingly taken up by right-wing nationalist movements. As Les Back argues, “it is the small provincial towns on the [British] coast like Margate, Dover and Hastings that have become the centre of concern about illegal immigration and asylum. These towns which occupy a special location in the national imaginary […] have become the new frontier for the defenders of exclusive national culture ‘rights for whites’” (Back 2006, 35).

4 “Rule, Britannia” (“Britannia rule the waves”), a patriotic, nationalistic song that originated from a poem by James Thomson in 1740, became a tool to foster a united and imperialist British identity and helped to conceive a powerful Britain/British Empire (“Rule, Britannia”, *OED*).

References


but one that Deola will turn, we sense, into her personal strategy, thus translating the meaning of the recurring phrase that also ends the novel from a sign of anxious ambivalence into an affirmation of the confidence that comes from self-authentication: “We’re fine … we’re here” (301).

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poem about seeking new media, mobile-app-driven sex, and intimacy in an unfamiliar city:

From this ancient city where new technology
Found a tender moment in close proximity
Because now this night is eternal like Rome
And in this poem I can take Leonardo home.

(2013, 69)

As in this encounter between strangers, embracing the potentiality of mediated connections, Siffre’s and Atta’s black queer poetics looks forward to a time when racism, homophobia, and misogyny do not control forms of social, sexual, or literary expression. As black queer poetry unfolds its potential in media, performance, and print, it continues to expand its community of influence. The potentiality of queerness for an open-ended poetics and politics makes such an expansion imaginable and possible.

Notes

1 In 2018, the British government deported black Caribbean residents who could not provide proper documentation to prove their residency status in the UK, including members of the Windrush generation; the government made no acknowledgment of the circumstances of their arrival immediately after World War II. They had been invited into the country when their labour was desperately needed, and they experienced social ostracism and discrimination. In subsequent decades, anti-immigrant legislation was passed that diminished the number of migrants, while anti-immigrant sentiments led to violence against visibly different migrants. For a succinct account of these experiences, see the essays by Fred D’Aguiar, Henry Louis Gates, and Stuart Hall in the anthology Black British Culture and Society, edited by Kwesi Owusu (2000).

2 The titles of both works reference James Baldwin’s famous words, as recorded in Raoul Peck’s brilliant documentary, I Am Not Your Negro (2016), a nuanced, politically charged account of Baldwin’s ideas as relevant to our contemporary moment: “What white people have to do is try to find out in their own hearts why it was necessary to have a nigger in the first place. Because I am not a nigger. I’m a man. […] If I’m not the nigger here, and if you invented him, you the white people invented him, then you have to find out why. And the future of the country depends on that. Whether or not it is able to ask that question” (1:28:59–1:29:45).

3 Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager, was the victim of a murderous attack by a group of racist young white men in 1993. The case made headlines for the botched police investigation and the initial acquittal of some of the perpetrators. When the case was reopened in 2006, fresh evidence was examined. Gary Dobson and Davis Norris were finally convicted of the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 2012. Stephen’s friend, who escaped from the scene with his life, reported that his attackers uttered, “What, what, nigger?” during the assault.
References


Afrospanish identity constructions in poetry

our shared humanity. Accordingly, Agboton stresses in an interview that “la diáspora es humana, como lo es el sufrimiento o la alegría” (Ngom 2013, 137) [the diaspora is human, such as suffering and happiness are], a statement echoed by Traoré’s appeal that, to resolve misunderstandings and transcend mutual ignorance, we should not fall for clichés but focus on “lo humano que somos todos, de poder entendernos, encontrarnos” (“Entrevista”, 7:05 min.) [the human that we all are, to be able to understand each other, to find our way to each other]. Or, eventually, as the Cameroonian author Céline Clémence Magnéché Ndé so rightly claims in her poem “Quiero ser” [I want to be], understand that:

Negro, rojo, blanco, amarillo, ¡tonterías!
Todos somos las ramas de un mismo árbol:
el árbol de la vida.

(Nana Tadoun et al. 2007, 63)

[Black, red, white, yellow, nonsense! We are all the branches of the same tree: the tree of life.]

Notes

1 Röggla states that, although racified categories such as black or white are fictions, these fictions have very real effects on peoples’ lives (such as in the presence or absence of certain privileges) that need to be voiced (2012, 19). Accordingly, the term Black is used not as a biological category that refers to actual skin colour but to label political and social realities in a modern/colonial world that are characterised by experiences of marginalisation, colonality, and racism and have a historical dimension (cf. Sow 2009, 19).

2 My special thanks to Mar Gallego, who guided my attention to this very illuminating song.

3 All translations of quotes into English are mine, if not otherwise indicated.

4 As Brancato (cf. 2009, 10, 35) argues, this is furthermore reflected in Spanish society’s unawareness of the Afrospanish diaspora’s cultural production.

5 Cf. also “Somos negras” (2015); “Black People” (2010); or with respect to Europe in general, Diao and Pitts (2014); moreover Mecheril (2009, 73).

6 These words probably allude to the fact that the local Romani community of Buika’s childhood neighbourhood in Palma de Mallorca had an important influence on her artistic development (cf. Cornwell 2008).

7 They both represent “the emergence of new cultural actors” (Ngom 2008, 101) writing in Spanish that come from other African countries than Equatorial Guinea and whose writings deal with the experience of migrating and living (as the African Other) in Spanish society; cf. also Ngom 2011. For a further interpretation of Agboton’s poems, cf. Borst 2018. For the biographies of these two authors, cf. the information on the homepages of the Biblioteca Africana and the Encyclopedia of Afro-European Studies as well as Ngom 2013.

8 According to the author, she writes her poems initially in Gun and then translates them into Spanish. However, she considers both versions as the original (cf. Ngom 2013, 13; Agboton 2006, 13).
9 Traoré furthermore keeps publishing poems on his blogs in French, Wolof, Spanish, and Galician (cf. Figueiras Catoira 2016).

10 The last two of these verses also function as the motto of the second part of the poem collection (cf. Traoré 2013, 59).

11 Cf. also Traoré’s poem “Senderos” (post from 18 October 2014) on his Spanish blog: “Me equivoco, tengo razón. | Te equivocas, tienes razón. | Se equivoca, tiene razón. | Nos equivocamos, temenos razón. | Ustedes se equivocan, tenéis razón. | Ellos se equivocan, tienen razón. | Entre la razón y el equívoco | la evolución […]” (Abdoulaye, n. p.) [I’m wrong, I’m right. You’re wrong, you’re right. One is wrong, one is right. We are wrong, we are right. You are wrong, you are right. They are wrong, they are right. Between right and wrong is transformation (…)].

12 Cf. also an interview (post from 27 October 2013) on Traoré’s Spanish blog (Abdoulaye, n. p.).

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Videos and audio-CDs


Blog posts and homepages


Articles and reviews about the film praise it for its celebration of a Black heroine and for its (alleged) mainstreaming of Black history within a supposedly White genre. The circles of authentification and unquestioning approval may, however, have effectively stifled any urge to engage in the complex needle-in-the-haystack type of research required to uncover the events surrounding Belle’s life since, as the film’s and the book’s advertising credits suggest, there are already such powerful accounts of the “true story”. The concept sold well; Asante continues to film race-relations romances based on “true stories”, be they set against the backdrop of Southern Africa’s history of apartheid or that of Nazi Germany: similar plots with changing costumes, props and (historical) settings that ultimately deflect attention from the violence inflicted in their historical contexts—and from the need to engage with the continuity and legacy of racism rather than keeping it safely contained in a fantasy past. Artists, writers, filmmakers—and critics (!) do not have to comply with an alleged audience taste that is emblematic of a “psychosis of Whiteness”, as Kehinde Andrews puts it. Zadie Smith, in her novel Swing Time, scathingly ridicules the recent parading of the exceptional Belle at Kenwood (2016, 112). Fred D’Aguiar’s pioneering, yet timeless, novel of commemoration on the Zong massacre, Feeding the Ghosts, also invents evidence and an even more unlikely Black heroine: Mintah is thrown overboard, but rises from the sea and ultimately furnishes the jury and the readers with a testimony. D’Aguiar thus feeds a much-desired fantasy complete with narrative closure. As the novel’s title poignantly reminds us, however, that fantasy remains firmly located on the diegetic level. Beyond this, it is but a “feeding [of] the ghosts” (1997). In marked contrast to the film Belle, D’Aguiar’s novel can serve to open up a discussion about historical silences, about the ethical dimensions of the transatlantic slave trade, and about cultures of both remembering and adapting difficult pasts with complex implications for the present.

Notes

1 I would like to thank Silu Pascoe, Ulla Rahbek, and Dineke Stam for their helpful comments and suggestions on different aspects of earlier versions of this text.
2 Given that the film’s aesthetics are the utmost expression of what might be expected from a mainstream heritage production, the classification as “indie” is conspicuous and highly suggestive of the racialised structures of perception at work in the Western film industry. Whether it is thus “othered” from the mainstream because its scriptwriter, its director, or its protagonist are Black women is, of course, difficult to determine. The gap between festival (September 2013, Toronto) and cinematic release (May [US] and June [UK] 2014) hints at concerns that a simultaneous release with Steve McQueen’s 12 Years a Slave (November 2013) would have relegated Belle to a shadow existence. With such a delay, Belle could thus profit from the discourse established by McQueen’s film
and at the same time distinguish itself as a film about Britain that inscribed itself in a recognisably British tradition.

3 The painting was the subject of an episode of the BBC art history series *Fake or Fortune?*, screened under the episode title “A Double Whodunnit” on 2 September 2018. Evidence from the household account books and chemical tests confirmed the identity of the artist. Previously, the painting had been loosely attributed to Johan Zoffany.

4 The claims pertaining to both artists’ direct source of inspiration assumed special significance in the context of a dispute about the writing credits. Following an arbitration by the Writers Guild of America (WGA), Sagay has been credited as the sole author. The dispute is only consequential for the present exploration because it displays both involved parties’ identification with the film’s representational agenda.

5 A LifeCaps study guide (Mason 2014), didactic materials pertaining to the film and the painting (e.g., Card 2015; Flowers 2014), and educational materials on Belle’s presence at Kenwood (e.g., Historic England, n.d.) have recently emerged. Prior to the film production, the painting had inspired a short story (Donoghue 2002) and a number of stage performances (e.g., Busby 2007). Most of the sparse available records on Belle had been unearthed and presented in a short article by Gene Adams (1984). Byrne’s recent book draws on contextual evidence rather than offering any new insights or evidence pertaining to Belle.

6 An example is Nisha Lilía Diu’s long review article in *The Daily Telegraph* (2014). Republished on the occasion of Belle’s Netflix release in the UK (2016), it fuelled the spiral of authentification twice. Streaming consumers, however, tend to select the film for the way it has been categorised (as “period drama based on fact”). They will be extremely unlikely to come to the film informed and quite likely to consume it outside an embedding critical context.

7 Information on distributors (“Fox Searchlight Pictures”, a branch of Fox Entertainment Group, distributor of independent and European films across North America) and producers (among them the British “Isle of Man and Pinewood Pictures” and the British Film Institute) is intertwined with the opening shots.

8 Byrne’s remains a singular aside. Even so, its implications raise questions. Who forces producers to bend evidence to tell a compelling story? What does a compelling story necessitate? Is the invented love plot more compelling than the mystery of Belle’s presence and status? And is the Zong case not compelling in and of itself?

9 The film establishes that Belle was “born on English soil” (00:08:23). The BBC episode of *Fake or Fortune?* presents the claim that she was born in the West Indies (“A Double Whodunnit” 2018). Neither of these speculations can presently be confirmed.

10 Floridian historians show that Lindsay bought a plot in Pensacola for Maria Belle and possibly enabled her to pay for her manumission in the early 1770s (Clune and Stringfield 2009, 110–13). This renders the relationship between Lindsay and Maria Belle and possibly also that between Belle and the Mansfields more complex than hitherto suggested. The difficulty of appraising Maria Belle and her relationship with either Lindsay or their daughter is reflected in Byrne’s tie-in book. Neither Byrne nor other authors have entertained the possibility that Maria Belle could have been alive while her daughter was already in the Mansfields’ care.

11 The Somerset case “moved through eight hearings” with unclear outcome, which Walvin attributes partially to Mansfield’s “procrastinations”; the various “delays through which the case stumbled served to heighten public interest”
The Zong case not only “made clear […] a rotten moral core to the slave system”, but “exposed it, publicly, as never before”, spurring on a “rising mood of deep-seated popular outrage” (Walvin 2011, 211).

Apart from such individuals as historian James Walvin and writer David Dabydeen, who have been pioneers in the field and continue in their lifelong engagement with figures, topics, and relations of relevance for a Black British historical culture, countless local historians have unearthed Black history in specific contexts (e.g., Stephen Small for Liverpool), and artistic engagements have been equally abundant (e.g., the recent Bristol-based project Daughters of Igbo) (Martin 2017). Peter Fryer’s Staying Power, a state-of-the-art compilation in 1984, had a considerable impact, and was followed by diverse academic works devoted to specific periods, e.g., Gretchen Gerzina’s Black Victorians/Black Victoriana (2003) or most recently Miranda Kaufmann’s Black Tudors (2017), to name but two examples.

This shift towards “consumer-orientation” is evident in Western productions, but also in the Bollywoods and Nollywoods of the new millennium, which are sometimes classed as seeking a global appeal—which seems to be a stand-in for their marketability in the West. Strong narrativity has become a reliable cinematic feature across these productions.

Sagay was no longer involved at this stage.

The fugue underlines the melancholy situation, but its use as period music reveals more about present-day notions of eighteenth-century taste than contemporary ones. That the cousins would have been familiar with Bach is not inconceivable, but Bach was not widely received in England before Mendelssohn made him popular.

Against the backdrop of prominent Black individuals moving in, or inhabiting, European aristocratic households (contemporary examples are Soliman in Habsburg or Gannibal in Russia), the decision was perhaps not as exceptional as suggested by the makers of the film. More research in this realm is certainly required.

Although different versions of the closing judgment of the Somerset case derive from several third-party reports and no written speech exists (Byrne 2014, 99), the wording is repeated habitually in countless places, sealing rather than verifying the connection between the statement and the towering figure of Mansfield.

The unlikely construction of Belle as a key player in the case cannot be negated by the records; neither can it be confirmed.

Lindsay married the Scottish Mary Millner in 1768, who died in 1788; two illegitimate children were left £500, though whether Belle is one of them is not clear (Byrne 2014, 142).

Mabel passes advice to Belle on how to comb her hair with the words, “My mam taught me” (00:38:02).

Card draws attention to the most striking historical inaccuracies but does not discuss their implications for the formation of a (collective) historical consciousness.

The film could be used in a classroom with younger pupils (aged 12 to 14 years) for its (Disneyesque) depiction of a non-White heroine who takes an active role, not only in her personal life, but with regard to social wrongs. The claim “based on a true story” in the film credits, however, should be clearly qualified by teachers, as should the historicity of the word “negroe”. Questioning the film’s historical inaccuracies can be a worthwhile exercise with older pupils (aged 15 to undergraduate students), but clearly presupposes profound embedding and the integration of additional, reliable materials. A discussion of the painting alone is as insufficient as a web search; the article by Gene
Adams, selected chapters from Byrne’s book for the family history and from Walvin’s *The Zong* are conceivable and can be distributed among work groups for presentations. Materials such as those presented by the V&A’s format Into Film only add to the problematic cycle of authentification (cf. Flowers 2014).

The early shots showing the cousins in the park (00:09:18–00:09:20) are modelled on the original painting and its suggestion of motion. Ten minutes later, the painter’s act of hammering the canvas onto the wooden frame is followed by a discussion concerning the propriety of Belle being a sitter (00:19:30–00:20:25). Shortly after this, close-ups of the brushes and the sitters are intertwined with the beginning love plot (00:28:09–00:29:18). The revelation of the painting is enacted (a point is made, again, of showing the material cover being pulled down by the painter) just prior to the court scene (01:22:06–01:23:07), one climactic finale following another.

I would like to thank Richard Hunter, archivist at Scone Palace, for providing this information. In spite of the painting’s impressive circulation in the media, on the internet, and in some scholarly contexts (e.g., Card 2015, 8), its size (one of the few certainties that there are) has so far neither been mentioned nor been commented on.

BBC One’s *Fake or Fortune?* recently presented confirmed evidence that the artist, David Martin, had used the gesture of the finger on the cheek in other portraits of female sitters, but, obviously, more research into this is required in order to shed light on the likely implications of the gesture. The episode also presents changing references to the painting in the Mansfield account books over the centuries (“A Double Whodunnit” 2018). None of this information was available when the film was produced.

The shots suggest the Reynolds to be hanging in a corner of the gallery. Only details of the image are disclosed in point-of-view shots, and neither the wall nor other objects are integrated in these shots. When Belle’s contemplative gaze is interrupted by Davnier and they enter a conversation, the spot where the image should logically be suspended is decorated by a different, much smaller image (00:23:34–00:26:14). Inconsistencies like these are not habitually discovered (viewers consuming the film for entertainment will not rewind and verify), and the Reynolds painting and its implications for Belle’s suggested development are likely to be taken at face value.

This seems to have been the director’s decision. The script suggests a different painting, in which “an English rose stares out, as a black domestic submissively fastens a priceless bracelet around her lady-master’s wrist” (Sagay 2014, 27).

New guided tours and medialisations have been created that benefit Scone Palace and Kenwood, among other places.

The book, first released just before the release of the film, first bore the title *Belle: The Slave Daughter and the Lord Chief Justice*, prompting some readers to expect “a story about illicit sexual behaviour between a slave master and his property” (Stowers 2017), and promised to reveal “The True Story Behind the Movie”. HarperCollins (with branches in the predominantly White Anglophone world) published the book as *Belle: The True Story of Dido Belle*, marketing it on its website and elsewhere as “the sensational true tale” and “stunning story of the first mixed-race girl” and “illegitimate daughter of a captain […] and an enslaved African woman” brought up by “one of the most powerful men […] and a leading opponent of slavery […] in his lavish estate”. “Eighteenth-century England was” allegedly “shocked” by the painting of “this extraordinary woman”. The publishers add that “*Belle* includes 20 pages of black-and-white photos.” Casting aside the blurb and title images, the nature of the commission would be hardly noticeable, which creates the impression that
Byrne wanted to distance herself from the film, politely choosing to mention it as little as possible.

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with that transnational process. Moreover, the reference to ancient traditions such as braiding and masquerade also hints at the importance of memory in maintaining some sort of connection to the past, to real and imagined homelands, and to other displaced black diasporic groups. One of the nine bracelets on the subject’s wrist stands out alone, representing a sense of uniqueness within a group, for not all routes are the same, nor does uprooting impact all dispersed people in the same way. The separated bracelet can also signify her remoteness from the audience. On the whole, her unapologetic African heritage is empowering her, shielding her away from colonial subjugation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored Afro-European artist Angèle Etoundi Essamba’s use of photography to produce counter-images that challenge the negative stereotyping of people of African descent anchored in Western consciousness; these images also constitute a visual counter-archive that contributes to the knowledge production of the African diaspora in Europe. As instruments of her cultural guerrilla raid, Essamba’s images suggest a new narrative of black womanhood through the black female gaze and new ways of seeing the black female body as a promising path to self-empowerment. Essamba’s women are not fixed in space nor time. Rather, they present a multi-layered discourse and invite a conversation about gender, displacement, ancestry, and diasporic identities. Ultimately, in a political and cultural climate that tends to promote a nationalist and colour-blind understanding of the self, Roots 3 demonstrates that the here (Europe) and there (Africa) are not necessarily oxymoronic. Roots need not be subdued or suppressed for routes to thrive. Instead, they are part of the social and spiritual transformation that characterises Afro-Europe.

References


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and People of Colour to sit as equal partners at the negotiating table of power. Diversity can instead be seen as the response of the hegemony to anti-discriminatory activism.

The diversity concept has furthermore translated struggles against institutional structures into a question of the individual. Locating discrimination at the individual level prevents us from seeing discrimination as a wider struggle against inequality and systematic domination and exclusion. Discrimination is not about individuals but about structures of oppression. Maisha Eggers states that when diversity replaces the “Rassismuskritik” (or racism critique), dominant power structures come out of focus and become less accountable (Eggers 2011, 59). This reduces diversity to an empty shell that does not address social discrimination and the accompanying power structures of exclusion and inequality. Diversity degenerates into a concept symbolic of the stability of institutional discrimination.

In light of this analysis, I ask myself whether it is meaningful to continue using the concept of diversity when anti-discrimination work provides useful analytical tools to directly address exclusion. And if we perceive diversity to be a necessary concept, it may be useful to analytically examine what purpose it serves us. Meanwhile, as we continue engaging in this discussion, I wonder whether empowering anti-discrimination voices with resources and decision-making capacity would pave the way to a new era of productively reflecting on white norms in the German academia?

Notes

1 I want to thank Esther Kalunge (Berlin) and Ismahan Wayah (Münster) for the translation of my text into English.
2 I would like to thank the organisers of this conference and this roundtable for the invitation and their hard work to make this conference possible.
3 I want to thank the organisers of the conference and the roundtable, especially Ismahan Wayah, for their work and vision.

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sites and highlights how a black British queer studies perspective might complicate and expand our critical horizons and problem-spaces of analysis.

**Conclusion**

The important field-defining critical anthology, *Black Queer Studies* (2005), marked one moment in the consolidation of black queer studies. A decade later, *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies* (Johnson 2016) revisited and appraised the volume’s legacies and the state of the field of black queer studies. Yet if Rinaldo Walcott’s essay, included in the original 2005 volume, forcefully critiques the black studies project’s narrow focus on American blackness, *No Tea, No Shade* is similarly marked by a US-centred and African–American-defined understanding of the field to the detriment of, for instance, queer Caribbeanness, African queerness, or black British queer narratives. In many ways, my call here to attend to black British queerness is linked to a desire to broaden and continually unsettle this demarcation of black queer studies as US-identified. In raising the question of the disarticulation of black British queerness, I am also interested in how the critical formulation of black British queer studies might agitate and expand black British studies to challenge the neat mappings of black British cultural history variously coalesced around particular moments (Windrush, the Battle of Lewisham, the Brixton riots). In the analysis of these sites and moments, queerness is often silenced. It is this spirit of disruptive challenges to established black critical frameworks that I want to invoke here as a key potential of black British queer studies. Impossibility, as here discussed, does not merely refer to a condition of exclusion but also has the potential to operate as a queer mode of critique that refuses disciplinary and epistemological certainty, enacting a practice and ethics of challenge that expands and redefines our queer fields of inquiry and possibility.

**Notes**

1 This mode of relational examination and critique is best evidenced in Gilroy’s path-breaking work, *The Black Atlantic* (1993a), which maps black cultures through their connections and flows across a range of locations that constitute the complex geographies that Gilroy has termed “the Black Atlantic”. I would also suggest that this methodological mode of relational critique is evident in his other 1993 text, *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures* (1993b). It is Gilroy’s insistence that we need to engage with black cultures in terms of pluralities and multi-sitedness that I mean to foreground. This includes an attention to various locations of black cultures but also a complex temporality of relation, such as that which Gilroy examines in a chapter in *Small Acts* entitled “Whose Millennium Is This? Blackness: Pre-modern, Post-modern, Anti-modern”.

2 The Rhodes Must Fall campaign and protests, which started in South Africa with a call to remove a statue of Cecil Rhodes at the University of Cape Town, has
expanded to a broader conversation about decolonising campus spaces, curricula, and pedagogy. This campaign has necessarily been transnational in its dimensions. In the UK, it has focussed on the presence of another statue of Rhodes at Oxford University and the university’s administration of the Rhodes scholarship. The important questions and concerns raised in the context of these debates and campaigns are also extended by some of the conversations in this volume, foremost “Why Isn’t My Professor Black?’ A Roundtable” (with Karim Fereidooni, Emily Ngubia Kessé, and Vanessa Eileen Thompson), pp. 247–256, and Shanell Johnson’s chapter, pp. 257–277.

3 I want to also note here how the decades of the 1960s and '70s staged important conversations about decolonisation in the academy. Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Henry Owuor-Anyumba, and Taban Lo Liyong’s “On the Abolition of the English Department” (1972) marks one flashpoint in this debate, but we might also situate this alongside discussions of the protests of West Indian students in Canada against experiences of racism at what was then called Sir George Williams University (now Concordia University) in Montreal in 1969. These moments recall a longer history of challenges to colonial pedagogy and racism in higher education.

4 It is also useful to remember and perhaps connect Mason-John’s recalling of a biblical discourse of “sin” here with Makeda Silvera’s work in “Man Royals and Sodomites” (1991), which similarly calls attention to how the Bible has functioned in black Atlantic cultures in the context of naming black women’s and queer desires. Both Silvera and Mason-John offer radical projects of challenge and reclamation that perhaps deserve further critical and comparative attention.

5 A wonderful body of work exists that documents Audre Lorde’s almost decade-long sojourn and work in Berlin. This includes Dagmar Shultz’s important documentary film Audre Lorde: The Berlin Years 1984–1992. Chandra Frank (2019) has also published on Lorde’s time and work in the Netherlands in the 1980s.

6 The 1985 Brixton riots followed the well-documented protests and riots that happened in Brixton in 1981. In this instance in 1985, two days of protest and riots were sparked by the shooting of Dorothy “Cherry” Groce by the metropolitan police. In 2014, the police finally apologised for this wrongful shooting. Mason-John’s play shows how this incident also inspired artistic responses, much like the 1981 Brixton riots served to inspire Linton Kwesi Johnson to write, including his poem “Di Great Insohreckshan” (2006, 60). We might also note further lines of queer rememberings and retellings of black British histories in relation to Johnson’s writing about the “New Craas Massahkah” (2006, 54), an event that is revisited through a queer exploration in Jay Bernard’s Surge (2019).

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Approaching university departments for this study has been crucial not just for my research; a new academic network is now being established to coordinate efforts, to reveal which writers and texts are being studied, to exchange ideas, and to hopefully organise more meetings with authors and wider audiences. Inviting these authors to participate in festivals and public lectures can be a real challenge, particularly in Spain; but fostering closer relations between citizens, activists, and the academic community will provide further opportunities to do so.

Finally, many Afro-European literary texts still need to be translated into Spanish, for students and other readers alike. A more dynamic exchange between academics, translators, and publishers would seem desirable. While approaching mainstream publishers is seen as a priority, independent publishers also have much to offer in terms of openness to a diversity of authors and texts. This should in turn have a positive effect on the reception and publication of African Spanish literatures, as it is high time they occupy their rightful place at Spanish universities.

Notes

1 By hispanophone African literature, I refer to works by African and African diasporic writers around the world who write in Spanish. In this chapter, I’m focussing on writers who reside in Spain. As my chapter unfolds, I will refine this concept.

2 Hofstra University’s conference Between Three Continents: Rethinking Equatorial Guinea on the Fortieth Anniversary of its Independence from Spain (2–4 April 2009) was a major international meeting of writers from Equatorial Guinea and academics working on hispanophone African literatures written in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Spain.

3 The award-winning short stories by Carmen Mangué Saint-Omer and Aurelia Bestué Borja and the poems by Carmen Mayra Rondo have been published in the volume Letras femeninas (2018) published by the AECID (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo): https://publicacionesoficiales.boe.es.

4 See also Julia Borst’s chapter in this volume.

5 The chronicle of Spain in Equatorial Guinea by Mariano de Castro and Donato Ndongo (1998, 200) and the poetry of Francisco Zamora Loboch (2008) reflect on this traumatic change.

6 See Juan Miguel Zarandona (2011) for a review of African migration in Spain and governmental policies.

7 As Elisa Joy White highlighted in her Afroeuropeans 2017 plenary lecture “Tales of Black Border Talk (and Other Anomalies in Mad Populist Times)”, this has only enforced the ongoing criminalisation of the black body for the mere fact of moving across borders—presumably most Africans do not wish to leave their continent and migrate. As a result, many migrants find themselves in spaces of maximal vulnerability in the countries of transit (Mullor 2011, 26), and then experience an abandonment once they reach all European countries.

8 One such survey is the one provided by the “Comunidad de Madrid”, which draws a loose distinction between continents in its 2018 “Informe de Población Extranjera Empadronada” [Report on Foreign Population Registered as Resident].
An example is the African continent section, which is presented as follows: AFRICA: 12.63% | Morocco: 8.82% | Rest of Africa: 3.81%.

9 Ana Cebríán Martínez (2016) includes a thorough survey of Afrospanish associations in her doctoral thesis “Etnoeducación y artivismo: aplicaciones de la educación artística contemporánea no formal en el colectivo afroespañol” [Ethnoeducation and activism: applications of contemporary non-formal artistic education in the Afrospanish collective].

10 Movimiento contra la Intolerancia [Movement Against Intolerance], founded by Esteban Ibarra, is one of the rare white organisations actively fighting racism in Spain.

11 Lucía Mbomio’s (2017) book, Las que se atrevieron, documents the stories of several interracial marriages.

12 Federación Africana y Afrodescendiente Negra Bloque Afro; Asociación África Activa; Asociación Centro Panafricano Kituo cha WanafriKa; Centro de Estudios Panafricanos; Centro de Comunicación y Estudios Afrokairós; Asociación de Pintores y Escultores Latinos; Organización Panafricana Española para los Derechos Humanos; Asociación Afro-Bantu de Libre Pensamiento; Asociación Afrodescendiente Universitaria Kwanzaa; Federación de Asociaciones Aficanas en Canarias (FAAC); Asociación de Inmigrantes senegaleses en España (AISE).

13 Italics also in the original document in Spanish.

14 I spoke about this in my article, “La problemática presencia de las literaturas negras en España” [“The problematic presence of black literatures in Spain”].

15 While my work considers writers of African descent, one of the aims of this conference was to separate the field of Equatorial Guinean literature from the broader and more inclusive field of hispanophone African literatures.

16 As I am a lecturer in literary translation, my students at the Department of Modern Languages of the University of Alcalá (Madrid) and I were able to collaborate with the Breaking Ground Project, led by the Speaking Volumes Live Productions organisation. The proposal was to translate experimental short stories by Leone Ross and Irenosen Okojie, fragments of novels and memoirs by Yvette Edwards, Colin Grant, and Peter Kalu, and a detective novel by Jacob Ross. The expectation of meeting the three female writers—we organised a translation class with them on 7 November 2017—and having some of the students’ Spanish versions published greatly contributed to their motivation throughout the eight weeks devoted to translating these texts.

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Addressing the first question—Who gets to study Black Europe?—it is apparent that, quite alarming for the permanent embedding of African European studies in Europe, the institutionalisation of AES is currently more likely to locate permanent places in the US academy. This implicates the structural conditions of European universities that are paired with the limited presence of African European studies scholars in positions that facilitate the development/approval of new programmes and, arguably, the lack of a critical mass of African European and Black European university students with the leverage to advocate for further implementation, as was done for Black studies in the United States.

I addressed the second question—How does Black Europe actually get studied?—by examining the experience of studying Black Europe in the institutional spaces where it currently has its greatest potential for permanence, the US university. My approach was to consider the viability of a sustained presence of African European studies by cultivating student interest via their experience at the Afropeans website. As discussed, the student experience of going beyond the spaces of the US is a crucial component of the implementation and effective teaching of AES courses in the US academy. The students’ responses forecast further interest in AES, provided they have the requisite opportunity to more viscerally—through contemporary technologies, if not actual travel—experience African diaspora and Black communities in Europe.

Finally, the third question—Who is studied?—highlights the circumstances related to a community’s acknowledgement and presence. The case study examining the emergence and now seeming permanence of African diaspora and Black communities in Ireland exemplifies the way that AES is linked to the social, cultural, and political visibility of a community. That is, AES advances, reflects, facilitates, and intersects with the various mechanisms of community recognition and research (i.e. data acquisition, fieldwork, cultural shifts, literature, state initiatives, media representations, etc.). If a community is studied, it exists (and, at times, vice versa). This is the work of the field of African European studies and, indeed, it will continue.

**Note**

1 Notably, a spirited debate occurred at BEST 2005 when a keynote speaker, to the shock and anger of several US scholars, suggested that input regarding their experiences with the intellectual and structural development as well as the framing of the racial discourse of US Black studies was not overwhelmingly desired for the development of Black European studies.

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