Dark Stars of the Evening: Performing African American Citizenship and Identity in Germany, 1890-1920

Kristin L. Moriah
The Graduate Center, City University of New York

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!
Follow this and additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds

Part of the African American Studies Commons, American Studies Commons, English Language and Literature Commons, and the Performance Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact deposit@gc.cuny.edu.
DARK STARS OF THE EVENING: PERFORMING AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY AND CITIZENSHIP IN GERMANY, 1890-1920

by

KRISTIN MORIAH

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
Dark Stars of the Evening: Performing African American Citizenship and Identity in Germany, 1890-1920

by

Kristin Moriah

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date

Robert Reid-Pharr
Chair of Examining Committee

Date

Mario DiGangi
Executive Officer

Supervisory Committee:

Robert Reid-Pharr
Duncan Faherty
Eric Lott

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

_Dark Stars of the Evening: Performing African American Citizenship and Identity in Germany, 1890-1920_

by

Kristin Moriah

Advisor: Robert Reid-Pharr

_Dark Stars of the Evening: Performing African American Citizenship and Identity in Germany, 1890-1920_ demonstrates that black performers in Germany developed wide networks in the performance world as they sought artistic opportunities beyond the racist circumscription of the American popular stage. Their performances became emblematic of modernity, globalization, and imperial might for German audiences at the turn of the century. African American-styled blackness contributed to the formation of the city of Berlin while allowing African American performers to assert themselves on the global stage. Groups like the Four Black Diamonds had a lengthy engagement with the popular stage in Berlin, as opposed to Paris, the city black performers are most often associated with in international contexts. Performances by women like Ida Forsyne and Bricktop signified urban sophistication and New World otherness for _fin-de-siècle_ German audiences. They were also a defining feature of Berlin as a German metropolis.

Black feminist performance scholars have established the relationship between African American women and performance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by focusing on embodiment and movement (Brooks 2006, Brown 2009). Scholarship on the relationship between African Americans and the political work of transnational black performance in the twentieth century has tended to focus on the detritus of American imperialism (Von Eschen 2006,
Batiste 2011). These studies reveal the multivalent nature of black performance for both actors and observers. However, little work has closely examined black performance in Berlin from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, in spite of Berlin's cultural importance.

My first chapter locates the roots of black performance on the German variety stage in the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and uncovers examples of its impact on the landscape of Berlin. My second chapter finds more evidence for the importance of black performance to the formation of Berlin's landscape in its colonial exhibitions and the rise of the department store. These ethnographic exhibitions allowed Germany to present the fruits of imperial labor and discipline to its people. I also examine the way African American performers, like cakewalk duo Dora Dean and Charles Johnson, used fashion and consumer culture to capitalize on the desire for blackness on the popular stage. In the third chapter, I examine how Sissieretta Jones, often referred to as America's first black superstar, strategically curated her German performance reviews in order to increase her listenership and wages in the United States. In that chapter I also highlight African American understandings of Germany as rich space for the production of music and acoustical innovation. My dissertation ends with an analysis of the ways Americans used visual tropes of blackness to demonize Germans in American propaganda during World War I, while African Americans used that moment to stake their claim to Americanness, or "Do Their Bit", as artist Jane Louise Van Der Zee might have put it.

Primary sources for this project were drawn from special collections at the Stadtmuseum Berlin Bibliothek, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center and the Kislak Center. These sources include nineteenth century newspapers and periodicals, children's books, postcards, playbills and other ephemera. I analyze these materials using performance studies methodologies.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am not a native New Yorker, but the steadfast friendship I have found here has made the city a home for me. Megan Paslawski and Lauren Baggett have given me shelter, warmth and the gift of laughter. Kate Broad has been my favorite coffee date, a formidable writing partner, and an uncanny source of wisdom. They are the kindred spirits I have been in search of my whole life. I am lucky to have found them here.

Zee Dempster and Jerry Watts made room for me at the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean (IRADAC). Instances of their kindness and generosity are too great to enumerate, but I am thankful for all of them. My friendship with Simone White was born during this period. I owe her no small debt of gratitude for welcoming me into her life during my rocky transition to New York life.

My work was made possible by a number of grants, awards, and fellowships from the Graduate Center and external sources including a dissertation Year Fellowship and a Doctoral Fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

I was fortunate to be taken under Sabine Engwer’s wing during my research stay at the Freie Universität Berlin. Her friendship and assistance have been invaluable ever since. I met Christine Bold under the same circumstances and she, too, has become a cherished colleague. At the Stadtmuseum Berlin Bibliothek, Iris Schewe and her colleagues presented me with an embarrassment of archival riches. This project would not have been possible without her assistance.

Esther Joy and Kantara Souffrant provided much needed motivation and critical feedback in our online writing group at the early stages of this project. In the Theater program at the Graduate Center, I have found willing co-conspirators in Donatella Gallela, Stefanie Jones, and
Eero Laine. Would that our work could continue for years to come. Members of the Africana Studies Group Dissertation workshop, particularly Sean Kennedy, Makeba Lavan, Leilani Dowell, and Conor Reed, have helped me to maintain my enthusiasm for writing as I neared the finish line.

At the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture I was fortunate to receive critical feedback on early drafts of my first and last chapters from Farah Jasmine Griffith, Rafia Zafar and Myra Armstead. While they did not serve on my dissertation committee, Herman Bennett and Kandice Chuh have and Louise Lennihan have treated me like one of their own students and opened new spaces of inquiry and intellectual critique. I have benefitted immensely from their support, professional guidance and critical feedback. They are models of what I would like my scholarly practice to become and the type of colleague I would like to become.

Somehow, in the midst of everything, I managed to assemble something of a dream team in terms of my dissertation committee. They are an embarrassment of riches. Duncan Faherty and Eric Lott have each generously agreed to read and comment on my work. It has been a privilege to work with them and my project is much better for it.

Finally, I am grateful for Robert Reid-Pharr’s guidance and support throughout this process. Robert and I were interlocutors long before we met in person. When I was an undergraduate I studied race and representation at the University of Ontario with Charmaine Nelson. I read Robert’s work on Kara Walker for my capstone project and I felt the urgency and cultural imperative of his words. Working away in the D.B. Weldon Library in London, Ontario, I could not have imagined that our lives would ever intersect off the page. But I wrote as if it was possible. That project was one of my first steps towards becoming an intellectual. Working with Robert has been one of the most important experiences of my life.
My grandmother, Marjorie Irene Owen Moriah, passed away the summer I began this dissertation project. For me, she was the quintessential black diasporic traveler. She moved to Canada in 1987 to live with my family and I spent much of my childhood listening to her stories about experiencing World War II in Guyana, living in England in the 1950s, and travelling throughout the Caribbean. I miss her dearly. I hope I have written a project that she would have liked.

This work would undoubtedly have been impossible without the love and support of my immediate family: Christopher, June and Alexis Moriah. Their love and support has been integral to my dissertation process and my educational pursuits.

For me, then, this project is the culmination of a lifetime of personal journeys and educational pursuits, as well as a testimony to the power of black intellectual and cultural productions. I am convinced that such scholarly work has the power to build bridges to worlds yet unknown and unseen. And I am so grateful for it.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong></td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acknowledgments</strong></td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>List of Figures</strong></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter One:</strong> Other People’s Cabins: <em>Onkel Tom’s Hütte</em> and the German Stage</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Two:</strong> Colored Fashion Plates: Racial Consumption, Variety and the Metropole</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Three:</strong> The Black Patti Abroad</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Four:</strong> The Colored Man Is No Slacker: Race, Gender and Nation in WWI Propaganda</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epilogue</strong></td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix</strong></td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Works Cited</strong></td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1: Uncle Tom’s Cabin Playbill 217

Fig. 2: Das Programm Ida Forsyne advertisement 218

Fig. 3: Postcard from Onkel Toms Hütte 219

Fig. 4: Postcard from Onkel Toms Hütte 219

Fig. 5: Postcard from Onkel Toms Hütte 220

Fig. 6: Tom Jack der Eis-König. Undated photocard 221

Fig. 7: Detail from the 500th edition of Das Programm 222

Fig. 8: Charles E. Johnson and Dora Dean promotional material 223

Fig. 9: Advertisement from Das Programm 224

Fig. 10: Two Diamonds advertisement from Das Programm 225

Fig. 11: Dora Dean photocard 226

Fig. 12: “Portraits by Ernst Heilemann” 227

Fig. 13: Washington Trio advertisement 228
Fig. 14: Sissieretta Jones photocard

Fig. 15: Wintergarten advertisement from the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*

Fig. 16: *Destroy This Mad Brute*

Fig. 17: April 2008 *Vogue Magazine* cover

Fig. 18: *The Colored Man is No Slacker*

Fig. 19: *True Blue*

Fig. 20: *Emancipation Proclamation*

Fig. 21: “Nigger War Bride Blues” sheet music cover

Fig. 22. Pvt. Ephraim Fields WWI Postcard

Fig. 23. Foreman, Wilson and Fields WWI Postcard

Fig. 24. Spliced Couple WWI Postcard

Fig. 25. Spliced Couple WWI Postcard

Fig. 26. The 4 Black Diamonds advertisement

Fig. 27. Arabella Fields advertisement

Fig. 28. Arabella Fields Emergency Passport Application
INTRODUCTION

His lectures are nevertheless intensely interesting. He is rapt in his subject, a man of intense likes and dislikes, beliefs and disbeliefs. He is the very embodiment of united monarchical, armed Germany. He has pity for France, hearty dislike for all things English -- while for America, well, the United States is his bête noire, which he seldom fails to excoriate. One day he startled me by suddenly declaring during a lecture on America: ‘Die Mulattin sind niedrig! Sie fühlen sich niedrig.’ [Mulattoes are inferior; they feel themselves inferior.] I felt as if he were pointing me out; but I presume he was quite unaware of my presence.


One question has haunted me throughout my work on this project: Why black performance in Germany? On the surface, it is an odd topic for a project in an English department. To properly situate myself as a researcher and critic, I should disclose that I have no official interests in comparative literature, even though taking on this work meant learning basic German to conduct archival research. I am ambivalent about linguistic barriers, but I contend with them in order to probe the African diaspora. My program of research was not initially focused mapping out the relationship between the African diaspora, Europe and performance. But my archival research has made the importance of delineating those relationships undeniable. Another argument might be made about why Germany in particular appeals to a person of African descent born in Canada (a country notoriously ambivalent about its own sense of nationalism), or why such a person would find the study of the African Diaspora in Germany appealing. Why is a study of African Americans in unexpected places so striking? I write about African Americans in Berlin at the beginning of the modern era because of a practical imperative. There is still so much that must be said about this specific set of black travelers. And yet, so much of what we know about African Americans in a transatlantic context has been ceded to later periods. Through my research, I have sought to enrich our understanding of African American life and culture by building bridges between the margins
and the center. I believe that one of the best ways to understand transatlantic black performance in the modern era is to look towards Germany and at home, and to be keenly aware of the ever presence of blackness in these spaces.

This dissertation demonstrates how manifestations of blackness and black performance in Germany reinscribed colonial authority while playing a critical role in the development of African American identity and citizenship. I conduct this study by examining multimodal texts featuring African American performance. This transnational drama unfolded on two stages. In the United States, the 1890s became known as the Red Decade, one in which lynching and racial violence rocked the nation on a non-stop basis. Years of post-Emancipation progress were erased as the United States government retracted many of the hard-earned rights of black Americans, calling their very citizenship into question. Germany was a locus for tensions around many of the cultural issues that defined the era following Plessy v. Ferguson (1896). This period also saw an increase in the international popularity of black music. An influx of African American vaudeville performers arrived on European shores. For African American performers, travelling abroad was often a matter of survival, providing an opportunity to work and live in less hostile environments. Several African American variety acts, like Johnson and Dean and the Four Black Diamonds, established robust careers in Europe while remaining virtually unknown in the United States and relatively neglected by the black press. And yet, even in Europe, African American performers often struggled to find audiences for shows that defied the racist limits of the minstrel stage. Throughout this project I delineate travel patterns for late nineteenth century black performers and map the routes of which the stereotypical blackness that circumscribed African American performance in the United States and became a global phenomenon.

I also probe the meaning of Germany for African American performers during the years
between the late nineteenth century and the World War I era. I contend that the young German nation state represented unique forms of artistic and professional freedom for African Americans who travelled abroad. Anchoring my work is a consideration of “unknown” central European terrains as counterintuitive utopic spaces. Movement towards Central Europe by African American travelers and performers was powered by a longing for the infinite possibilities of the unknowable and a discontent with the troubling there and then of America. This emphasis on transnational movements and locations necessitates a thorough consideration of the politics of space, sound and racial embodiment. African American literature from later periods attests to this fact. A number of Harlem Renaissance novels reveal the ways performances of African American citizenship and identity took shape on the European continent. For example, in W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Dark Princess* (1928), Matthew Towns escapes to Germany to heal himself from the psychic wounds of American racism. Weimar Berlin’s ambiguous racial boundaries allow Matthew Towns to practice American citizenship and perform an unfettered African American identity for the first time. Du Bois’s depiction of Matthew Towns as a “resonant body”, a performer who uses sound to shape the viewers’ perceptions of his or her humanity, signifies upon the legacy of black performers abroad and Du Bois’s own emphasis on the importance of song to the African American tradition and socio-political ambitions in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). What emerges from DuBois’s novel is a sense of the ways in which Germany could both confound and appeal to the African American imagination as a utopic site of black performance.

African American newspapers and periodicals provide an important touchstone here. Two critical resources for this study are the German performing arts trade journals *Das Programm* and *Der Artist*. Rich sites of transatlantic black encounters, these multilingual periodicals contained international performance news, announcements, advertisements and open calls for companies
touring the European continent. In addition, playbills and other forms of ephemera found in archives in Berlin, Germany and the United States have helped to paint a picture of Berlin as a vibrant and culturally diverse site of performance. Close reading of these materials reveals a wealth of black performance in Germany and across Europe that belies contemporary notions about the scope of European colonialism, black immigration and Afro-European aesthetics. Our understanding of this historical period has been foreshortened, or overshadowed, by the horrors of the Third Reich. But these historical periods and transnational movements are not so easily disentangled. In fact, as has been well documented, the influence of African American culture represented a distinct threat to German fascists during the WWII period.\footnote{Important overviews of this perceived cultural threat include Theodor Adorno’s “Farewell to Jazz” (1933); and Michael Kater’s \textit{Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany} (2003).} In my own archival research, I have found evidence of the ways in which National Socialist propagandists deemphasized the presence of black performers on the German popular stage through a set of calculated omissions.\footnote{Here, I refer to two festschriften held in the Stadtmuseum Berlin Bibliothek archives, a Wintergarten Variete festschrift published in 1928 and one published 1938, the latter edited by Joseph Goebbels. For readers of contemporary international variety publications, the Goebbels festschrift is stunning in its emphasis on fair haired white performers and effacement of Berlin’s diverse stage history.} That set of materials is beyond the scope of this project, but I draw attention to it now in order to demonstrate the ways the African American presence on the German popular stage was both significant and problematic. The urgency behind the need to refute such cultural effacement feels poignant at our current moment in history, in which American ethno nationalism has once again gained ascendancy and looks towards a coherent white European landscape that, as it turns out, never quite was.

The constituents I am most concerned with in this dissertation are African Americans,
German Americans and Germans. In this project the terms German and German American are closely aligned, geographical differences notwithstanding. As Kathleen Conzen notes, in spite of a long history of immigration, the presence of German immigrants in the United States did not make them legible as “Americans” in ways that would be recognizable to various publics until the beginning of the 20th century (140). Additionally, while references to Germany as the nation we now know it to be seem anachronistic, longstanding linguistic, cultural and geographic similarities between European continental territories in which High German was the dominant language, including current day Germany and Austria, or the former Austro-Hungarian empire, yoke these regions together in ways that are not easily accounted for beyond the shorthand of nation-state nomenclature. Thus, while Germany as we now know it did not exist in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was undoubtedly a distinct region whose people shared the German language and a specific set of cultural traditions, and for whom America and its culture served as a catalyst for self-definition at home and abroad. For lack of a better term, I will call that region and its people German throughout my study, in spite of the anachronisms contained within that term.

For German immigrants and Germans on the continent, the potential uses of this subject and its agency are enigmatic. I borrow from Fred Moten, among others, when I think about blackness as a constant cultural presence that defies expectations and resists containment. In In the Break (2003), Moten gestures towards the polyvalent nature of blackness and its mutually constitutive effects while affirming the sonic qualities of blackness within mainstream culture. For Moten, blackness is the object that possesses. It is the resonant subject-object. Blackness makes and unmakes its subjects and objects through a number of mechanisms, including performance and cultural consumption. For popular audiences, viewers and readers in turn-of-the-century
Germany, blackness meant much the same thing. As evidenced by the psychotic break of Du Bois’s professor, Heinrich von Treitschke, “the German Machiavelli” (Du Bois 164), American styled blackness was a strange object of fixation and force to be reckoned with by Germans outside of the theater, too.

But how did “Germany” become a destination for African American performers and a place with which African American intellectuals contended? My research reveals that the beginning of this relationship began in the nineteenth century, soon after the Reconstruction era. The early success of nineteenth century African American musical companies who travelled in Germany lent credence to nostalgic leanings about the musical connection between the black diaspora and Germany in the black popular imagination. The Fisk Jubilee Singers were among the first to make waves in this area. African American newspapers reported that "in Germany they sang before the Crown Prince and Princess. The latter was moved to tears when they rendered 'Steal Away to Jesus' and 'The Lord's Prayer'" (2). Afterwards, "by great influence they procured the Academy of Music in Berlin," a city whose residents "hear nothing in the musical line but the best" (2). While the article is an amalgamation of a handful of articles culled from newspapers across North America, the Berlin anecdote appears in a column about the Jubilee singers that was originally published in Ottawa's Free Press. This report highlights the way in which performances by African Americans in Germany, and abroad in general, were meant to signify across borders while commenting on local racial politics.³ It was the Detroit Plaindealer in another interview with F.J. Loudin, the manager of the Fisk Jubilee singers, who reported that

³ In that same article, the village of Brookville is noted for its reluctance to embrace the Jubilee Singers: "they are well patronized in every place in Canada except in Brookville...Mr. Loudin said that the company is always greeted with a good house in every place where a refined taste exists among the population. This was a hard knock at Brookville!" (2). Brookville, Ontario remains a small town to this day. What is most fascination about this description of Brookville is the way its
the great masters of Germany, who had written that in the music of the Fisk Jubilee singers, they had found the true foundation of music, and a purer source of harmony than was traceable in the grand compositions of some of the names foremost on the roll of fame. The Negro melody had been exalted in high places and the plantation ditty had been rapturously received by royal audiences.

For the Fisk Jubilee Singers and African American performers who would follow in their footsteps, performing in Germany represented an important form of vindication. Their work overseas and their relationship to German high culture formed a spectacular repudiation of American racism.

The refashioning of African American identity through interactions with German culture I am interested in is also evident in accounts by late 19th century black travelers. Starting in 1885, readers of the Cleveland Gazette, an African American newspaper, had the sporadic privilege of reading about the travels of a young African American architectural student from Oberlin as he made his way across Germany in a series of dispatches called “Across the Water”. Frank J. Robertson describes Germany’s rustic pleasures and people as he roamed the country unmolested. Robertson writes that German “country people are good natured, and oftentimes tramping about in a mountain village they will give you shelter, charging very little, and sometimes nothing. An evening spent with a country German family is interesting.”4 In Karlsruhe, Robertson reports that upon entering a local restaurant, he and a friend “were friendly greeted by the guests, a polite provincialism (and racism) is contrasted with the reception of the Fisk Jubilee Singers in Europe. Here and elsewhere, we see the way in which European enthusiasm for black music and performance is bound up with class politics and characterized an indictment of (North) American racism.

4 “Across the Water. Traveling Through Germany. Something of the German’s Life. As Seen by a Representative of the Gazette – The German Dorf, etc.,” The Cleveland Gazette, 18 April 1885.
custom not common in America.”\(^5\) In Baden-Baden, he is one of many international tourists who speak a wide array of languages and seems charmed by the nonchalance with which he is treated by staff members at the drink hall.\(^6\) Robertson takes great pains to describe the details of his surroundings, but his work also evokes a sense of the freedom that European travel represented for early African American tourists and members of the black bourgeoisie. Such accounts cultivated the illusion of travel without the baggage of racism. Robertson and his colleagues represented America writ large for the Europeans they encountered. In the years that followed Robertson’s initial reports, several members of the African American elite would travel in his footsteps.

As Leroy T. Hopkins notes (1996, 1998) nineteenth century African American intellectuals were influenced by mainstream America’s thrall with German cultural achievement and occasionally chose to study there, too. W.E.B. DuBois famously spent an early part of his academic career in Berlin. In Germany, DuBois experienced an educational system free from the tyranny of American higher education and some of the pecuniary concerns that characterize the lives of American students. Like Robertson, DuBois found Germany to be a place mostly free from a superabundance of racist violence and discrimination. DuBois spent two years in Berlin while working towards a Ph.D. degree in Sociology. His teachers at the University of Berlin included Rudolph Virchow, Gustav Schmoller and Max Weber. The “Europe 1892 To 1894” chapter of his autobiography forms a love letter to a region which captured the imagination of fellow Americans. Du Bois writes that

\[
\text{in Germany in 1892, I found myself on the outside of the American world, looking in. With me were white folk -- students,}
\]

\(^{5}\) “In the Black Forest. Across the Water in Germany”. \textit{The Cleveland Gazette}, 24 October 1885. 
\(^{6}\) Ibid.
acquaintances, teachers -- who viewed the scene with me. They did not always pause to regard me as a curiosity, or something sub-human; I was just a man of the somewhat privileged student rank, with whom they were glad to meet and talk over the world; particularly, the part of the world whence I came. (157)

He explained that “from this unhampered social intermingling with Europeans of education and manners, I emerged from the extremes of my racial provincialism. I became more human [...]” (160). Additionally, DuBois’s sojourn marks the beginning of a process by which he was able to better deconstruct American whiteness and to understand its place in a more global framework:

I was a little startled to realize how much that I had regarded as white American, was white European and not American at all: America's music is German, the Germans said; the Americans have no art, said the Italians; and their literature, remarked the English, is mainly English. (157)

Living and working in Berlin allowed DuBois to decenter American whiteness even as he refined his understanding of American racial politics and racial capitalism.

To be sure, Berlin shaped the perspective of African American musicians as well as intellectuals. The experiences of musician Will Marion Cook are instructive here. Born in 1869, Will Marion Cook was one of the most influential and innovative composers of his day. His work with famed African American minstrel duo Bert Williams and George Walker includes the sketch Clorindy, the Origin of the Cakewalk (1898), and In Dahomey (1902), the earliest full-length black Broadway musical (Bordman 190). Cook also studied with Antonín Dvořák and was famed for merging European and African American musical styles in his compositions. Will Marion Cook
hailed from a family with long ties to higher education in the United States, an unusual trait in African American families during the period. Marva Carter explains that "few Oberlinians could boast of the number of ties to the college as could the Cook family" (12). Several of his family members attended Oberlin College and Will Marion Cook was included in that number. Cook studied violin at Oberlin from 1883 to 1887 before going to Berlin for more advanced training.

In Berlin, Cook gained admittance to the Berlin Hochschule für Musik and was a special pupil of Joseph Joachim. Joseph Joachim is now an obscure figure, but at the time the honor of studying with him was unmistakable. The Cleveland Gazette reported that he was just one of 16 pupils specially selected to study with Prof. Joachim. In her autobiography, Mary Church Terrell, a fellow Oberlin student and Berlin traveler, recalled the cultural importance of Will Marion Cook’s studies in Berlin:

At that time Joachim, one of the greatest teachers of the violin of modern times, taught nobody who was not unmistakably talented in that instrument. Neither wealth, power, nor high social position could tempt this great master to teach anybody who was not a presumptive genius. It was rumored in Berlin that more than one member of the aristocracy had implored Joachim in vain to teach his son. But the great Joachim taught this young colored man from the United States, so impressed was he with his superior talent. (Terrell 78)

The Washington Bee reported about Cook that after two years “the masterly skill with which he handles the most beautiful of all instruments is quite simply marvelous.”7 His biographer suggests

---

that cook returned to the United States when he ran out of money. 1889 reports of Will Marion Cook’s return from Germany could be found in major African American newspapers. Nevertheless, Will Marion Cook’s musical education was widely seen as a boon for the race, if not for himself.

Germany, and Berlin only offered black elites like Cook, Terrell and DuBois more than a brief respite from American white supremacy. The cultural life of the German capital provided DuBois and his contemporaries with more fodder for their intellectual mills. A recurring motif in DuBois’s Berlin reminiscences is an unfettered engagement with high culture. DuBois’s experiences with the performing arts in Berlin provide a helpful framework with which to understand the significance of transnational performance for African Americans at the turn of the century. DuBois explains that

Germany took up my music and art where Fisk had left me; to religious oratorio was now added opera and symphony, song and sonata. I heard cheaply and often from the balcony seats offered students, the great music of the world: but I heard it in reverse; I heard Wagner before Verdi; I listened to Tannhäuser before Il Trovatore. Nevertheless my delight in good music was signally increased. (169)

Regardless of the order in which the music was played, this experience is significant because it points to unencumbered access to performance spaces which black travelers were afforded. Stalwart activist Mary Church also frequented the theater during her stay in Berlin.

Twice and sometimes three times a week I attended the opera while I remained in Berlin. I often attended the theater also, for there is no
better way of educating the ear and acquiring the correct pronunciation in studying a foreign language than by listening to good actors. I had a dear little Russian friend who was one of the most remarkable linguists I have ever met. She spoke at least seven languages fluently. We usually attended the opera together and sat in the peanut gallery, which was frequented by students, from whose comments I learned much more about the operas and music on general principles than I could have acquired in any other way.

(Terrell 76-77)

For both DuBois and Terrell, Berlin’s performance venues represent a space of immersive intercultural education. It is a place in which they are not only able to attain the highest levels of bourgeoisie cultural attainment, but one in which they are, unexpectedly, allowed to come as they are.

I suggest that these kinds of experiences would prove influential to African American intellectual history. For example, later in life, DuBois suggested that performance offered solutions to the “problem of the color line” and could be used to gauge racial tolerance and progress. In his 1923 treatise the “Criteria of Negro Art,” Du Bois famously said that all art is propaganda. In this

\[8\] In that same speech, DuBois also raises the specter of German colonialism in Africa and the ways in which black political organization and decolonial efforts are so easily disremembered. DuBois asks his listeners:

---

Have you heard the story of the conquest of German East Africa? Listen to the untold tale: There were 40,000 black men and 4,000 white men who talked German. There were 20,000 black men and 12,000 white men who talked English. There were 10,000 black men and 400 white men who talked French. In Africa then where the Mountains of the Moon raised their white and snow-capped heads into the mouth of the tropic sun, where Nile and Congo rise and the Great Lakes swim, these men fought; they struggled on mountain,
speech, Du Bois asserts the importance of the struggle that is to come after racial equality, the struggle to create "a world where men know, where men create, where they realize themselves and where they enjoy life" Du Bois decries the limited performance opportunities available in the United States for black Americans: "We can go on the stage; we can be just as funny as white Americans wish us to be; we can play all the sordid parts that America likes to assign to Negroes; but for any thing else there is still small place for us". While making his argument, Du Bois also wrote about the structural racism faced by a talented African American woman musician in order to emphasize the urgent plight of the African American artist:

There is a colored woman in Chicago who is a great musician. She thought she would like to study at Fontainebleau this summer where Walter Damrosch and a score of leaders of Art have an American school of music. But the application blank of this school says: “I am a white American and I apply for admission to the school.”

________________________

hail and valley, in river, lake and swamp, until in masses they sickened, crawled and died; until the 4,000 white Germans had become mostly bleached bones; until nearly all the 12,000 white Englishmen had returned to South Africa, and the 400 Frenchmen to Belgium and Heaven; all except a mere handful of the white men died; but thousands of black men from East, West and South Africa, from Nigeria and the Valley of the Nile, and from the West Indies still struggled, fought and died. For four years they fought and won and lost German East Africa; and all you hear about it is that England and Belgium conquered German Africa for the allies!

9 The American Conservatory at Fontainebleau, France, was founded in 1921. Its alumni include Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein. The school was founded after WWI had fractured relationships and cultural exchanges between the United States and Germany. American students no longer able or eager to study in Germany due to political tensions were in search of European-style musical education. General John Pershing, along with several white American military band leaders, including Walter Damrosch, founded the summer musical academy in France, a country eager to supersede Germany in its prior role as a leader in musical education. Given the circumstances under which the Conservatory was founded, it might be possible to understand the
Du Bois's description of Fontainbleau's racist admission policy speaks to the importance with which African Americans viewed opportunities for musical education and performance as well as the significant challenge faced by black artists who sought to hone their craft. Du Bois repeatedly mentions the necessity of foreign training for black artists. The denial of education to black artists in this way was considered more than a personal tragedy, it was a set back for the entire race.

It is not simply the great clear tenor of Roland Hayesthat opened the ears of America. We have had many voices of all kinds as fine as his and America was and is as deaf as she was for years to him. Then a foreign land heard Hayes and put its imprint on him and immediately America with all its imitative snobbery woke up. We approved Hayes because London, Paris and Berlin approved him and not simply because he was a great singer.

program as a move to counter the influence of black music, specifically jazz, on the European continent, and perhaps to reshape European perceptions of American music and musicians. At the very least, in its racist admission policies, the school managed to signal an end to the open musical education that African Americans had benefitted from in Germany prior to the war.

Kendra Prescott Leonard has written that while "for many years after the school's opening all of the class photographs show a uniformly white student body [...] it is hard to say empirically whether is this the result of manipulations within the admissions process or the effect of the divisions of race and class within the United States". Prescott's rhetoric is reminiscent of contemporary language surrounding diversity and a "lack of qualified applicants" in American higher education. This strange evasion persists when Leonard mentions that the Conservatoire Américain rarely received applications from black students. Exceptions to this rule are truly notable: "the word 'pass?'" was penciled in the margins Josephine Baker's niece's application. No records of Baker's niece's acceptance or attendance exist (xvii).

Born June 3, 1887, Roland Hayes was a gifted singer and composer. He was a member of the Fisk Jubilee choir, studied at the Oberlin conservatory for a time, and is believed to be the first African American to have performed at Boston's Symphony Hall. Hayes toured Europe extensively. Hayes died on Jan. 1, 1977.
I include this brief prehistory of African American involvement with Germany because it weaves together several disparate threads which testify to the larger phenomenon which I examine in detail. It is still relatively uncommon to think of Cook, Du Bois, Terrell as fellow travelers, but they quite literally were. Beyond such primary texts, this dissertation contributes to what has been a decades long discourse on the relationship between African Americans and Germany. I am certainly not alone in my understanding of the close relationship between African American and German culture in the early part of the twentieth century. Sander L. Gilman’s *On Blackness Without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany* (1982) was one of the first academic studies to investigate the connection between the black diaspora and Germany. Gilman found that stereotypical blackness could be traced all the way to the Middle Ages in German literature and culture. More recently, *Germany and the Black Diaspora: Points of Contact, 1250-1914* (2013) has added newer studies to this area of research. Larry A. Greene, and Anke. Ortlepp’s collection *Germans and African Americans: Two Centuries of Exchange* (2010) triangulates the relationship between African Americans, German Americans and Germans and is unique because of its focus on interactions between African Americans and German immigrants in the United States. *Crosscurrents: African Americans, Africa, and Germany in the Modern World.* (1998), a collection by David McBride, Leroy Hopkins and Carol Blackshire-Belay, shows the cultural connections and use of “Germany” by African Americans to further their own social and political needs in a domestic context. Their work incorporates analyses of working class black soldiers as well as performers and intellectuals. In this dissertation I progress one of the underlying premises of these studies: that the relationship between African Americans and Germans during the beginning of the modern era was mutually constitutive.
And yet, in this project, I have chosen to focus on Performance, Sound and Visual Culture studies in order to develop a lens with which to further delineate the cultural connection between Germany and the black diaspora. As such, the work of critics like Joseph Roach and Harvey Young informs my analysis of black diasporic performance, even as I operate under the assumptions that fuel many of the foundational texts of this branch of Afro-European studies. The work of scholars like Tina Campt has enriched my consideration of the importance of race to German raciology and prompted me to be wary of making facile comparisons between the treatment and experiences of Afro-Germans and African Americans in Germany during the modern era. In each chapter I have endeavored to foreground my research around the work of African American women performers and raise questions about the performance of gender as it is influenced by race. Thus, this project recovers performances that have been overlooked due to geography and avoids critical tendencies which routinely overlook the contributions of black women.

In my first chapter, “Other People’s Cabin’s: Onkel Tom’s Hütte and the German Stage,” I argue that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) created a very specific “vortex” of performative behavior in German culture. Early German editions of *Onkel Toms Hütte* and criticism of American minstrel shows that appeared in German newspapers reveal both contiguities and tensions between stylized American depictions of race and German literary and theatrical tastes. As the various Tom Shows that were developed from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* made their way to Germany from the United States, so did a troubling appetite for African American performers, *negersongs* and *negertanz*. African American acts inspired by *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* were so popular in Germany that black vaudeville performers there were often promoted as African Americans, no matter where they came from. The mutability of black identity in this context generates questions of national passing and racial performance. Furthermore, the actual space of Onkel Toms Hütte resonated deeply in Germany as
a phenomenological ideal in ways that are difficult to imagine on American soil. In Berlin, the “idyllische Wald-Restaurant” named for Onkel Toms Hütte was a popular entertainment site. In the 1920s, the Zehlendorf neighborhood in which the restaurant was located would become home to the Onkel Toms Hütte social housing development designed by Bruno Taut. While playing out and translating the lives and living spaces of enslaved people’s, guests and residents of Onkel Toms Hütte shaped their own national identity.

In Chapter Two, “Colored Fashion Plates: Racial Consumption, Variety and the Metropole,” I write about the German Kabarett scene as a site for black performance and the culmination of a number of colonial and modernist impulses. The rise of the department store in the metropole was the result of an increased desire for variety and amusement from consumers at the turn of the century. This desire was supported by an increasing turn towards global consumption and Germany’s colonial endeavors. Popular desire for the exotic is also reflected on the pages of Das Programm, where readers could shop for a number of international ethnic acts making their way across central Europe via Germany. Racial descriptors were widely used to attract continental audiences and in ways that were particular to European viewers, who had few live references for people of African descent or of mixed race backgrounds.

In Chapter Three, “The Black Patti Abroad,” I examine Sissieretta Jones’s performance reviews and their use as a form of cultural capital. Sissieretta Jones travelled in Europe from February until November in 1895. Described by some musicologists as America’s first black superstar, the classically trained opera singer told the Indianapolis Freeman that she would like to live in Europe permanently after her first (and only) European tour. According to reviews that she provided to African American newspapers, Jones performed at the Winter Garden in Berlin for three months. Sissieretta Jones also claimed to have sang for Wilhelm II, the last German Emperor.
and King of Prussia, at his palace and to have been presented with an elaborate diamond brooch for her performance. Coverage of these events in the archives of major German newspapers is elusive and contradictory. Reports in the *Berliner Borsen Zeitung* and *Der Artist* point to the difficulties Jones had in establishing a European audience for black classical music performances.

In my final chapter, “The Colored Man Is No Slacker: Race, Gender and Nation in WWI Propaganda,” I posit that the reproduction and circulation of visual material in the age of mechanical reproduction contains another example of the chiasmic relationship between African Americans and Germany. World War I propaganda was a medium for African American and German cultural exchange and a means by which African Americans figured and performed their own citizenship. The relationship between African Americans and Germany was a key battleground during the World War I era. African Americans organized themselves around and against the anti-Germanism of the period at the very same time race (and racism) inflected American war propaganda. Embedded in this project is an examination of various works of World War I era posters and ephemera, an analysis of the ways in which these materials were deployed and a critique of modern visual culture as it relates to the performance of race and gender. In all, I invite my readers and interlocutors to consider what it might mean to expand our conception of the Black Atlantic a la Paul Gilroy. In the outer reaches of that space we might not only find new Cities of the Dead, but within those spaces, histories that unlock the present.
CHAPTER ONE: OTHER PEOPLE’S CABINS: ONKEL TOM’S HÜTTE AND THE GERMAN STAGE

What would have been the result, if the book had reached Germany eight or ten years earlier? Who can estimate the flame of feeling that it would have produced? Yet we may believe, from the wide influence which we shall prove, that it helped to keep alive and deepen the desire for freedom and reform, until in the progress of social development, the hope was fulfilled.

Grace Edith Maclean, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin in Germany*

Introduction

In the lead up to the 2008 American presidential elections, the German newspaper *Die Tageszeitung* was itself the subject of international headlines when it ran a cover story featuring a photograph of the White House with the title “Onkel Baracks Hütte” (or Uncle Barack’s Cabin). For left-leaning Germans, those familiar with the overwhelmingly pejorative uses of the term “Uncle Tom”, and *Die Tageszeitung*’s history of using that term in reference to African American politicians, the cover was an embarrassment. In the eyes of Yonis Ayeh, a board member at the Initiative of Black People in Germany (ISD) "the newspaper [was] comparing Obama with Uncle Tom, a subservient slave…It transmits an image of black people as submissive, uneducated people, which is simply not true" (Smith 1). Responding to such criticism and claiming innocence, Deputy Editor-in-Chief Rainer Metzger said "'Uncle Tom's Cabin' is a book that all Germans know and which they associate with issues of racism. The headline is supposed to make people think about these stereotypes. It works on many levels" (Smith 1).

But it did not. Metzger’s dance around *Die Tageszeitung*’s controversial cover and his feigned innocence is instructive here because it signifies upon *Uncle Tom’s Cabin’s* longstanding presence in Germany and takes advantage of the plasticity of its cultural uses. *Die Tageszeitung’s*
The use of the term “Onkel Tom” is bound up with a long history of German and American cultural exchange. *Onkel Tom’s Hütte* itself has long been an ambiguous link between German and American culture. In this chapter I argue that the novel has been as important for Germans defining America and its social problems as it has been for the formation of German cultural identity in a global context.

This *Die Tageszeitung* anecdote illustrates the deployment of African American signifiers in German contexts and the weight of what Toni Morrison would term “a dark, abiding, signing Africanist presence” (6) in Europe; in other words, to map out the impact of figurative “blackness” and “whiteness” in transatlantic contexts. Speaking of the work of figurative blackness in the area of identity formation in mainstream (white) American literature, Morrison reveals that through significant and underscored omissions, startling contradictions, heavily nuanced conflicts, through the way writers people their work with the signs and bodies of this presence – one can see that a real or fabricated Africanist presence was crucial to their sense of Americanness. (7)

For Thomas DeFrantz, Africanist aesthetics can be characterized as “the willingness to back-phrase, to move with a percussive attack, to sing against the grain of the other instruments, and to include the voices of those gathered in the fabric of the event” (5). As a means of describing the rootedness of black Diasporic culture in the African continents and the continued movement back towards Africa contained within black performance, the term Africanist is helpful when placing this work within a larger field of black cultural studies. In the term Africanist we can see the ways in which blackness, both prolific and influential, was both a site of emanation and return.
The potential uses of Africanist aesthetics are enigmatic. How Africanist aesthetics are crucial first to a sense of Americanness, then German-Americanness and Germanness, is my particular concern. I submit that, in spite of significant geographical and cultural differences, American-styled blackness has played an important role in German culture since the mid-nineteenth century, giving Germans a sense of their place in the new world order and their own understanding of relatively new concepts of whiteness. The functions of this Africanist presence have travelled forth, and doubled back between, Germany and the United States for centuries in a mechanism made possible by, but not limited to, long-standing German American cultural exchanges embedded in German American communities.

Transatlantic performances of blackness that developed from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* are about the fiction of blackness as it is inscribed on the body, in the text and in the world. They are about the ways that this fictive blackness gives birth to politicized senses of self as well as novel modes of reading and seeing. This performance of blackness is a convoluted process that brings whiteness into being across nation spaces while defining its subjects. In light of globalization and imperial efforts at the dawn of the twenty first century, it has become clear that black performance helps “white” people to establish their position in the world as political/politicized bodies and to understand exactly how they are similar to those who look like them, in spite of old animosities and regional anomalies. Thus, the milieu into which *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was born and became a potent racial signifier for distant German readers and viewers resonates strongly here.

In this chapter I consider the amplifications of Harriet Beecher Stowe as they progressed through American, African American, German and German American culture because of what those amplifications can tell us about the depth and breadth of the Black Atlantic. This work invites us to think about the diffusive nature of black performance and diaspora by looking far inland.
There are many ways to analyze the impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in Germany and to trace to its movements back and forth across the Black Atlantic, but I will limit my current discussion to the theatrical and performative aspects of this exchange, performance itself being a notoriously capacious genre. Orienting myself by way of Joseph Roach’s work, I argue that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) created a very specific “vortex” of performative behavior that was potentially lucrative and liberating for black performers while also providing a way for pervasive racist iconography to enter German culture.

My consideration of this phenomenon will include an outline of the way the novel moved from page to stage to place. I am particularly concerned with the ways the novel and its outcroppings were used to define blackness and Americanness while simultaneously aiding the formation of German identity. The relationship between African American performers and the German stage at the turn-of-the-century receives relatively little critical attention today, but Germany was an important stop on the vaudeville circuit for American entertainers. Black performance is important because this relationship teaches us the limitlessness of the black Diaspora and its crucial impact on modernity. Including African American performance in our understanding of early Afro-European studies can provide us with a starting point from which we can theorize the ways in which space and national identity coalesce in performances of race.

**Onkel Tom in Deutschland**

A wild and unprecedented success, Uncle Tom’s Cabin had a broad international reach. Numerous unofficial translations appeared worldwide soon after its publication in 1852 and drew international attention to the American anti-slavery movement. It is hard to overstate the impact of the novel in its time. Clearly, “Stowe had made the slavery issue sell, and it sold on a huge scale
not only at home but also abroad” (Mee 5). Stowe’s novel also made the slavery issue visible across mediums, including the popular stage. Indeed, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’s “first stage production occurred during its serialization” (Lott 213). In the process, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* promoted much more than anti-slavery politics. Theater historian John Frick argues that in terms of 19th century American popular culture, the Tom show was the “most influential in disseminating racial imperatives and attitudes” (21). The novel’s dissemination throughout the English speaking world has been widely studied. Most notably, Sarah Meer’s earlier, influential study, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (2005) takes Tom Mania in Britain as its focus.

The deep impact of Stowe’s novel in transatlantic, non-Anglophone contexts is also worthy of consideration. And yet, as critics like John Mackay have pointed out, little is known about the responses to variations on Stowe’s work across genres and cultures (Mackay 14). Mackay attempts to rectify this oversight in *True Songs of Freedom: Uncle Tom's Cabin in Russian Culture and Society* (2013). In particular, I argue that attention to the performative iterations of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in Germany reveals the long reach of Stowe’s novel and its importance to multiple, overlapping discourses about racial identity in a global context. Furthermore, audience enthusiasm for and reception of Uncle Tom’s Cabin sets the stage for the performance of race in a way that circumscribed opportunities for future generations of Black performers.

Numerous translations, adaptations and children’s versions of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* appeared on the German market almost immediately after the book’s initial publication. Harry Birdoff has estimated that “in Germany more than half a million copies of Onkel Tom’s Hutte were sold” and above and beyond that, “over a dozen novels by German writers – who had never been in the United States – carried on the “Weltschmerz” [or world-weariness] of Mrs. Stowe’s
characters” (180). The present-day preponderance of nineteenth century editions of German translations of the novel on German language online bookstores supports Birdoff’s earlier claims.

Tom shows developed alongside the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the influence of those dramatizations could be seen on the pages of numerous German translations and spinoffs. Birdoff’s research suggests that even in the very early years of the novel’s syndication, an overlap existed between page and stage. For example, Viennese author Ferdinand Kürnberger’s novel *Der Amerika-Muede* (1855), or *The Man Who Became Weary of America*, includes a description of a dramatization of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and Birdoff believes that Kürnberger "had Mrs. Stowe in mind when he named one of his principle characters Mrs. Harriet Drake Store" (180). Conflations between Stowe’s novel and their theatrical offspring remained constant throughout the German obsession with Stowe’s work in the nineteenth century. German language stage productions of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* would eventually dictate the kinds of work available to African American performers on continental stages and the ways in which “Germans” would conceptualize blackness in their colonial encounters.

This point of convergence provides a location from which we can begin to understand some of the ways in which Germans, and through them, German-Americans, conceptualized both whiteness and blackness on stage in the nineteenth century. German contributions to American concepts of race and ethnicity were closely tied to theater and literature. In “German Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity” Kathleen Neils Conzen reads debates in nineteenth century German-American periodicals and argues that that German-Americans helped to invent ethnicity as a category within American society. Conzens also argues that German language cultural outlets, like German theater, developed as a way of distinguishing German immigrants from their American neighbors (133). In the nineteenth century, some German-Americans believed in the
utility of their hybridized culture to America as a whole, in addition to the importance of maintaining German traditions within their own communities. In the post-Civil War era, many German Americans believed that “the salvation of American culture” (140) lay within German American immigrant communities, Germans (Americans) being “dreamers, artists, thinkers, impractical perhaps, but able to enjoy life and cultivate warm personal relationships” (139). The perils of not embracing German culture were apparently numerous, and it was understood that without a deep, ardent, inner life the American nation will be tested time and again as it was in the late conflict; without a sound lively popular way of life rooted, German fashion, in the ethical sentiments of the heart…the temple of true freedom may never be ornamented with the cupola of completion and will appear to coming generations little more than a desolate ruin. (Conzen 140)

In this way, Conzen’s work on ethnicity and nationalism among German immigrant populations in America reveals a reliance on antiquated stereotypes that would soon be subsumed under the banner of whiteness that American ethnicity sought to codify.

While their cousins in America attempted to affirm their Germanic roots and culture, residents of German-speaking territories within continental Europe went wild for American culture, without fear of cultural alienation or social consequence. German Tom shows travelled the entire country and appealed to Germans across a broad political, economic and social spectrum. Again, Harry Birdoff explains that advertised as a “Schauspiel,” wherever given, the drama captured such towns as Leipzig, Frankfort-on-the-Main, Laibach, Freiburg, Fünfkirchen, Troppau, Rostock, Lemberg, Linz, Mainz. Other
popular dramatizations were seen in cities like Augsburg, Baden-Baden, Coblenz, and Hermannstadt” (180).

Even in the midst of this plethora of productions, some German adaptations of Stowe’s novel were particularly popular. The first known German stage adaptation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was G. Dankwardt and W. Khaleis’s *Negersleben in Nord-Amerika*, with a score by Thuiskon Hauptner, was performed seven times in Berlin at the Königstädtisches Theater in December 1852 (Birdoff 180; Maclean 47). Of this production, one German reviewer wrote that Dankwardt and Kahleis’s production was not without merit, and worthy of note due to the activity of abolitionists, even though the novel itself was weak.\(^{12}\) In spite of the reviewer’s ambivalence about Stowe’s work, the staging of Stowe’s work and its relevance in a German context, an irreversible precedent had been set. Another Tom Show, *Barbier und Neger, oder Onkel Tom in Deutschland*, by Ernest Nonne with music by Thuiskon Hauptner, too, was produced very soon after at the same theater (Birdoff 180). Therese Megerle von Mühlfeld’s adaptation of *Onkel Toms Hütte, Onkel Tom, Amerikanische Zeitgemälde mit Gesang und Tanz in drei Abtheilungen* (1853), was also staged at the Vorstädisches Theatre during this period (Birdoff 180). It is one of the only German Tom Shows whose text was published, a fact which certainly lent to its popularity in Germany, Austria, and eventually the United States. The *Amerikanische Zeitgemälde* was first performed in 1853 at the Vienna Repertory Theater from February 19 to the March 19. Von Megerle’s adaptation would

\(^{12}\) Onkel Tom’s Hütte ist ein sehr schwacher Roman, aber es ist eine interessante, warm auch eine unerfreuliche Schrift, und es fragt sich, ob es überhaupt wohlgetan, solchen Stoff auf die Bühne zu bringen. Da indess die rüstige Tätigkeit der Abolitionisten-Partei dem Buch auch in Europa die weiteste Verbreitung verschafft hat, so konnte die Dramatizierung nicht ausbleiben, und wir müssen zugeben, dass die Arbeit der Herren Danckwardt und Kahleis keine ungesclückte ist [...] aber die wirkliche poetische Figur im Roman der Mme. Stowe, Evangeline, fehlt in der dramatischen Bearbeitung. (qtd. in Maclean 47)
be performed in German language theaters in Germany and the U.S. into the early twentieth century; it was staged several times in German American theaters in both New York and Philadelphia between the 1850s and 1890s. Through the efforts of dramatists like Von Megerle, Dankwardt, Kahleis and Nonne, the German Tom Show took on a life of its own. A three-act puppet show entitled *Onkel Tom, der Berliner Negersklave*” by famed marionettist Silvius Landsberger also competed with these offerings for audience attention in Germany (Maclean 50). “Indeed, “so fevered was Tom Mania in Germany that Berlin renamed a street Oncle Tom Strasse [...] (Frick 22).

As with American Tom Shows, music was an important part of the German Tom Show productions. For American viewers in the Northern states, Tom Shows provided an opportunity for audiences to hear “Black” music that had only been accessible in the South. German audiences also welcomed the chance to listen to Negro songs and experience black culture. Like listeners in the Northern American states, German listeners would have been enthusiastic about the "authenticity" of the black music in Tom Shows. However, in Germany such musical displays had an even higher valence. The circulation of Tom Shows occurred alongside the development of the field of musicology. As Vanessa Agnew points out, comparative musicology developed alongside other colonial discourses, like anthropology. Under its rubric "music was a direct expression of a 'people's character (Volkscharacter) and hence only "authentic examples of indigenous music could give rise to genuine scientific insights" (Agnew 41). The German colonial discourse of music, or "the treatment and practice of music in a manner that instituted or justified colonial relations of power" certainly "included the use of music as a criterion of race" (Agnew 41). This discourse privileged Western European music, but it thrived on a curiosity about exoticized others. Like anthropology, it would contribute to an atmosphere in which foreign musicians and
performers were admired for the "authentic" and unusual quality of their staged offerings.

Uncle Tom’s Cabin eventually influenced the kinds of music Germans listened to when they craved something distinctly (African) American. As the various Tom Shows that developed from Uncle Tom’s Cabin made their back and forth between the United States and Germany, so did a troubling appetite for African American performers, negersongs and negertanz. As a direct result of the Tom Show, “new ballads caught the ear of many Lieder-kranz, or vocal clubs. In 1853 Composer F.L. Shuber published three polkas, “Topsy, I came from Alabama,” “Elisa, When I libd in Tennesse,”[sic] and “Chloe, Now Niggers Listen to Me” (Birdoff 180; Maclean 45). In addition, composer J.H. Doppler’s “Neger-Polka” for the pianoforte was published in July 1855 by the Leipzig music publisher Friedrich Hofmeister as a part of his popular monthly catalog of musical offerings, the Monatsberichte. Earlier, “Neger” themed offerings from the Monatsberichte catalog included F.E. Doctor’s “Die Plantage: Neger Melodien: Favorite Banjo Song” and “Die Plantage: Neger Melodien: Female Slave’s Lament”, which were published in late 1851 and early 1852, respectively. This polka music appears to have been developed independently of Aiken’s Tom Show productions, although some similarities between improvised songs during American Tom Shows are possible.

Therese Megerle’s Onkel Tom, Amerikanische Zeitgemälde mit Gesang und Tanz in drei Abtheilungen (1853), or Uncle Tom: Portrait of An American Era with Song and Dance in Three Acts, is notably shorter than George Aiken’s play and contains fewer songs. Compared to Aiken's play, Megerle's work is more closely aligned to the Sentimental tradition of American literature that Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote from. Her Amerikanische Zeitgemälde takes the black family and the dissolution of familial bonds as a result of slavery, as its primary focus. The prelude and three act are as follows: “Eine Ehe in Amerika,” or “A Marriage in America” in which the action
takes place on a plantation in Kentucky eighteen years before the rest of the play; “Eine Wirtschaft in Lousiana,” or “An Inn in Louisiana,” in which the action takes place at “Good Scelbi’s” in Louisiana; “Eine Sklavenjad,” or “A Slave Raid,” which is set in Stratford, Ohio on the banks of the Ohio River; and “Die Sklavin Und Ihre Kinder,” or “The Slave and Her Children” which is set on a plantation in Kentucky. Megerle’s play opens with a song sung by Tom called “Die Kleine Negerin,” or “The Little Negro”, a sorrowful song describing the life of a slave. The lyrics are as follows:

An Louisiana's barren beach, On Louisiana's barren beach,
Mit gramumwölcktem Sinn, Her senses clouded by grief,
Da sitzet fern vom Heimathland Snatched from her homeland
Die kleine Negerin. The small negress.

Kein mitleidvolles Lüftchen trägt No pitiful breeze
Ihr Klagelied dahin Carries her lament
Und kündet, wie so schmachbedeckt And proclaims how covered in humiliation
Die kleine Negerin. The small negress was.

Was schaukelt auf der Woge her? What is bobbing on the waves?
Ein Palmenzweig so grün A palm branch so green
Ach, Heimathsblüthen bringt das Meer Oh, homeland's blossoms brings the sea
Der kleinen Negerin. To the small negress.

Sie faßt darnach mit sichrer Hand, She hurries after it with steady hand,
Der Tod war ihr Gewinn, Death was her reward
Die Woge trägt in's Heimathland The wave carries to the homeland
Die kleine Negerin! the small negress!

On the surface, Von Megerle’s mournful song and the sentiments it expresses share some similarities with African American Sorrow Songs. And yet, Megerle’s Tom Show was not entirely serious or overly radical in its politics. Other notable variations in her script include several new characters, including a juggler named Song, his wife, Paoli, and an “Indian” named Misouri and a

---

13 Translated by Sabine Engwer and Kristin Moriah
native American song and dance number.

The text for G. Dankwardt and W. Khaleis’s adaptation of Stowe’s novel was never published. Records of the production, like playbooks or working scripts, have not been archived in any major research libraries. As such, it is difficult to say with certainty whether Hauptner deviated from racial tropes established in songs from contemporary nineteenth century American Tom Show productions in the score for Negersleben in Nord-Amerika. And yet, given the high level of professional accomplishment attained by Thuiskon Hauptner, and his sustained interest in American culture, it seems plausible that the music of these productions also leaned heavily upon established American theatrical tropes. Hauptner had a longstanding professional interest in race and American popular culture. He was a chapelmaster at the Vorstädisches Theatre in Berlin from 1850-1851 and at Berlin’s Königstädisches Theatre in 1852, both sites of early German Tom Show productions. Hauptner’s works include a short, four-act farce entitled Die Afrikanerin (1860) and an earlier play called Der Zweck heiligt die Mittel: Vaudeville (1856) which translates roughly into Vaudeville: The Ends Justify the Means; both are loosely related to Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Tom Show in that they take up the issue of race and American theater, however casually.

In these adaptations of Stowe's work, we are witness to the ways in which American racism and racist stereotypes became recognizable stage tropes the world over. Indeed, in Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class (1995) Eric Lott argues that American popular culture is founded on a bed of racial conflict. This conflict provided ample material for writers, composers and theatre types. Germans recognized this conflict as expressed through adaptations of Stowe's novels and Tom Shows. Their understanding of American racial conflict shaped their perception of America, guided their choice of popular entertainment and occasionally their means of cultural production.
The mania for Uncle Tom’s Cabin extended to Harriet Beecher Stowe herself. Harriet Beecher Stowe herself travelled to Germany in 1856, visiting several towns and cities including Berlin, Heidelberg, Düsseldorf, and Leipzig over the course of three weeks (Maclean 17). In Germany she was known as "die berühmte Verfasserin von Onkel Tom’s Hütte," (the famous author of Uncle Tom’s Hut), or "die Humanistin" (the humanist), and her book was called the “Evangelium der Negersklaven” (Gospel of the Negro Slave). The craze for Onkel Tom’s Hütte created a wider demand for "Sklavengeschichten," or slave stories, and more foreign translations and German-authored novels with similar themes began to appear, including Der Negerkönig Zamba. eine Sklavengeschichte, advertised as an accompaniment to Uncle Tom’s Cabin. The fan culture that surrounded Stowe and her novel reveal an ambivalence about the anti-slavery politics that inform her work, as it does in other international contexts. Many German readers and audiences craved slave-stories and admired Stowe because they were fascinated by the glimpse of America that her work provided, not necessarily because they sought a deeper engagement with the radical racial politics her work provided an entryway to. To be sure, Stowe’s most radical anti-slavery text, Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp (1856) was not translated into German and was only issued once in Germany after its initial publication, by the Tauchnitz publishing house in 1856.

And yet, long before Uncle Tom’s Cabin was published, many Germans and German Americans had opposed slavery. In 1688, Francis Daniel Pastorius initiated the Germantown Quaker "Protest Against Negro Slavery" at a Religious Society of Friends meeting. This marked the first moment in which Quakers would openly denounce slavery and thus the beginning of a central role for Quakers in the antislavery movement. Nearly two centuries later, many German immigrants who came to the United States after the failed German Revolution of 1848 became
strident abolitionists and participated in the antislavery movement. In her 1910 dissertation *Uncle Tom’s Cabin in Germany*, Grace Edith Maclean suggested that in Germany, the failed 1848 revolution created an atmosphere ripe for Stowe’s antislavery work:

> The influence of Schopenhauer, the father of pessimism, was heavy upon the minds of the people, and with eagerness and curiosity the book-hungry public sought any disclosure of the shame of social conditions. The newspapers, journals and books of the day were full of merciless criticism and discontent. It was this soured and despairing public that received *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in 1852, and read it with sympathy and enthusiasm, for it reflected the state of mind and conditions of society existent among the readers themselves (22).

In addition, their own liminal status within America could sometimes provide opportunities for German immigrants to operate outside the realm of typical antebellum race relations and sensitize them to the plight to Black Americans. Kathleen Conzen notes that in the mid-nineteenth century “Germans in the South, according to one disillusioned observer, frequently found themselves so starved for accustomed sociability that they jeopardized their status within white society by resorting to the company of slaves” (137). The nature of these social relations remains obscure. What I mean to highlight here is the way that for German immigrants in America, different forms of ethnic consciousness could sometimes allow for interracial solidarity and abolitionist activism that were aligned with the nobler aims of Stowe’s text. Before the Civil War, German immigrant's prior stance on slavery and their provisional acceptance within America
meant that they could more easily forge bonds with disenfranchised and subjugated blacks.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, the subject of slavery was “debated at the Verein halls in New York City,” and at the Shakespeare Hotel especially, [Uncle Tom’s Cabin’s] dramatization was soon suggested” (Birdoff 434). Furthermore, “the German-Americans who frequented the Deutsches Theatre, better known to native American’s as the St. Charles Theatre, saw Onkel Tom’s Huette, by Olfers, on 20 and 24 October 1853. Only three months elapsed between the first performance in New York of Aiken's play, which was first given at the Chatham Theatre on 18 July 1853, and the performance of "Onkel Tom's Huette" at the St. Charles. It was produced by Max Cohnheim, "collaborator” on the long running satirical publication “Berliner Kladderadatsch." (Leuchs 64). Philadelphia also saw two adaptations: Birch-Pfeiffer’s, at the Meledeon, on May 31st, 1856, and the Megerle version, on March 23rd 1857. Megerle’s play was revived at the Volkstheatre,” on September 15th and 16th in 1858. Jumping on the bandwagon, German-American writer Hermann Muhr published Zuavenstreiche in Amerika, a three-act comedic play about life in America which included characters like “Tom, a ‘Neger’; Blaque, another servant; Freeman, a merchant; and a lawyer called Sharp” (Birdoff 434).

Like American special interest groups, German political activists found ways to appropriate images of black suffering (which fueled the abolitionist movement and decorated the pages of many editions of Uncle Tom’s Cabin) for their own political purposes after the end of the Civil War. In Berlin Coquette: Prostitution and the New German Woman, 1890 – 1933 (2014), Jill Suzanne Smith briefly gestures towards the ways the American abolition movement provided a model for the German feminist movement against anti-prostitution legislation in the Wilhelmine era. But this German identification with downtrodden, enslaved African Americans was not unproblematic. Maclean and Smith’s work points to a cultural predisposition on the part of the
Germans that contemporary feminist critics might link to larger debates on the nature of sympathy in literature and a “subversive-colonization” paradigm in which the “‘subversion’ side holds up sympathy’s ability to create solidarity with the disenfranchised, while the ‘colonization’ angle emphasizes its disciplinary function and its tendency to elide agency and (especially racial) difference and to colonize the subjectivity of its objects” (Crosby 379). The subversive–colonization paradigm does not necessarily result in social recognition or equality; such impulses contributed to the racist political climate of the Atlantic slave trade and African colonialism.

Deutsch Tom Shows and Minstrelsy

International Tom Shows based on Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel fueled the desire for blackface minstrelsy in the United States and in Germany. To some critics and readers, Stowe’s original text already reduced black characters to easily digestible stock characters and tropes that were destined to lend themselves to reductive performances of race. A reviewer from the Freiburger Zeitung claimed that “because of the books unqiueness and “its political and social ‘tendenz’, it was bound to be circulated and read, and it left behind a picture of the black race, which could not be banished. The negro characters are considered by all well drawn, and to form a ‘gallery of black faces’” (Maclean 41). The “picture of the black race” presented by Stowe were both figurative and literal; the “gallery of black faces” based on Stowe’s novel soon included blackface minstrels. This point is particularly significant when tracing a trajectory of Black performance in a transatlantic context. Some scholars have argued that Germans were uninterested in blackface minstrelsy. Jonathan Wipplinger notes that there is no German word for blackface and “there are no scholarly treatments of blackface in Germany before the first World War, let alone discussions of the ways in which blackface impacted the cultural engagement with America,
African Americans, and Africans” (Wipplinger 457). And yet, Katrin Sieg points out that in spite of the lack of critical vocabulary surrounding blackface, it "has been a common and unremarked-upon practice in German theater and popular culture" (117).

But blackface minstrelsy did impact sites of cultural negotiation between Germany and the United States. The mere fact that nearly three decades after blackface minstrels made their first appearance on American stages in the 1840s, Charles Hicks “led the very first troupe of black minstrels to Germany in 1870,” (Ciarlo 218) compels us to pay closer attention to this phenomenon. More recently, the appearance of the term "blackfacing" has been used in the German language to describe American-style black face minstrelsy as well as more culturally specific forms of racial representation on the German stage (Sieg 118) including the notion that "blackfacing in German theater, in contradistinction to other national traditions (especially the American one), serves to deconstruct racial identity and difference" (119).

From the advertisements in journals like Der Artist and Das Programm, one can surmise that there was a sense among nineteenth century theatre impressarios that the German public would be interested in the minstrel show, and that sense was not entirely misplaced. Prior to the first World War, "the increasingly visible presence of Africans in German towns and cities challenged both the authorities and the majority population to respond" (Aitken 23). The visible presence of blacks within Germany began as a manifestation of colonial power but soon became unruly. Africans travelled to Germany from colonized nations for the purpose of education, but it soon became clear that the formal and informal effects of that education were unpredictable and not always in favor of Empire. Some black colonials overstayed their welcome. Some became politicized as a result of their travel and education. Furthermore, although relatively small, the black community in Berlin posed a direct challenge to conservative conceptions of the European
metropole. Thus, "in 1902 the *Berliner Illustrierte* newspaper reported that 'Everyday here in Berlin new dark faces appear, some of whom indeed come from the German colonies" (Aitken 2).

In the United States, German immigrants had negotiated their place in American society through performances of race, like the rest of the mainstream public. Minstrelsy was always a tool by which whites had negotiated their place in American society vis-à-vis Black people, foreigners and recent immigrants. German audiences recognized minstrel performances as a distinctly American form and occasionally used such racial performances to navigate their own place within a highly racialized Empire.

Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel was an integral part of the global context in which black lives were objects to be both consumed, traded and acted upon. The notion of the novel as a portrait reemerges here. The phrase “Amerikanische Zeitgemälde” title of Therese Megerle’s play suggests that Uncle Tom’s is the portrait of an American era. The portrait that her work presented readers with was two dimensional and perhaps somewhat obvious in its artifice. For many readers of the novel and its translations, black characters in Stowe’s novel lacked the depth that prompt a more nuanced recognition of the politics that informed black struggles for freedom in the 19th century and their expansive political stakes. This pliability was one of the secrets of the Tom Show’s success. Scholars have noted the ways in which Tom Shows could be played many ways, radically or not, pro- and anti-slavery. Eric Sundquist explains:

> Stage versions and the traveling “Tom troupes” that performed [Tom Shows] purged any radical messages from the blackface drama: Topsy became a star, singing “I’se So Wicked” and “Topys’s Song: I am but a Little Nigger Gal”; the famous minstrel performer T.D. Rice “jumped Jim Crow” in the role of Uncle Tom; the South
appeared as an arena of light-hearted fun (in the P.T. Barnum version, Tom was rescued from Legree by George Shelby); Tom and Eva were reunited in cardboard heavens; and abolitionism itself was attacked in such songs as “Happy Are We, Darkies So Gay.”

(Sundquist 4-5)

The increased popularity of Tom Shows and growing number of Tom Show troupes in the United States during the post-Civil War era demonstrates the way such shows could bolster white supremacy in times of racial anxiety and political upheaval. And yet, the function of these shows in transatlantic contexts has rarely been remarked upon.

In 1853, at the beginning of the Tom Show craze a German interpretation “by a Herr von Olfers” was performed at the Deutches and Charles Street Theatre” in New York City (Frick 71). In the post-Civil War era, a Tom show could be seen at Staten Island’s German Club Room. *Oncle Tom’s Hütte* [sic], was also on the stage at the Städt Theatre in New York (Frick 110). The German-language adaptation of *Onkel Tom’s Hütte* (1853) by Viennese author Therese Megerle von Mühlfeld was produced several times in Philadelphia between 1856 and 1880, including two almost consecutive runs at the Germania Theater in 1879 and 1880, both of which featured Mathilde Frank in the role of Topsy. Another production of the Megerle play was mounted at New York’s Neues Stadt Theater in 1880. Of course, these translations and adaptations also took on the textures and forms of their new contexts. It is worth recalling that work like F.L. Schubert’s polkas, “Topsy, I came from Alabama,” “Elisa, When I libd in Tennesse,”[sic] and “Chloe, Now Niggers Listen to Me,” which drew on racist tropes in American music and less progressive interpretations of Stowe’s text, and were possibly a precursor to German language Tom Shows. Sarah Meer suggests that
these mutations can also be seen as translations (and of course Uncle Tom was translated into dozens of languages), but these were just as often ‘infracultural translations,’ rewriting in English that could amount to mimicry, appropriation, manipulation and transformation. Adaptations were often willful “misreadings,” deliberately partial, and of course especially loaded in their attitudes to slavery. (Meer 9)

American Tom Shows were more often than not performed by white theater troupes and featured white performers in black face. German American Tom Shows featured black face minstrelsy, too. An attention to the late nineteenth century productions of Therese Megerle von Mühlfeld’s work at the Germania Theater are revelatory in a consideration of the extent to which such productions were willing to engage with these racialized theatrical conventions. The poster for the January 1880 production of Megerle’s Tom Show [Figure 1] is especially intriguing. The advertisement appears to be recycled from Jay Rial & Draper’s Ideal Uncle Tom’s Cabin, a show which included both blackface and "the celebrated trick donkey, ‘Jerry’” (Prince 201). The poster features Eliza, a character popular in illustrated versions of novel and on stage. Eliza is fair skinned and appears to be wearing a costume of North African origin. At first glance, the poster seems to indicate that Mrs. Jay Riall will play Eliza, but Martha Wedemeyer’s name is pasted in smaller font beneath the name Eliza.

The seemingly interchangeable nature of the shows and their iconography reveals the pliability of racial representation on the ethnic stage at the turn of the century. White actresses “Mrs. Jay Riall” and Martha Wedemeyer were presumably so similar as to be interchangeable once they blacked up. Their mutual ability to perform the role of Eliza, a light skinned Black woman,
in either Riall or Megerle’s production, is unquestioned. There is no evidence that any Tom Show productions in German American communities in New York or Philadelphia featured Black performers in Eliza’s role or in any other. Furthermore, the nature of the racial representation exemplified by the 1880 Germania theater poster that characterized these shows meant that Africans could perhaps be easily substituted for enslaved Black Americans, all things being equal for audiences at the time. These Tom Shows, German American productions of a German play based on an American novel, were initially produced as a way of concretizing a sense of community among German Americans in American cities and reestablishing connections to their homeland. They achieved these ends by allowing German Americans to reproduce the racist performance practices that characterized mainstream American theater at the turn of the century. As such, they drew German audiences close to mainstream white audiences in ways that ran contrary to some of the German Tom Show’s productions original intentions and to a tradition of German activism and interracial cooperation that would soon be forgotten.

The motivation to claim a dominant stake in this kind of cultural conversation, one in which “whites” could claim authority and cultural authorship, would be powerful, one that few immigrant groups in the United States would be able to resist. One influential factor, and an example of the momentarily liminal position of German immigrants within the developing schema of American whiteness, was the way Germans immigrants themselves became fodder for the minstrel show in the mid-Nineteenth century. German ethnic difference piqued certain American anxieties about class, race and economic status. Of course, compared to Blacks and the Irish, Germans had an easier time on the minstrel stage, White minstrels “portrayed Germans as practical, hardworking people. Robert Toll explains:

Usually played for comedy, robust German women and burly men,
speaking “Dutch” dialects, indulged their immense appetites for sauerkraut, sausage, cheese, pretzels, and beer. Although men frequented lager beer saloons, sometimes drank too much, or ran up tabs they could not pay, they were never rowdy or obnoxious as the minstrel Irish often were. German women were usually built like the “Radish Girl,” who was “butty as a shack horse,” but, despite their tendency to overeat, they were good, solid, practical women. (Toll 172)

Although they shared common European backgrounds, Germans were differentiated from white Americans, whose race and culture were normalized in popular contexts and who were equipped with the ability to embody ethnic and racial differences across multiple valences. Given this context, the benefits of participating in minstrel performance through the staging of Tom Shows, included claiming some of the privileges of American whiteness. By staging shows that made use of blackface, Germans not only situated themselves favorably in relationship to Black Americans within America's racial hierarchy, they partook in an American pastime and made themselves more culturally American.

One of the supposed differences between German (American) audiences and American audiences was a sense of taste that bristled at the notion of blackface minstrelsy. This fact is occasionally still repeated out at research institutions in Germany and the United States. And yet, in the early 1870s, Haverly’s Mastodon Minstrels attempted to take the continental popular stage by storm. Their failure was notorious and has eclipsed many other considerations of blackface performance in Germany since. In the opening scene of their 1883 slapstick comedy Cordelia's
Aspirations, Harrigan and Hart satirized “J.H. Haverly’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin Troupe,” an Uncle Tom production that had legendarilly returned from Berlin in a state of bankruptcy. Considering differences in taste between German and mainstream American theatergoers and the reception of Haverly’s Mastadon Minstrels, a nineteenth century music critic claimed that “the negro minstrel is practically known and loved only in those parts of the world where the English language is spoken” (“Banjo and Bones” 308). This was certainly not the case as far as German audiences were concerned; blackface minstrels had experienced success in Germany and African American performers would find eager fans. Be that as it may, the anonymous American critic goes on to recount an anecdote about

the absolute failure of an American managers attempt to invade Germany with a resolute band of negro minstrels, in consequence of the perspicacity of the German critics in detecting the fraud of trying to pass off as negroes white men artificially blackened! Obviously the imitation darkey of the negro-minstrel stage did not coincide with the genuine darkey as evolved from the Teutonic inner consciousness.” (Banjo and Bones 308).

Such racial misrecognition was not only a German problem, but the decision to try to pass off white performers as Black in Germany seems particularly opportunistic. In addition, this kind of deception would have been both unfeasible and unsafe in an American context. In fact, white minstrel performers in the United States took precautions through advertisements and other promotional avenues to let audiences unused to African Americans know that they were not in fact black offstage, “only their makeup and some of their material was black” (Toll 38). In doing so, they avoided the hardships and dangers of travelling cross-country faced by Black performers.
But it is the literal-mindedness of the Germans that is the true butt of the joke here. Expecting real black performers, and faced with the appearance of white men in racial drag, the Germans were unable to recognize the nuances of that particular American art. On another level, this anecdote can be also read as an example of international class bias: a case of naïve Germans vs urbane Americans. It is likely that author is referring to a specific and notorious incident that occurred in the early 1880s in which Haverly’s Mastodon Minstrels “were threatened with arrest by the police” (Ciarlo 218) in Hamburg. The situation that the Mastodon Minstrels found themselves in was perhaps more complicated than it appears. Haverly’s Mastodon Minstrels were charged with ‘a fraudulent attempt to deceive the German public’ by white performers who had blacked-up (Ciarlo 218). But the act of performing in Black makeup, or donning burnt cork was not necessarily the cause of offense: Haverly’s troupe did not run afoul of the law for “affronting public decency – the most common charge in the Kaiserreich levied against any type of entertainment that was seen to be outside of German bourgeois or parochial norms” (Ciarlo 218).

Instead, I suggest that Haverly’s troupe may have run afoul of the law because of a genuine attempt to defraud German audiences. In the 1870s Haverley ran two minstrel troupes: one with black performers, the Haverly Colored Minstrels, and one with whites, the Haverly Mastodon Minstrels, both with notably different repertoires. The appeal of the Colored Minstrels was partly anthropological, in comparison to the hyper-stylized offerings of the white Haverly Mastodon Minstrels. While the Colored Minstrels offered viewers outside of the South a glimpse of “genuine” plantation life, the Mastodon Minstrels featured exotic locales like “gold and silver Turkish” palaces (Toll 205). If Haverly had promoted the Mastodon Minstrels as “the darky as he is at home, darky life in the cornfield, canebrake, barnyard, and on the levee and flatboat,” as he had done in the past for the Colored Minstrels, German audiences would certainly have expected
to see Black performers on stage.

This incident has been used to illustrate the naiveté of rural Germans during this period, as if an appreciation of blackface performance was a genuine mark of cultural sophistication. Also worth considering are the other meanings at play in American perceptions of the German rejection of blackface minstrelsy in spite of the documented German embrace of racialized performance on a grander scale. American critics perceived the importance of the international influence of troupes like Haverly’s Mastodon Minstrels in the work of promoting American Empire abroad. In an article for *Scribner’s*, again referring to Haverly’s failed attempt to penetrate the German market, Brander Matthews wrote that

> at the apex of his inflated prosperity Haverly invaded Germany with his mastodonic organization; and one result of his visit was probably still further to confuse the Teutonic misinformation about the American type, which seems often to be a curious composite photograph of the red men of Cooper, the black men of Mrs. Stowe, and the white men of Mark Twain and Bret Harte. (Mathews 759)

Matthews never quite settles upon the correct American type for the stage. In his analysis, the relatively simple German public’s exposure to “the American type” occurs mainly in popular literature. And yet, the American populace that Germans were exposed to was an undeniably multiracial one. By Matthews own estimation, Haverly’s performers entered a context in which multiraciality was one of, if not the defining American characteristic. Haverly’s troupe fails then, in part, because it does not disabuse Germans of this notion. Brander’s critique suggests a pre-existing fluid exchange between American ethnic groups, and their relative proximity, in the work
of Cooper, Stowe and Twain and a global understanding of that intermingling. As such, there was no Teutonic misinformation about the American type, only an outsider’s perspective on the permeability of American racial boundaries. Again, this “Teutonic image” of the “American type”, stands in contrast with the more simplistic gallery of black faces presented by *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* alone.

Fluid racial boundaries were one of the defining features of blackface performance, not only because they allowed white performers to embody black stereotypes while simultaneously disavowing blackness, but because these fluid boundaries allowed black performers to cross the threshold of the stage. Blackface minstrelsy and the allure of Black music, and buffoonery, allowed Black men, and eventually women, to enter previously barred professions. Outlining the history of blackface minstrelsy, Brander Matthews notes that during blackface minstrelsy’s heyday

> there did come into existence sundry troupes of minstrels whose members were all of them actually colored men, although they conformed to the convention set by those whom they were imitating and conscientiously disguised themselves with burnt cork to achieve the sable uniformity by the ordinary negro-minstrels. (Matthews 759)

Robert Toll’s research supports Matthews assertion, although Toll claims that only select black performers, specifically “End Men”, used black makeup. Nevertheless, with the entrance of black actors, the minstrel stage became a site of interracial contact in more ways that one. This was problematic for some German viewers because of their own increased contact with the black diaspora. Jonathan Wipplinger suggests that blackface minstrel shows like Haverley’s were controversial because of
the coexistence of African American performers alongside this white performance of blackness. The negative reaction to blackface in Germany, in other words, was not due to a lack of knowledge about blacks or the irrelevance of blackness to German culture; rather it was a direct result of increasing contact between Germans and people of African descent. (459)

Blackface minstrelsy presented German viewers with a topsy-turvy world in which viewers were frequently in a state of uncertainty, a result of the form of the blackface acts and the conventions of the variety show business. White men who performed in blackface also demonstrated the fragility of white privilege and the ease with which white identity could be subsumed by blackness. Black men who performed in black makeup further underscored the inauthenticity of the whole charade. With blackface minstrelsy, German viewers in the continent could never be quite certain what was being satirized or by whom and the effect was unsettling. Blackface minstrelsy agitated German viewers in a way that other performances of racial ineptitude, or cooning, did not. Blackface revealed the constructed nature of such performances at the very same time it destabilized widely circulating stereotypes of people of African descent. In the words of Jonathan Wipplinger, “blackface became a site around which blackness and whiteness, German and American, modern and traditional had to be reinterpreted and reconstructed (Wipplinger 462).

The popularity of the Tom shows demonstrates an abiding interest in staged racial caricature on the international theater circuit. German enthusiasm for the novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and its staged version, all of which were “informed by devices of the minstrel show” (Lott 212),
also belies the novel’s relationship to racial capitalism and imperialism. Tom Shows provided white American and German viewers with an opportunity to reframe racial identity and interracial schemas in ways that reinforced power dynamics that were favorable to white viewers. Tom Shows promoted the vision of a nation in which the best whites were placed in a paternalistic relationship towards hapless blacks, blacks whose natural dispositions guided them towards subservient roles and called for white supervision. On the cusp of colonization, this portrait of racial relationships and social structures appealed to a German nation waging war with native Africans in search of an efficient means of colonization and domination. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and ensuing Tom Shows circulated a vision of a world in which whites were in charge of blacks, whose natural place was in the cotton fields. It was a vision that would prove potent.

It is here that my examination of *Onkel Tom’s Hütte*’s role as a vehicle for the visualization of monolithic blackness funnels into questions about the novel’s (and it’s attendant cultural productions) relationship to German colonization. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 saw the gathering of powerful European nations to divide the African continent and establish complete colonial dominance over its peoples. Prior to this meeting, Germany’s influence over the continent had been minimal in comparison to that of major slave-trading nations like England, France, Spain and Portugal. After the Berlin Conference, Germany would become a new colonial force in Africa and begin to engage with racial otherness in ways that were particular to the dawn of the modern era.

Colonization resulted in new confluences between blackness and servitude throughout the Western visual field. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* served as a cultural script for Germany and other European countries with imperial agendas. In *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (2011) David Ciarlo delineates the connections between German imperialism,
racist tropes in advertising and visual culture during the late nineteenth century, and the impact of
German-American cultural exchanges on these fields. Among other things, Ciarlo argues that Tom
shows “familiarized European and German audiences with the racial stereotypes that were
common in the slaveholding and postslavery segregated United States” (219), and came to
represent a certain Americanness in terms of visual aesthetics that resonated “with both pro-and
Anti-American sentiments” (219). Jayna Brown suggests that Topsy and other pickanninnies
represented “figures of English and European colonial subjecthood” (65). In other words, “the
picaninny was a lasting figure for the primitive; the project of civilizing Topsy was a metaphor for
colonial missionary programs and their agendas” (65). Germans had long found this metaphor
appealing and would soon put it to practical use as they attempted to expand their colonial empire.

Traced from the mid-nineteenth century, changes in illustrated versions of Onkel Tom’s
Hütte reflect Germany’s increasing colonial ambitions through the use of lush tropical iconography
and increasingly exotic landscapes. The transformations I am referring to here are best exemplified
in Onkel Tom’s Hütte, Oder Des Leben der Sklaven in Amerika, nach Harriet Beecher Stowe, fur
die Jugend, as translated by Leopold Streich in 1863. Printed on a lush green cloth, the cover for
Streich’s Onkel Tom’s Hutte evokes a jungle setting. The title is written in a bamboo style script
and framed by palm trees. Monkeys, snakes, tropical birds and alligators play in their branches.
Tom and his family are framed by vines above the title. To a lesser extent, undated editions of
Bruno Hoffman and Carl Koch’s Onkel Tom’s Hütte: Erzählung Aus Dem Fernen Westen (1930)
also feature lush tropical settings on the cover and exemplify the conflation between black labor
and colonialism, although in this particular instance, the unsettled territory is also imagined as the
Western United States. In early editions of Onkel Tom’s Hütte, illustrations were often copied
directly from American or English editions of the novel, or hewed closely to the originals. These
early illustrations depicted popular episodes in the narrative, like Eliza’s flight over the Ohio river or Eliza’s son dancing for Mr. Haley. As Germany became more involved with African cotton production, Onkel Tom’s Hütte illustrations began to focus less and less on popular episodes in the text and more on incidents of black manual labor, especially of blacks and cotton. Such illustrations functioned as visual justifications for colonialism in the same way Tom Shows could also support proslavery sentiments. This conflation of enslaved African Americans with African laborers also revealed an increased interest in visual tropes of race. While the popularity of minstrel shows in Germany peaked in the 1880s (Ciarlo 218) German performing arts journals and trade periodicals like Das Programm and Der Artist reveal a surge in racialized performance in the 1890s, just a few years after Germany’s first colonial engagement with Africa. Black stage performance in Germany would flourish in this way until the end of the Weimar era.

The poster for the Germania Theater production of Von Megerle’s “Zeitgemalde” featured Eliza front and center, one of the main attractions of Rial and Draper’s Ideal Uncle Tom’s Cabin. And yet, it seems clear that such a depiction is also connected to the ways in which black Americans were depicted in the United States and abroad, and the ways in which those representations bled into discourses about African colonization. Rial and Draper’s Eliza is not only a tragic mulatto, or a mixed race woman, she wears a costume similar to orientalist depictions of Arab women in the late nineteenth century. The Fez and cape that Eliza wears align her with paintings of Northern African women by Delacroix and his contemporaries. Examples of women dressed like Rial and Draper’s Eliza could be found in ethnographic catalogues of the era. The Rial and Draper/ Germania Theater poster appears at a time in which continental Germans were beginning to view the African female body with new interest, as colonial subjects and sites of conquest. Recycling this poster in a colonial context, producers at the Germania Theater signaled
the ways in which “Africanness,” or the Africanist presence was essentialized across global and linguistic boundaries and on the popular stage. While this Eliza is demure and fully clothed, she shares sartorial similarities to depictions of women from North African harems. The poster appeared only a few years before *danse de ventre* would become all the rage on Vaudeville stages in the United States and the European Continent (Dox 53). In this way, it is also possible to understand Rial and Draper’s chaste Maghrebi-styled Eliza is a precursor to Ada Overton Walker’s Salomé and the culturally subversive work Walker conducted on stage through her own reimaginings of these orientalist and imperialist tropes.

The production also points to the popularity of Topsy with German speaking audiences in America, if not Germany itself. These initial tendencies towards blackface opened the doors to performances that held a greater potential for subversion. Riffing off of Miss Ophelia and Topsy, “Belle Davis and her Pickaninnies” were immensely popular in Germany; one of the only surviving recordings of Davis was made in Berlin. Late nineteenth century performing acts like the “Georgia Piccaninnies of America [sic]” were relatively unknown in the United States, but they were able to make their living almost entirely in Europe, and well past their youth. There would be many other such groups. Dancer Ida Forsyne [Figure 2] began her career in pickaninny shows in the United States, but she made a name for herself in Europe and promoted herself as “Topsy” across the continent and in several large *Das Programm* advertisements.¹⁴ Jayna Brown, noting the way “stories proliferating out of plantation lore melted together European colonial fictions with U.S. antebellum plantation nostalgia” (58) identifies the Topsy figure as one who resists containment or absorption in Western practices of discipline and time. Thus, performances

¹⁴ See *Das Programm*, No.546 1912, *Das Programm* 555 1912 and *Das Programm* No. 612 1913 for more examples of Ida Forsyne’s Topsy advertisements.
of childishness and servitude that were a feature of most Topsy and pickaninny acts, as demonstrated by women like Davis and Forsyne, and their troupes, represented moments at which performances of blackness were most resistant to cooptation or easy assimilation into either German or American political agendas.

In her unruliness, Topsy embodied racialized modernity. Topsy made it new by virtue of being herself. Forsyne's advertisement in Das Programm makes this clear in several ways. The exotic nature of Topsy is highlighted in her billing -- Topsy is "from out there," presumably the "Hot Country". Whether this country is the southern United States or Africa is never fully established and is perhaps purposely ambiguous. The originality and newness of Forsyne's dance is highlighted several times over. In a review of her Sack Dance performance in Brussels, Forsyne is described as "einer kleinen, beweglichen, wohlgebauten Mulattin," or small, mobile, well-built Mulatto, able to elicit applause from the audience due to her lively dance. The Sack Dance is inimitable, the only one of its kind, which is why Forsyne/ Topsy is always engaged. While no performance dates in Berlin are listed in the advertisement from 1913, the Berlin based Das Programm was responsible for handling her correspondence and professional inquiries. Thus, Forsyne's performances are anchored by her engagement with the city, one of the largest in the world at that time.

The costumes Forsyne is pictured in as Topsy speak volumes. The sack, a stylized slave uniform from which Forsyne's signature dance earned its name, is especially striking here. It conjures fantasies of enslaved Black Americans as well as depictions of subjugated and disenfranchised Africans found in various forms of colonial ephemera, including postcards. Also of note is the reminder that "Dieses Kostume ist aus dem Atelier von Pruchinski," a Berlin couturier also responsible for the costumes of Vaudeville duo Brody and Brody, whose
advertisements in Das Programm frequently bear the name Pruchinski, too. Atelier Pruschinki’s significance to black performers on the Central European variety circuit and their role on styling modernity will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. For now, we should note that there are other stylistic choices which contribute to Topys’s modernity. Forsyne's advertisement indicates that she will sing "You Made Me Love You," a song which has little to do with Uncle Tom's Cabin or the character Topsy, but much to do with the minstrel stage; it was recorded by blackface minstrel performer Al Jolson in June of 1913 and became a hit. In light of these facts, I argue that these signifiers solidify Forsyne's position as a harbinger of modernity as embodied by black Americans as well as her role as a potential object of white paternalism and domination.

**Gruß Aus “Onkel Tom’s Hütte”**: Housing Complex

I will end this chapter with a brief gloss on the actual space of Onkel Tom’s Hütte, which resonated deeply in Germany as a phenomenological ideal in ways that are difficult to imagine on American soil. In Berlin, the “idyllische Wald-Restaurant” named for Onkel Tom’s Hütte was a popular entertainment site. The Onkel Toms Hütte restaurant and resort became a signifier for popular entertainment and colonial power. The title for the subheading is taken from a popular postcard from the resort. There is little information about the kinds of performances offered at the Berlin restaurant or resort. No academic study of the area exists and information about the business in journals and newspapers is scarce. And yet the area was linked to Blackface minstrelsy within the German press and the popular imaginary. An article about a Zehlendorf festival published in the Teltower Kreisblatt in 1891, entitled "Das fünfte Stiftungsfest des Ortsvereins zu Zehlendorf," describes the neighborhood's annual festivities, including a detailed description of a blackface
minstrel show.\(^{15}\)

This thick description, provides irrefutable evidence of the existence of German enthusiasm for blackface minstrelsy and its relationship to Tom Shows. I am particularly fascinated by the ways in which colonialism and American racism are yoked together on the German popular stage at this moment in the account, race creating a nation of both Samoans and Black Americans, a "group" with their own "authentic" national songs and traditions in spite of actual geographic, cultural and racial boundaries. The racial conflations contained within this performance reveal the ways in which Uncle Tom's Cabin became useful in transnational networks of white dominance and superiority.

The project of building an entertainment complex named after one of the most famous black characters in American literature was certainly a curious one, but it was even more so in light of the fact that a black diasporic community was already present in Berlin. Within the cityscape, the presence of black people, colonial subjects and otherwise, had been a symbol of prosperous imperialism across Europe for many years. The presence of black people within the city of Berlin and the idea of a black community, housing and homes, was not entirely new to Berliners by the time the Onkel Toms Hütte resort was built. Berlin's multinational black

\(^{15}\) Die kohlpechabenschwarzen Neger aus Samoa waren eingetroffen, und also der Vorhang aufging, erschien zunächst ihr Führer, der schwarze Mr. Tom aus dem hinterwalde, um in wohlgemerkt der Ansprache sich und seine Leute der Kunst des Publikums zu empfehlen. Das war ein urwüchsiges Völkchen von Schwarzen Musikanten, das bald auf der Bühne zusammentrat und ein nationales und colonialized Konzert aufführte. Die Musikstücke waren echt. "Zie moosik compt" verkündet das Programm und die Zuhörer glaubten die bekannte Weise von der "Musikbanda" zu vernehmen. Wir spielen jetzt den Nationalgesang "Ozuzanna" verkündete der "hüttenbesitzer" Onkel Tom, und es war also hörte man unfern heimischen Kaffenhauser [sic] "O Susanne wie bist du doch so schön." Das Originelle der Idee, das Naturlche im Masken-Spiel und Geberden der Mitwirkenden, das Erheiternde der Musik -- Alles das vereinigte sich zu einem vollendeten Ganzen und fand so lebhaftes Antlang, daß die Schwarze kapelle noch einige Nummern zugeben und mehrmals vor der Rampe erscheinen mußte.
community had made international headlines before. In 1882 the *Teltower Kriesblatt* reported that the Berlin “Negro Colony” had approximately 60 residents who were divided into two groups: blacks who came from America and those who came from the Spree.\(^{16}\) The article carefully documents the fact some residents of this black community on the Spree speak German with a Berlin dialect, a mark of both language proficiency and class distinction within Germany. The exact location of this colony was not revealed, although given the nature of the service industry work available to blacks in Berlin during the late nineteenth century, one would presume that the community was centrally located. The *Teltower Kreisblatt* report was later picked up by the *New York Times*, although the *Times* failed to make mention of the scale of this community. In fact, the *Times* reported that the community was much smaller. In an 1887 New York Times article largely based on the previous report, readers were informed that there were only 23 "male Negroes" in Berlin, some of whom had married white women from Berlin. The men were reportedly employed as "house servants, waiters, porters, peddlers, etc.". The *New York Times* notes that "by far the largest number come from the United States, and are proud of claiming American citizenship, and of being able to produce their American passports". In spite of their purported American nationalism, these ex-pat men fathered "numerous mulatto progeny" and seemed to have settled in Germany for the long haul.

The *Teltower Kreisblatt* explains that the noblest (or *Vornehmste*) of the Negro Colony residents was "Sanjo der Mohr des Prinzen Karl". "Sanjo" was most likely Henry Wilson, originally born in Freetown, Sierra Leone. By the 1920s Henry Wilson had retired from royal

\(^{16}\) "Die Berliner Negerkolonie, welches ungefähr sechzig kopfe zahlt, gehört sicherlich zu den interessanten Bewohnern Berlins. Dieselben trennen sich in zwei verschiedene klassen, in die Schwarzen, welche von Amerika gekommen sind, und die Neger, welche direct von Afrika an der Spree."
service and moved to Zehlendorf with this wife, a white woman, and their three sons (Zeller 35). Of course, Zehlendorf is the site of the blackface minstrel show previously described in the Teltower Kreisblatt. By the time Wilson had moved to Zehlendorf the suburb was also the location of the famed Onkel Tom's Hütte restaurant and resort. No neat, formal connection can be made between Wilson and the Zehlendorf entertainment complex. However, given his status and the attention blacks in Berlin received in the late nineteenth century, it is possible to surmise that part of the appeal of the area to Germans was related to the performance of blackness and the black diaspora in the public imagination, however unofficially. It appears that Wilson was an active part of the community upon his retirement to the suburb. He can be seen in the front row of a group photograph of members of the Zehlendorf Men's Choral group taken in 1914. Henry Wilson's geographic position within Berlin, a prominent resident of the city of Berlin who was also, however tangentially, aligned with the Onkel Toms Hütte restaurant, also connect him to American slavery and performances of black subjugation and white domination within a global framework. Wilson was a black diasporic subject, a Sierra Leonian who was understood in a context shaped by American racial discourse, even though he was not born into American slavery. His Sierra Leonese nationality also leaves open the tantalizing possibility that he had American roots, adding another layer of complexity to his relationship with the German metropolis.

The mention of Henry Wilson in the Teltower Kreisblatt article also calls to mind his predecessor, "Achmed" who is prominently displayed in the foreground of Franz Krüger's "Parade Unter den Linden" (1839). The painting portrays a military parade along Berlin's main avenue and is meant to depict the scope of Germany's Imperial might. The landscape is populated with prominent members of the city's aristocratic class and their identities have been painstakingly documented. And yet, unlike "Sanjo," "Achmed's" real name has not been recorded in histories of
the painting. Nevertheless, "Achmed" bore with him the signifying powers of other blacks in service to European royalty in Western art and literature. "Achmed's" position in the center of the urban landscape demonstrated the cosmopolitan nature of early 19th century Berlin. For contemporary scholars of the black diaspora, "Achmed" also testifies to the lengthy black presence in Berlin. In this way, both Achmed and Wilson are ciphers for colonial power within the urban landscape. Their presence and imagined enslavement allowed for the visualization of white supremacy in the German city. These men set whiteness within the European metropolis into relief via the tropes and mechanisms of slavery.

As royal servants styled as imperial slaves, "Achmed" and "Sanjo" contributed to the sense of Berlin as a global power. Their presence was linked to the kinds of formal and informal performances necessary for the visualization of that power and the racial imbalance necessary for Imperial dominance. Through Sanjo, Achmed and the Onkel Toms Hütte resort we can also see the ways in which American slavery and race relations provided a crucial framework for performing relationships of power and national identity within the European Empire and colonial cityscape. While Zehlendorf and the Onkel Toms Hütte restaurant and resort may have been home to actual blackface minstrel performances and Tom Shows, what is perhaps even more compelling is the way in which the iconography of American slavery transformed parts of the city of Berlin into sites for the performance of white colonial identity. Thus, not only the presence of slaves, but of entertainment sites meant to mimic American plantations become integral to Berlin's identity as a global power. Plantations are themselves an amalgamation of transnational ideas about the housing and management of forced black labor. Scholar Theresa A. Singelton notes that "the creators of plantations utilized design principles emanating from transnational movements accompanying the rise and spread of industrial and agricultural capitalism that showcased the
power of plantation owners” (Singleton 95). Elaborating on the transnational flow of ideas surrounding the design and management of plantations in the late nineteenth century, Singleton also writes that: “ideas circulated among planters through multiple venues: correspondence, agricultural and other learned societies, publications, travel to other plantation regions, settlement of immigrant planters to new plantation settings, and so forth” (96).

This understanding of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin impacted Germany's largest city draws on performance studies and the ways in which this discipline allows us to consider how performances of identity and citizenship occur within the urban landscape. In her introduction to *Performing the City*, the 2014 *TDR* special issue on the relationship between cities and performance, Carol Martin claims that

> Cities are live performances. How people behave in the streets, in the parks, in the outdoor markets, in the stadiums, inside buildings— the halls of learning, museums, government offices, courtrooms, theatres, apartments, restaurants, cafes, and hotels—and riding public and private transportation gives cities their unique character, ambience, and tone. (Martin 11)

Martin's treatise also hints at the importance of architecture and urban planning to embodied performances of identity and, in the case of the Uncle Tom's Hütte restuarant and resort, colonial identity. For if "geographic place and aesthetic experience are inevitably entangled in ways that deserve careful consideration. (Martin 15) then "the physical spaces and structures of urban environments result from a performance of ideas that signify organizational and hierarchical problems and possibilities including those of political, religious, and cultural systems" (Martin 12). In the same issue of *TDR*, Imanuel Schipper reaffirms the importance of the work of French
theoretician Henri Lefebvre (1974) and his conceptualization of space,

with the observation that spaces do not exist per se, but rather arise
as a social product, as relations between the perceptions and actions
of people and the built environment. In other words, a space
(including urban space) is a coproduction of given circumstances
and the experiences and actions of human beings. Secondly, as
urban space depends on people, it always has the potential to be
reshaped, transformed, and used differently. (Schipper 22)

Through Henri Lefebvre's work and in keeping with recent work on performance in the urban
landscape, we can begin to understand the ways in which the physical structure of Uncle Tom's
Cabin, understood as a space of white supremacy and domination, was perfectly at home in the
German metropolis.

In the absence of an archive of written documentation about the Onkel Tom's Hütte
restaurant and resort, I rely on visual material to understand the nature of the performances the site
engendered. Postcards from the late nineteenth century (see Figures 3-5) illustrate the ways the
Onkel Toms Hütte site eerily mirrored the tropes of plantation iconography. The circa 1898 ‘Grußs
aus “Onkel Toms Hütte”’ postcard takes the style of a typical eighteenth century plantation
engraving, although it actually depicts the Berlin entertainment site. The resort grounds are
sprawling and contain peak-roofed buildings, open pavilions and a thatched roofed gazebo. The
branches of all of the trees have been sheared far up the trunk, perhaps to give them the appearance
of tropical palms. Horse and riders roam the background. In the midground, tiny dark figures dine
at open tables. In the foreground, people roam along open paths and canoe along the banks of the
Riemesiter river. More detailed postcards from later years reveal more intimate details about the
massive entertainment complex. Up close, the lattice work fences and high peaked roofs of the complexes building appear rustic in a way that is representative of traditional German architecture. The Onkel Toms Hütte resort complex played host to both children and adults. Built before the completion of Berlin’s subway system, a visit to this luxurious site would not have been an easy task for most Berliners. In fact, the very existence of a number of postcards indicate that the site was a special tourist attraction. The plantation complex represented in the lithograph seems closely aligned to the style of Palladian architecture common during the nineteenth century: “Neoclassical attributes frequently found in plantation landscapes include the elevated great house, a hierarchical order for buildings, a symmetrical layout of outbuildings and grounds, the concealment of workers’ quarters from the formal plantation landscape, and treelined avenues leading to the grand entrance of the great house” (Singleton 97). Furthermore: in the Palladian plan, the great house is prominently sited on top of a hill...with the crop production facilities, slave quarters, and outbuildings located below it, symbolized the central position of the owners held within a social order modeled after the hierarchical relationships of the ancient temple gods” (Singleton 98).

After the construction of the resort, many of Berlin's surrounding suburbs were absorbed into the city. In the 1920s, the Zehlendorf neighborhood in which the restaurant was located would become home to the Onkel Tom’s Hütte social housing development designed by renowned modern architect Bruno Taut. Bruno Taut’s Waldseidlung is one of the most important examples of modernist public housing. Constructed between 1926 and 1931, the early development “housed some five hundred units in three types, set in beautiful parkland on the edge of the Grunewald, but with a direct railway link to the city” (Boyd and Whyte 465). Its forest setting was pragmatic in keeping both with “the social democratic ambition to create housing that was generously provided with light, air, and access to green space” (Boyd and Whyte 465) and the need to house working
class people in inexpensive areas of the city. Providing adequate housing for “German” people was a key element of German nationalism in the modern era. The newly formed Weimar Republic took the creation of public housing as one of its key elements. While the increasing urbanization that fostered the birth of the Metropolis began in the Wilhelmine period, it was only in 1918, under the Weimar government, that a concrete public housing development policy was enacted. Barbara Miller Lane’s *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918-1945* (1985), remains a useful guide to the ways in which architecture was used to define the new values of the Weimar Republic. Weimar housing policies, a central achievement of the newly formed republic, were unique in the world at the time. Later, the National Socialist Party would explicitly use public housing as keystone of its definition of the volk and the cityscape as a reflection of National Socialist *Weltanschaung*. However, while the National Socialists party also claimed that the creation of public housing was important to them, but the construction of public housing was cut under their regime and modernist architecture was thoroughly rebuked.

Taut’s Waldenseidlung can be understood as a tribute to interracial collaboration and political activism. Indeed, Esra Ackan explains that, “Taut was one of the few architects of the modern period who were consciously engaged in understanding these tensions and potentials inherent in cross-cultural translations” (Ackan “Towards” 9). Bruno Taut’s architectural writings reveal a preoccupation with transnational principles of architecture that was rooted in his interest in non-European design and his belief in its superiority. Ackan explains the ways in which Taut's work became the focus on an ethical split in urban design and architecture during the National Socialist regime, his work itself the subject of a coordinated attack on cosmopolitanism (Architectural in Translation 236). In this way, “in Taut’s own words, ‘what was played out in the forest suburb of Zehlendorf in Berlin in 1929 was the precursor of that which the whole of
Germany would experience in 1933” (Akcan, *Architecture in Translation* 236). The challenge that Taut’s work posed to colonial authority is perhaps best illustrated by his forced exile during the rule of the National Socialist party.

The backlash against a purely functional conception of mass housing, which was already gathering pace by 1930, found a natural support after 1933 in National Socialist ideology that damned modernist architecture and urbanism as Bolshevist, and favored instead housing that reflected the simple life on German soil, drawing heavily for its symbolism on vernacular models. In Berlin, this urge found quintessential expression in the SS-*Kameradschaftseidlung*, built in Zehlendorf in 1937-39. Sited, with a certain irony, almost directly across the road from Taut’s Onkel-Tom’s-Hütte development, this housing for the SS came straight from the pages of the Brother’s Grimm, with high-pitched roofs, red tiles, and rustic shutters.

At one point, the National Socialist agenda against Bauhaus design devolved into stirring up controversy over flat and pitched roofs; pitched roofs took on racial implications and were conflated with the maintenance of an imagined German heritage. Ironically, the neighborhood’s *Kameradschaftseidlung* more closely represent a literal interpretation of the slave cabins the neighborhood is named after. They look like rustic Western dwellings. And yet, for Taut and his contemporaries, the Onkel Tom’s Hütte complex, and the novel that inspired it, represented a complex negotiation of European ideals and rough translations of African American culture that did not necessarily bolster white supremacy.

The current space of Onkel Tom’s Hütte in Berlin poses a challenge for those who are conscious of the numerous ways Harriet Beecher Stowe’s text has been deployed, and of its afterlives. Ex-pat American artist Paula Ross has written about her own confoundment around the stop, in light of its cultural baggage, asking herself, during her initial encounter, “if this was some
kind of German joke? What on earth would possess the transportation system to name a station after a character in an American text that carried so much baggage?” The elegance of Taut’s “projects” are so much more beautiful than any North American public housing development that currently exists, or that possibly ever will be, that they defy even these initial reactions. These cottage/cabin/apartment buildings nestled between soaring pines miles from the bustling center of Berlin were built out of necessity and a sense of mutual obligation, an obligation to a people quite like oneself with similar claims to land and space. Public housing by the volk for the volk, dignified living in a way that continues to be denied to so many black folk on American soil. In this housing project I read a recognition of mutual humanity through the experience and being of the other that does not always translate across bodies, space and time.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined some of the foundations of black performance in Germany at the beginning of the modern era. It is my contention that early engagements with Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* set the stage for later forms of black performance. The novel spawned a set of visual tropes that took root on the German popular stage even as they contributed to American blackface minstrelsy. Performances of blackness on the popular stage in both Germany and the United States evolved from a shared set of racist visual tropes. These visual tropes, while ostensibly creating definitive limits for the personhood of the black other, also created a means by which whites on both sides of the Atlantic could come to understand themselves and their own relationship to nationhood. This phenomenon became evident in Berlin’s urban landscape, starting at the turn of the century. Thus, iterations of Uncle Tom’s cabin as a physical site in the city of Berlin have much to tell us about race, space, and performances of nationhood.
CHAPTER TWO: COLORED FASHION PLATES: RACIAL CONSUMPTION, VARIETY AND THE METROPOLE

It was to my mind and the minds of most of my teachers a day of Progress with a capital P. Population in all the cultured lands was increasing swiftly, doubling and more; cities everywhere were growing and expanding and making themselves the centers and almost the only centers of civilization; transportation by land and sea was drawing the nations near and making the lands of the earth increasingly accessible. Inventions and technique were a perpetual marvel and their accomplishment infinite in possibility. Commerce was madly seeking markets all around the earth; colonies were being seized and countries integrated into European civilization in Asia, Africa, South America and the islands.


My young German friend admired my type very much. She had never seen a colored woman before. She used to pat my cheek and say, “You are so schön schwarz (so beautifully dark) and your hair curls so prettily.”

Mary Church Terrell, A Colored Woman in a White World

Introduction: Riding Pegasus Along the Rhine

We have seen the ways in which representations of blackness made their way onto the German popular stage in the late nineteenth century, their indebtedness to stereotypes of blackness that originated in American literature, and how those representations influenced civic architecture and public articulations of nationhood for Berliners. That analysis provides us with an understanding of the global reach of American popular culture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Within that analysis some of the circuitous routes of cultural exchange between Germany and the United States were made apparent through a series of broad strokes. From these complicated beginnings an affinity between African Americans and the city of Berlin developed. One of my goals in this project is to emphasize the importance of those routes of cultural exchange to African Americans and African American culture during this period. As such, I would now like
to consider some of the more complex workings of “blackness” as a set of cultural expectations, especially as embodied and performed by African Americans, and Berlin’s variété.

At the turn of the century, as African Americans began to travel far and wide, their international exploits made news at home as well as news abroad. On June 29, 1889, The Cleveland Gazette, the highly successful black newspaper published by well-known editor and activist Harry C. Smith, ran the following item on its front page:

A colored man clad in respectable garments, who appears in Berlin, is almost lionized. There is no race prejudice. On the contrary, he is the equal of all, and people speak of the handsome "brunette" and the frauleins saddle Pegasus in his honor. Hundreds of promenaders stop before the Café Zur Oper and gaze for minutes at the colored man who acts as porter to the establishment. His presence draws numerous people to the restaurant who would otherwise pass it by. The big fellow appreciates his position now and has become proud. His wages are high, and being the only attraction of his kind in Berlin, he is able to dictate his terms.17

---

17 I rely on sources from the Cleveland Gazette here and elsewhere in my work because of the papers unique position as a crossroad for communication and the exchange of ideas within the black diaspora at the turn of the century. Until its demise in 1945, the Cleveland Gazette was the longest running weekly African American periodical. It was nicknamed “the Old Reliable” and did not miss one of its Saturday publication date in 58 years (“Cleveland Gazette”). In her dissertation, Straddling the Color Line: Social and Political Power of African American Elites in Charleston, New Orleans, and Cleveland, 1880-1920 Kim M. Carey provides a vivid description of the importance of the Cleveland Gazette in a national framework. Carey writes: the quality of writing and its ability to satisfy the needs and wants of its readers made the Gazette and its editor a force to be reckoned with, not only in Cleveland but throughout the nation. Especially during the first decades of its operation, the paper republished articles from other black newspapers. Likewise, African American
The headline was "No Color Line in Germany". In the article, the “color line” represents a bar to employment income, not racial discrimination. The author interprets the absence of anti-black racial violence in the city of Berlin as the absence of racial prejudice. At the moment, we have no way of knowing who the unnamed porter was or where he hailed from. He could be African American or from one of Germany’s new African colonies. He might also have been a resident of Berlin’s aforementioned “Negro Colony” on the Spree. The tale seems more than a little apocryphal. But for African American readers, the unnamed colored man was meant as proof that being well-behaved and well-dressed can get you into the right places, given the right circumstances. It was a useful fiction.

Some of the subtext for “No Color Line” is made clear later on in that issue, in a third page article entitled “Always Be Careful”. Readers are reminded that “there is among numbers of the public a feeling against the accommodation of Negroes in restaurants and places of public pleasure, against which we must fight and consequently must have clean weapons with which to do so”. These “clean weapons” were clothing and personal hygiene. The author describes his horror at apprehending an unkempt working class black man eating at a cafeteria not far from the Gazette’s main offices. Readers are told that “just one such thoughtless person” in a public establishment could bring down the entire race. As such, “it behooves us especially not to do so, as we are credited with ill-breeding and a lack of nicety”. The writer places the burden of racial uplift through

________________________
newspapers in other cities reprinted articles from the Gazette. Residents of Cleveland continued their subscriptions to the paper by mail when they moved to other cities and it was common for people in Cleveland to include clippings from the paper in letters to friends and family throughout the country (256). Similar arguments can be made about the role of the Indianapolis Freeman in black communities in the United States. Here and in other chapters, I read both papers closely to gain a fuller sense of black newspaper coverage of black performers abroad and reports of various European cities.
black respectability squarely on the shoulders of its readers. Cleveland’s black residents had been relatively free from the effect of “Black Laws” since the Civil War, but the article points to the tenuous nature of that peace and generalized fears and anxieties about the speed with which such brutal restrictions could be reapplied. Small measures that could shift white perceptions of blacks, like personal conduct and grooming, were considered weighty matters. Black Ohioans, like black Americans on the whole, lived with a fragile sense of freedom. Ohio would be counted among the handful of Northern lynching states in Ida B. Wells’ *Red Record* (1895) only a few years later.

Thus, for African American readers, “No Color Line” was an article about more than the liberatory aspects of black style, or the wonders of foreign travel. “The big fellow” in Germany is an aspirational figure as well as a curiosity. He lives beyond the American "color line", in an ostensibly white country, one that Americans believed to be "blonder of complexion and tidier" (Twain 1) than any other. He is a black cosmopolite and a figure of racial uplift. His labor is a mere performance. He makes an easy living off of his black dandyism. His sexual appeal to young white women, or his ability to inspire poetic frenzy, a thing punishable by death in many parts of the United States, goes unchecked. It is not improbable that his employers at the Café Zur Oper hoped to exploit such sexual tensions. Located only a few steps away from Berlin’s main opera house on Unter den Linden, the city’s main thoroughfare, the porter is strategically positioned to attract customers and notoriety.

For the German patrons described in "No Color Line", the good-looking well-dressed man is Café Zur Oper’s main attraction. He is not on stage, but his presence surely added to the experience of a night at the opera. He embodies modernity. The *Gazette’s* readers were regularly reminded of the ways in which Germany stood at the center of Europe’s cultural achievements, leading the pack in terms of musical accomplishments, the arts and architecture. This trope appears
sporadically across black print culture, but an especially powerful example lies in the Gazette’s “Across the Water” series, a travel exposé by Oberlin grad F.J. Roberson. The series ran sporadically from the fall of 1884 to 1885 in the Cleveland Gazette. In “Across the Water" Roberson documents his travels across Germany and frequently remarks upon his warm reception by the locals and seeming lack of color prejudice among the working class Germans that he meets. But we know that the Germans were not color blind. Race was an important factor in the nascent German worldview. In the decades after “No Color Line” appeared, German entertainment establishments and nightclubs would seek out black employees for positions as porters, coat check attendants and performers. Contrary to the Gazette’s claims, their presence, the soupçon of blackness that they added to urban establishments, was ample evidence of the cultural currency of race in Germany.

In the first chapter, I discussed the influence of Uncle Tom’s Cabin on German popular culture and space. In this chapter, I extend my examination of the impact of African American culture on Berlin through an investigation of various scenes of racialized, particularly black, performance. Both chapters attempt to locate sites of black diasporic performance and self-making beyond the borders of the United States. Berlin’s variété, or variety shows, and its Kabarett scene were the sites of a culmination of a number of colonial and modernist impulses in which various strains of transnational American influence can be detected. The presence of black (especially African American) cultural signifiers was a key feature of the modern European city and frequently expressed through fashion, design and entertainment. African American performers and performances that featured racialized subjects, particularly people of African or Asian descent, were main attractions in the modern European city. Many of these performances fell into categories that would be considered low culture and contained decidedly racist content. And yet, the very fact
of their being, the presence of tourists and locals who could absorb their performances, became a key feature of the metropolis and added to its reputation as a site of liberalism. Racialized mass entertainment and related consumer cultures were a set of conflicting yet moving parts. German performance venues sought to profit from racist stereotypes. Concurrently, German popular stages provided black entertainers with a forum in which they could act out relatively transgressive tableaux; interracial gymnastic couples and family acts were par for the course. Subversive performances of gender, nation and family were par for the course for black variety performers in Berlin during this era.

Holding fast to these tensions, I argue that commodification of black performers during this period is an example of the centrality of blackness to the development of Berlin as a world-class city. Direct connections can be made between the function of black performers on the popular stage and the consumer impulse on display in German department stores, both notable features of the new city. Furthermore, the presence of “colored fashion plates” and other black performers provided a means for Germans to define whiteness in a cosmopolitan context. What emerges from this line of inquiry is a better sense of the connective tissue that existed between Germany and African American performers at the turn-of-the-century.

Although a consideration of Berlin and its history is important to this work, I have not attempted to provide a comprehensive overview of the history of Berlin between the Wilhelmine and Weimar periods. The history of that city and its complexities are far too rich for this project. Instead, I am interested in defining the terms that made Berlin a city that was so conducive for black performers from the late nineteenth century onward and a city that so often reflected their impact. The years between the 1890s and 1920s marked the beginning of European modernism and the early phase of black theatrical interventions. The rise of Berlin as a metropolis occurred
alongside the rise black performance in the United States and a class of black laborers and
performers who were willing and able to travel abroad. The number and variety of their acts is
particularly tantalizing to those who try to follow their footsteps through the archives. This
diversity is a testament to the particularities of German audiences and the performance
opportunities they created for black performers. Rather than making a comprehensive argument
about the city of Berlin as a whole, or attempt to document the numerous forms of black
performance which proliferated during this period, I argue that the commodification of black
bodies was central to Berlin's emergence as a center for world-class mass entertainment and
consumer culture. I also examine the ways in which mass entertainment and consumer culture
informed one another vis-à-vis race.

In its concern with the interlocking mechanisms of racism and capitalism, my work is
informed by the formations described by Cedric Robinson in *Black Marxism* (1983). Robinson
explains the necessity of nationalism to colonialism and the ways, "as an enduring principle of
European social order, the effects of racialism were bound to appear in the social expression of
every strata in which they were formed (28). Robinson notes that

in Germany and Italy, where national bourgeoisies were relatively
late in their formation, the marshaling of national social forces
(peasants, farmers, workers, clerics, professional classes, the
aristocracy and the state) was accomplished by the ideological
phantasmagoria of race, *Herrenvolk*, and nationalism. This compost
of violence in its time, became known under the name of facism,
(27)
This fascism allowed the bourgeoisie to extend their control beyond European borders, into Africa and beyond. And yet, Robinson also notes that because nationalism as a cultural force was dismissed by many early Marxists and social theorists, they were unable to predict its influence on Europe, its imperial holdings, or the Marxist movement itself. My examination of Berlin's consumer and entertainment culture forges a bridge between the functions of empire and the fuel provided by American popular culture. On the stage, in the streets and in showrooms, American racism meshed with European racialism and colonial ambitions to shape the city and its culture.

One of the most important organizing concepts in this investigation is that of heterotopia. In his essay “Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias,” Foucault distinguishes between different kinds of external spaces and the ways they overlap with time: “the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space”. Foucault defines heterotopias as those spaces which “have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect”. Heterotopias are the opposite of utopias in that they are very real sites of accretion. Thus, “the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible”. Among other spaces, Foucault names theaters, cinemas, gardens, fairgrounds, brothels, museums and libraries as examples of heterotopias. Heterotopias are totalities, but they also function in relation to space outside of themselves. Heterotopic spaces contain superimposed meanings and are at once part and parcel of the world.

Heterotopias are timeless in the sense that they play a part in all human civilizations. The site specific heterotopias that developed as a result of Berlin’s emergence onto the global stage created opportunities for the performance of national identity by Germans and foreign performers
alike. They did so by neutralizing much of the trauma of racial violence that characterized Germany’s colonial interventions in Africa and by reframing that violence as pleasure. Turn-of-the-century Berlin’s heterotopias crystalized the nation’s imperial ambitions and its attendant, insatiable desire for racial consumption. It should be clear by now that the modern department store is a deeply heterotopic site. I argue that both the German department store and the variety stage provided the public with the opportunity to enact systems of global domination on a micro-scale. I also draw connections between the formal stage of the variety and the stages set for consumers in the department store. On each stage we find the raw material for the modern city and a reliance on the black performing body. To shop, to be shopped for, to be a place where one can shop, the shop as site of variety and sedimented excess of empire, these are the themes that link the variety stage and the department store in turn-of-the-century Berlin and the spaces in which black performers, the performance of blackness, and black products, become important forms of capital.

The department store as a site of performance, black or otherwise, has been vastly under theorized. And yet, in Performing Consumers (2006), her study of the immersive brand experience that define contemporary corporate retail environments of business like Nike and Disney, Maurya Wickstrom explains the synergistic relationship between retail environments and performance. Wickstrom writes:

Store designers overtly poach the theatrical. They have deemphasized the consumption of specific commodities and instead create experiential environments through with the consumer comes to embody the resonances of the brand as feelings, sensations, and even memories. As if we were actors in the theatre, as consumers in
branded spaces we loan the brands character the phenomenological resources of our bodies. We play out its fictions, making them appear in three dimensions, as if they were real. Embodied, the story the brand is telling is real. (2)

Furthermore, Wickstrom reminds us that "our consumption practices are shaped by our theatrical ability to hold the real and the not real as simultaneous instances of embodied experience, and ability to live the truth of the make-believe" (Wickstrom 2).

Wickstrom's work is relevant here because it calls to mind the imaginative possibilities conjured forth on the department store floor by its designers and its patrons. Entering into retail spaces requires an embodied encounter with capitalism in which both the patron and the employee are recruited into the production of surplus value and active participants in the creation of racial capital. In successful retail environments, the thin line between the product and the theatrical experience which is produced is successfully blurred. I am particularly interested in the story of imperial power that was expressed through consumption and retail environments in the modern European city. Describing his childhood in Berlin during the turn-of-the century, Walter Benjamin claimed that he "came to know the 'city' only as a theater of 'shopping'...A chain of impenetrable mountains, nay, caverns of commodities -- that was the city" (qtd. in Jelavich 16). If we consider Berlin as a branded shopping-theater space, which phenomenological resources do white residents and black artists call into play?

Considering Maurya Wickstrom's position and extending it into the past provides us with the opportunity to understand the relationship between race, capital and performance in a global context. The brand of Berlin was empire. Entering the cityscape and heterotopic sites like the department store involved an immersive, embodied experience of globalization and imperial
power for the modern Berliner. The commodification of the black body was both an implicit and explicit feature of the modern city. The imperialism that undergirded developments like the European department store were explicitly concerned with African colonialism. This same imperialism informed the variety of entertainments to be found on the popular stage. The excesses of these imperial pursuits were made available to German nationals as proof of Germany's international prowess and the successful management of its protectorates. The products of empire justified imperialism. The commodification of empire also required the participation, and cooptation of colonial subjects. Thus, the black body became a fetishized commodity, a thing to be consumed across various heterotopic spaces. It is precisely at this moment that the retail stage and the variety stage become yoked. In its examination of the black presence on the German variété stage, this phase of my project provides an overview of a segment of what was a highly fragmented and diverse cosmopolitan art form and city. At its heart, this chapter seeks to answer the question: what made Berlin a significant site for black performance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? How did Berlin differ from Paris, the city with which black performers are most often associated? How can a black presence that is hidden from view shape a city?

**Berlin as Heterotopia**

Sketching the history of Berlin's development in relation to commerce and entertainment is now a well-rehearsed scholarly strategy. Berlin became one of the world’s largest cities during the Wilhelmine era by shaking off its provincial roots as an unremarkable military outpost in what had once been a highly fragmented nation. Prior to the boom, the city was almost conspicuously average in both size and ambitions. But Berlin’s population increased from roughly 800,000 in the late 1870s to over 1.5 million in 1890 (Taylor 155). In the midst of this transformation, Berlin
became “the buzzing center of German heavy industry” (Taylor 154) and the city itself became highly mechanized, as common lore has it. Berlin’s infrastructure became more sophisticated, including the extension of the canal system, the creation of underground sewage system and the development of the S-bahn railroad network. By the time Berlin became Germany's official capital after Germany's unification in 1871, its position as a central location in the development of new travel and communications networks such as railways and telegraph systems had already been established. Its centrality and sophisticated infrastructure would make Berlin an important stop on the continental variety circuit. Germany's efficient, un-segregated transit system and Berlin's central position within Europe would also have made the city an attractive stop for African American performers. The central European variety circuit was largely free of the racist violence that plagued the American vaudeville circuit. Indeed, in some cases, the rules of Western racial violence seemed completely inverted in Germany.  

The response of Berlin's citizens to this growth was not one of unmixed delight. On its way to becoming Europe’s fourth largest city, Berlin's rapid changes gave rise to new sets of social problems and pressing local concerns. Urban historian Andrew Lees claims that "out of all of the emerging world cities during the nineteenth century, the responses to Berlin by Germany's inhabitants were the most ambivalent and often the most negative" (Rowe 11). According to Dorothy Rowe,

---

18 For example, readers of Das Program issue No.378, published in 1909 learned of the following incident in which a German audience was thrown into a murderous rage over the mistreatment of a black performer: “During a wrestling match between Illa, a coloured man, and Romandos a deaf and dumb Greek at the ‘Volksgarten’ in Pirmasens (Rhine-Bavaria), the two competitors become entangled in the curtains on the stage. After they were separated by the umpire and Illa had stepped back to the carpet, the Greek suddenly jumped from behind on Illa and threw him down…The police had much trouble to protect the Greek against the furious crowd, who wanted to lynch Romandos on the spot”.

one of the main concerns for the many urban commentators on both the left and the right of the political spectrum in Imperial Germany was the effect that the general size and living conditions of the modern world city [...] had upon the development of individual human life and social interaction. The city was seen to be a melting pot of all social ills in which either the threat of revolution or else the fear of self-centered egoism was a major fact of urban existence.

(Rowe 30)

Berlin’s growing pains were severe. In its heyday, its residents waged an uphill battle to maintain basic standards of living and hygiene in an increasingly crowded city. Berlin attracted scores of migrant workers from Eastern Europe and other parts of Germany. Crime and poverty surged. The city developed a reputation for licentiousness and lawlessness and depictions of Berlin as the “Whore of Babylon” began to circulate (Smith, Berlin Coquette 3).

German imperialism was supposed to solve such urban crises by helping to balance the nation's fluctuating economic cycles and unify the nation in service of grand project. Under Kaiser Wilhelm II Berlin became the center of German imperial wealth, an important stop in the circulation of goods. The Deutsche Kolonialgesellechaft (or German Colonial Society) was formed in Berlin in 1887 to promote the benefits of colonization for Germany. Berlin’s position at the headquarters of German colonial activity was solidified after Berlin produced a world fair in 1896, twenty-five years after the city became the capital of the Reich. The capital city's debut at the 1896 world's fair prompted Georg Simmel, famed philosopher and critic of the metropole, to meditate on the role of commerce in the new city:
It is a particular attraction of world's fairs that they form a momentary centre of world civilization, assembling the products of the entire world in a confined space as if in a single picture...Thus it becomes clear what is meant by a "world city" and that Berlin, despite everything has become one. That is, a single city to which the world sends its products. (qtd. in Rowe 44)

Simmel paints a picture of a heterotopia in which the city writ large is a commodified version of the world that would last long after the fair had ended. Conversely, the truly international city could be capacious enough to contain a single city if not multitudes. Berlin's first Colonial Exhibition, organized by the German Colonial society, was held in 1896, too. Its features included "a colonialiste café that took the form of a grass-roofed hut 'built in the African style'" and positioned directly above the threshold to the exhibition, ensuring that all visitors to the exhibition would encounter it (Ciarlo 55). Africa and blackness were always central to this project.

That the world fairs centered on commodities was crucial to their appeal and resulted in a new form of commodity fetishization in which the commodity was firmly yoked to exoticism and to entertainment. Fair patrons came to look, to buy, to learn and experience. At the 1890 Northwest German Commerce and Industry Exhibition in Bremen, detailed paintings and ethnographic props were used to set the stage for visitors to the African display. Of these panoramic representations of faraway land, the African set was rumored to be the most enchanting (Ciarlo 55). Some have suggested that the spectacle of the African part of the exhibition masked a distinct lack of colonial goods. In this way, the exhibition succeeded in fetishizing Africa itself as commodity. It would also set the stage, so to speak, for future commercial interactions. Expanding on Marx's meditation on the phantasmagoric effect of capitalism, Walter Benjamin writes:
the world exhibitions glorified the exchange-value of commodities. They created a framework in which their use-value receded into the background. They opened up a phantasmagoria into which people entered in order to be distracted. The entertainment industry made that easier for them by lifting them to the level of the commodity. They yielded to its manipulations while enjoying their alienation from themselves and from others/ (Rowe 45, see original)

This description of the phantasmagoria contains an elision of the violence and racism that powered European colonialism. Benjamin’s phantasmagoria and Simmel's world city are both examples of heterotopias, very much places in which layers of human impulses become sedimented. The terror of empire was implicit in these spaces and thus, perhaps, in need of repackaging and promotion. David Ciarlo notes that "some have seen these exhibitions as a building block of Western identity itself -- an "exhibitionary complex" that drove Europeans to display the bewildering multiplicity of the world into discrete and comprehensible parts, and then display these parts as a way to showcase their own cultural power" (27).

With the spectacle of the World's Fair, one began to find the rumblings of consumer culture, that form of social relations in which “groups constituted by class and gender could find social definition through the acts of buying as much as of consuming” (Crossick and Jaumain 2). As historians Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain establish, “retail distribution constitutes an immediate point of intersection between economy, culture and daily life” (3). Changes in Berliners consumption habits at the turn-of-the century created new opportunities for the performance of class and gender in the city. They also created new ways of conceptualizing empire, especially for women, who were restricted in terms of the ways they could participate in colonialism.
Cultural historian David Ciarlo has written extensively about the interconnected "rise of modern advertising culture and the subjugation of colonized people" (3). Only three years after Germany established itself as a colonial power in West and South West Africa, Germany's first advertising handbook was published (4). Central to Ciarlo's thesis is the notion that German advertising culture reflected "a narcissistic interest in the exotic and a casualness with racism that was instrumental to Germany's often brutal projection of rule overseas" (3). Such racial capitalism required a group effort in order to be maintained. Germany's consumer society was an example of learned social behavior (11). There can be no doubt that these early forms of exhibitions paved the way for modern consumer culture and its environs. Colonial exhibitions and displays were reviewed in modern entertainment magazines that also promoted variety shows (Ciarlo 43). Furthermore, many performing arts trade journals would advertise ethnic acts from across Europe and the world alongside other performers for hire. And yet, there was a certain moral reticence to engaging deeply with entertainment simply for entertainment’s sake. This is reflected by the way in which the ethnographic aspect of many variety shows was brought to the foreground in spite of seeming incongruity with the matter at hand, simple pleasure and public spectacle.

Vigorous debates around the distinction between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* arose during this period. Berlin's inhabitants were disturbed by the social problems that arose with Berlin's newfound urbanity, or *Zivilisation*. In German usage, *Zivilisation* came to be associated with the problematic and distasteful aspects of modernity, those things which were “useful, but nevertheless only a value of the second rank, comprising only the outer appearance of human beings, the surface of human existence” (Elias 6). On the other hand, “the word through which Germans interpret themselves, which more than any other expresses their pride in their own achievements and their own being, is *Kultur*” (Elias 6). We can see some of these attitudes on display in descriptions of
the city. Actress Caroline Bauer described the older incarnation of Berlin to its newer manifestation thusly:

That modest, harmless, provincial little Berlin that had a mere 193,00 inhabitants in 1824, no gas, no railways, no water supply, no sidewalks, and just two theatres and two newspapers. A cobbler’s apprentice getting a hiding from his master, or a man flying a kite, or an overturned horse-and-cart used to provide entertainment for hours…But as for this second half of the century, this metropolis with its dazzling gas lamps in the streets, with its two dozen theatres, the roaring of steam engines, a feverish pursuit of riches, a philosophical nihilism and pessimism – it all fills me with disgust.

(qtd in Taylor 161)

Bauer’s description of the city highlights the structural development alongside changes in consumer culture and entertainment. The new Berlin is an example of Zivilisation. The entertainment the city provides before the imperial era is simple and uncomplicated. Much of it centers on spectatorship surrounding simple commercial interactions: cobbling and the (failed) transportation of goods. With its limited media and performance options, much of old Berlin's entertainment scene is provided by the city's street life. Bauer romanticizes the opportunities to study human behavior that the old city afforded. The old Berlin is an example of Kultur. As the city grew larger, the distance between its residents also increased. The introduction of technology, media and urban innovation contribute to Bauer's sense of ennui and alienation as much as the feverish pursuit of riches.
The multiplicity of Berlin's new architecture also contributed to a newfound sense of urban alienation. On the street level, Berlin’s new building projects proliferated to accommodate new people and new business. To be sure, “as an essential part of commercial architecture, the modern façade played an equally important role in the convergence of modern subjectivity with the urban rituals of consumerism” (Hake 143). The relationship between Berlin's architecture and seeming passion for consumerism is also fundamental to our understanding of this site. One of the most notable additions to the cityscape was the department store, at the heart of which lay the insatiable desire for the new, luxurious and exotic that would inform a broader desire for the performance of blackness. The construction of urban department stores coincided with the construction of national narratives of white supremacy even in the ostensible absence of black bodies. Shopping spaces became places where German citizens found justification for a sense of national pride and contained organic fascist elements. Shopping itself was a cultural act.

Of these new department stores, Wertheim’s was the most notable, being “a technical sensation in the revolutionary opulence of the ways in which it displayed its goods, with glass-roofed courtyards, crystal chandeliers, mosaics, gilded terracottas and an ornate façade over 300 metres long (Taylor 164). The Wertheim department store was such an attraction that it was listed in the Baedeker travel guide. The modernist extravaganza was owned by the Wertheim family and designed by Alfred Messel. It was opened to the public one year after the World's Fair and was the largest department store in Europe. Among its many marvels, including a legendarily stunning façade and original artwork like Ludwig Manzel's statue Die Arbeit, the emporium boasted no less than 83 elevators. Petia Sierchynski has argued that German department stores represented the convergence of art and commerce and that the Wertheim itself occupied a special place in debates around Kultur and Zivilisation. In her close reading of the journal Deutsche Kunst and Dekoration
Sierchynski discovered that the contemporary critics believed that Alfred Messel, the Wertheim's famed architect, had balanced practical considerations of the modern era with aesthetic grace. Messel's use of the Applied Arts created a "pleasing sensory experience" (203). Messel's other celebrated buildings included the Pergamon Museum. Ultimately, his legacy reveals the synergy between modern heterotopic design elements.

Writing about department stores and consumer culture in fin-de-siècle literature, Rachel Bowlby notes that the Wertheim's "grandiose architecture and theatrical forms of lighting and display contributed to a blurring of both functional and financial considerations...shopping became a new bourgeoisie leisure activity, like going to a play or visiting a museum" (qtd. in Rowe 49). The Wertheim department store contained spaces clearly modeled on the international exhibition hall in which German Applied Artists could display their work. The presence of Applied Art aesthetics allowed artists to "educate the 'people' in order for them to be able to appreciate the balance between the useful and the aesthetic, and reject cheap imitations of historical styles in mass produced goods" (Sierchynski 214). And yet, these spaces were more than just training grounds for the German consumer. In Deutsche Kunst and Dekoration these Applied Arts display spaces were described in relation to international decorative arts exhibitions in which German artists attempted to establish their cultural superiority to other industrialized nations by way of design (Sierchynski 220). Like the museums with which they shared a lineage, the urban department store in Berlin was another example of heterotopia and the ways in which racial capitalism was embedded in the fabric of the German empire.

Even outside of grand department stores, in the fashionable shopping districts of Kufürstendamm and Tauentzienstrasse, the city itself became a stage for consumer culture. Commodities displayed in storefront windows were valuable spectacles. The city had long been
an important center for textile manufacturing, but now Berlin became the center of the "fashion industry and the illustrated press, as the city of the emancipated woman and the artistic avant-gardes" (Hake, "Mirror" 192). Berlin's role as a place where style was produced influenced the way Berliners traversed the city: "the spectacle of the commodity attracted the wealthy socialite and the fashion-conscious secretary, the modern flaneuse and...the 'Tautentiengirl' who strolled on the boulevards to see and be seen, thus making the rituals of fashion an important part of public life in the big city" (Hake, "Mirror" 192). Berlin's city streets became spaces in which the performance of modernity, as often filtered through encounters with the other and that most modern of states, America, was frequently staged.

**The Chicago of Europe: Race and Berlin’s Kabarett Culture**

I have outlined some of the ways in which the rise of the department store in the German metropole reflected an increased desire for variety and amusement from consumers at the turn of the century. This turn was fueled by racial capitalism in real and abstract ways. Now I turn my attention to more traditional modes of performance in Berlin and the ways in which they were racialized and influenced by Berlin's consumer culture. Here, I consider the way imperially informed capitalism influenced the popular stage and black performance. In doing so, I hope to clarify the relationship between these two kinds of heterotopic spaces in the imperial metropolis. That changes in European consumer culture influenced the stage, and that the stage and the store informed one another, there can be little doubt. In 1919 German architect Bruno Taut wrote one of the most striking critiques of this phenomenon:

Let us turn our backs on that abhorrent institution we call theater nowadays! Capitalist department stores for art connoisseurs.
Expensive ticket prices. War profiteers or at very least well-to-do citizens. There they sit, ogling, sniffing at each other; the safety curtain still conceals the department store for art connoisseurs, and when it goes up, pitch darkness descends and the audience has to peer towards the stage as though at a peep show -- whether they so desire or not -- to where the art wares are on sale. And whether these are good value for the money or not may be decided by those who regard art as something enjoyed by connoisseurs -- moreover, something with a price tag. (512)

Taut vividly describes the commodification of popular culture. His variety stage is one in which multiple acts and performers are offered up for viewer inspection, the very multiplicity of the form requiring aesthetic discernment on the part of the audience. We must note that Taut wrote when Europe was experiencing the first rumblings of the jazz age. Hovering over his stage are the same imperial impulses that shaped capitalist department stores and supplied the material goods which would fulfill consumer desire for the exotic. Taut's critique points to the ways in which even the diverse offerings of the cosmopolitan stage was tied to the commercialization and ran counter to liberal sympathies.

The aesthetic preferences of Berlin’s residents began to reflect much more a fragmented sense of modern city life. Berlin became known as “the German Chicago,” an American-styled city known for its shopping, entertainment and underworld.19 Berlin's own style of variety show,

---

19 In 1899 German statesman Walter Rathenau famously declared that "the Athens on the Spree is dead, and the Chicago on the Spree grows apace". (qtd. in Jelavich 11). For an American take on the changes in Berlin during this period and a comparison of Berlin to other major cities, see Mark Twain's "The Chicago of Europe," published in the Chicago Daily Tribune, April 3, 1892.
variété and Kabarett were predicated on the principle of variety and audience desire for more, and more difference. These changes can be pinned to precise historical events dating from the late nineteenth century. In her dissertation, *The History of Popular Culture in Berlin, 1830-1918*, Angelika Hoelger explains that the 1869 act which suddenly allowed freedom of trade within Germany had a great impact on popular theater. The 1869 Gewerbeordenung ushered in an era of commercial liberalization, the result of which was "the quantitative rise of privately owned theatres, the ending of repertoire restrictions, and eventually the emergence of serious competition among providers of public entertainment” (Hoelger 183), all of which created an unheralded increase in Berlin's theatrical offerings. Commerce and capitalist impulses contributed to the development of Berlin's theater scene in concrete ways, dispersing its energies across a number of genres to attract the widest possible audience and maximize profit.

The race to provide a sense of variety in mass entertainment resulted in the commodification of different kinds of entertaining bodies. Jill Suzanne Smith has written about continuities in the theme of prostitution between the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras. She explains the way in which increases in the number of sex workers at the turn of the century was linked to mass entertainment. Smith writes that

At the beginning of the twentieth century, and most markedly in the 1920s, commercial entertainment venues such as vaudeville or variety theaters, dance halls, and Nachtcafés (night cafes) provided both career and occasional prostitutes with alternatives to the Pension (a type of brothel) or street” (Smith 7). These Nachtcafés, a cross between café and bar which functioned as sites for “clandestine prostitution” were frequented by clients from a wide range of social backgrounds and demonstrate
the “confluence of urban leisure and commercial sex for which the capital city was already becoming known for at the turn of the century” (Smith 97).

The general expansion of Berlin's entertainment and leisure industry and its deepened relationship to the open market created an ideal climate in which to stage racial capitalism. The commercialization of Berlin's theater scene occurred directly alongside Germany's imperialist capitalist expansion into Africa and Asia. Public interest in these places and their peoples also boomed. Berlin's theatrical expansion resulted in the kind of venues that would eventually host a multitude of ethnic acts and black performers from the likes of Sissieretta Jones to Josephine Baker. Of that expansion, Hoelger explains that “the opening of the Wintergarten in 1887 and similarly posh establishments such as the Apollo-Theater (1892) and most famously the Metropol-Theater (1898) signaled the social acceptance of a previously disrespected entertainment form” (205). These were exactly the kinds of upper-mid range venues that welcomed black performers like the Fisk Jubilee singers and the Four Black Diamonds, and which they wrote home about.

One factor that contributed to these changes in Berlin was the acceptance of a heightened sense of commerce and a preponderance of commercial entertainment venues across numerous spheres. Theatre historian Peter Jelavich posits that

the appearance of cabarets and revues after 1901 was itself an expression of the change that had taken place in the nature of Berlin and its inhabitants. Cabarets and revues were attempts to come to

---

20 The crown prince of Germany and Prussia, the emperor’s oldest son and heir apparent, visited the Berlin Wintergarten on October 23, 1887. This was a significant event because it was the first time a Berlin music hall saw a member of the Royal family within its walls except on special occasions.
terms with the growing population of vaudeville or variety shows in
the years following the unification of the Reich (Jelavich 97).

Of course, Jelavich is correct in his identification of this moment as a turning point in Berlin's cultural scene. However, what neither Jelavich or Hoelger fully account for is the way in which changes in Berlin's demographics and the tastes of its residents were uniquely shaped by racial capitalism, or the all encompassing nature of that shift.

Much of the impetus for this study comes from my own awareness of the magnitude of this shift because of the ways in which it was illustrated in German performing arts trade journals and newspapers. My methodology for this study, quite frankly, has involved sitting in the midst of the very well-kept Stadtmuseum Bibliothek in Berlin-Spandau, on the outskirts of the city. Presented with an embarrassment of archival riches, I have often felt overwhelmed by the amount of black performance material contained in the archive and the context in which it existed. While my own research interest remain fixed on the cultural outputs and outskirts of the black diaspora, the Stadtmuseum Bibliothek archives revealed the ways in which these outcroppings appeared alongside a panoply of racial formations and presentations. Popular desire for the exotic was reflected on the pages of publications like Der Artist: Fachblatt für Unterhaltungsmusik und Artistik and Das Programm: Artistisches Fachblatt, where readers could shop for a number of international ethnic acts making their way across central Europe via Germany. Racial descriptors were widely used to attract continental audiences and in ways that were particular to European viewers, who had had few live references for people of African descent or of mixed race backgrounds.

Given the time and the ability, I would devote a chapter to East and South Asian performers on this circuit and the ways in which racial boundaries between those groups seems to have been
collapsed for profit and perhaps due to sheer ignorance. Much work might also be done on the ways blackness and Asianness were conflated on the popular stage and page in Central Europe. I might also write of the ways in which European performers were organized into ethnic acts that occasionally aligned performances of European ethnicity with performances of blackness. My most striking encounter with this phenomenon occurred with my discovery of "Tom Jack" the Eis-König, an albino Icelandic man who is often depicted with a giant white afro and occasionally in chains (as an escape artist) in Das Programm advertisements [Figure 6]. My somewhat distant, heavy on visual content, reading practices of these magazines has alerted me to the overwhelming interest in racialized performance during this time. If it was true that everyone had to have a gimmick, it is also clear that the most popular gimmick was race. German fascination with racialized performance, like the intermingling of race and capital in other parts of the city, was epic in proportion.

One of the most important sources for this line of inquiry is Das Programm: Artistisches Fachblatt, a leading German performing arts trade journal that flourished from the late nineteenth century onward. Das Programm, the news organ of the Internationale Artisenloge a union for professional entertainers, was published monthly and was primarily written in four languages, German, French, English and Russian, although some editions also included articles in Esperanto. What the I.A.L. sought to accomplish above all was “the betterment of the legal status and social conditions of the variety performer”. The I.A.L's journal claimed that it was “the first paper to be issued ‘of the artiste, by the artiste and for the artiste’”. To be sure, “from its first issue “Das Programm” has devoted from two to four, and at times even more pages to its English part and many of the editorial articles which have appeared therein have been widely copied in American

21 Das Programm No. 1252, page 43
and English vaudeville journals." In their coverage of the rules, regulations and conditions of the continental stage, English language *Das Programm* articles provide a nuanced view of what living and working conditions in Germany would have been like for African American performers. *Das Programm* also served as an international message board between black performers the world over and their families. The journal obliquely criticized American racial politics by warning its readers about the dangers faced by black performers travelling and working in the United States. In its coverage of the American vaudeville circuit and American race relations, the journal made its liberal politics clear. In this project, my analyses of *Das Programm* focuses on its

---

22 According to the journal’s editors, "the English portion…is not mere translation of a part of the news and the articles contained in German or the French part. Its leaders as well as its special news are written to appeal to English and American artistes travelling on the continent and contain a good deal of information which is not found in its German part, because some of it would not, probably, interest its German readers. The same, of course, holds true vice versa. (500)

23 In *Das Programm* No. 507 (1911) what amounts to a missing person notice for an African American performer ran among the continental items: “The American Consulate at Berlin is trying to ascertain the present whereabouts of Fred Blunt, a coloured performer formerly of the Georgia Piccaninny Troupe. He informed his mother in America that he would return home, but no further news was received from him. When last heard from, as far as the Consulate can ascertain, he took part in the Boxing Match at the German Boxing Club at Halensee-Berlin last April. Anyone who can give information will please communicate with the consulate”. No missing person notices for Blunt, or reports of his disappearance, appear in any African American newspapers from the period.

24 At times, the journal warned it readers of the dangers involved in travelling through the United States for entertainment troupes with “coloured” members. In issue no. 474 (1911) the journal ran the following item on the lynching of Will Porter, which made explicit connections between American racial violence and spectacle:

Hanging specialties have been done upon the stage, and a latterday handcuff king once took a respectable drop without breaking his vigorous neck. But real hanging as a stage performance has been first introduced in Kentucky, a beautiful state that has not been without tough people since discovered by the pioneer Daniel Boone. True the old McCoy-Hatfield feud has nearly died out through mutual extermination, but though vendettas pass away the stuff they are of remains, and now and then comes to the front on old Kentucky’s ‘dark and bloody ground.’

At Livermore, in that state, the shooting by a young negro Frank Mitchell, a popular young resident, preluded the grimmest show
advertisements as well as the English sections of the journal. These features highlight *Das Programm's* international ambitions and locates them within a larger sphere of globalization and empire.

An adequate history of the journal would be beneficial to researchers on both sides of the Atlantic. That we are without one is unfortunate, given the history of the I.A.L.'s journal and the professional conversations in which it sought to intervene. One of the main goals of *Das Programm's* founders was to foster an international performing arts scene in Germany. In a celebratory editorial for their 500th edition, the journal's editors proclaimed:

for the five hundredth time “Das Programm” makes its bow to the public today, a public composed of all races and all nations travelling and sojourning in almost every known part of the civilized ever seen in any theatre. For the negro was caught and lynched on the stage of the opera house, those who would see the tragedy paying for admission. The setting of the stage, done by raw men not members of the Stage Hand’s Union, took up rother [sic] too much time, and the audience yelled for the performance to begin. At length, the curtain went up. The negro was dragged down the stage, shrieking and begging for mercy. His arms and legs were pinioned, a rope was placed around his neck, and he was hanged from the proscenium arch while the crowd yelled its execrations. The lynchers gave so vigorous a push to the victim that he swung far out over the footlights into the auditorium, and while he swung back again the lynchers hurried from the stage. This was the signal for the audience to produce revolvers and fire a volley at the human pendulum. More than a hundred shots rang out, gallery patrons being allowed one shot only, though the higher paying patrons down stairs could fire as many times as they liked. When the county sherriff arrived the dead negro lay riddled with bullets. The fees which were paid for admission to this horrific show were handed over to the family of the murdered white man.

Here and elsewhere in *Das Programm*, the journal obliquely makes a case for the superiority of the moral German entertainment circuit. Further analysis on the connections between the lynchings of Will Porter and American popular entertainment can be found on page 227 of Jacqueline Goldsby’s *A Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature* (2006).
world. For there can be no doubt, and there is, indeed, no doubt, that “Das Programm” is the leading international professional paper. Others may lead it in point of age, but “Das Programm” has, from its first issue to the present Number 500, been far ahead of all its contemporaries as regards internationality.

Internationality was in the journals' blood, so to speak. Born Max Buldermann, the president of the I.A.L., Max Berol-Konorah was a Berliner who immigrated to the United States at the age of fifteen and eventually became a travelling magician. As a magician, he set up shop in “European settlements of Japan and China, then Manila, Singapore, Rangoon and all the way through India from Calcutta to Bombay as far up as Lahore and Simla”.

The pages of *Das Programm’s* 500th edition celebrate ethnic diversity and internationalism in a way that seems decidedly modern. In its early editions *Das Programm’s* issues contain numerous advertisements for ethnic acts from around the world that traded in offensive racial stereotypes. However, the magazine did not advocate for discriminatory treatment for non-white artists or artists from countries other than Germany. The 500th edition featured performers of all nationalities reading its pages, thereby actively participating in the life of the I.A.L., and took their presence as a mark of success [Figure 7]. Given the period in which it was published, *Das Programm’s* racial politics could be considered progressive. However, in light of my previous observations about the importance of internationalism to empire and its necessity in the project of supplying variety to consumers, I am hesitant to ascribe too much progressive meaning to the publication's work or draw any larger conclusions about its relationship to racial equity. *Das Programm* was a business publication, and its interest in international acts is further evidence of the influence of imperialism on German popular culture that we have been discussing. The
journal's fixation on internationalism was meant to highlight business opportunities for its readership and promote the work of its members.

Internationalism and the popularity of ethnic acts signaled a unique business opportunity in Berlin. Black performers attempted to partake of Berlin's heterotopic capitalist offerings, too. The city's strong capitalist undercurrents impacted residents and visitors alike. Legendary nightclub impresario Ada "Bricktop" Smith moved to Europe at the very dawn of the Jazz Age, a time in which “it wasn’t unheard of for an entertainer to go to Europe, but not many did, and hardly any blacks did” (Bricktop 83). While living abroad, she crisscrossed the continent for travel and work. In her memoir, Bricktop rhapsodized about Berlin’s nightlife in the 1920s:

Berlin...I loved that city. It was a circus. Compared to it, Montmartre, event at two o'clock, was a sleepy little town.

Friedrichstrasse, Behrenstrasse, the Jäger were so packed with night spots – sometimes two or three in a single building – that you wondered how there could be enough customers to fill them all…At night the sounds of music and singing and laughing made a steady, joyful din, and there were so many lights you could hardly see the sky. Anything went in Berlin, and I mean anything. All the dope-

25 Born Ada Beatrice Queen Victoria Louise Virginia in 1894 in Alderson, West Virginia, to Thomas Smith, a barber, and Hattie E. a domestic worker, Bricktop, as she later became known, began performing at an early age. By the age of 16 she had quit school to pursue a full-time career in entertainment. She moved to Paris in 1924 to begin working for African American ex-pat Eugene Bullard at his Montmartre club Le Grand Duc. Bricktop’s Paris nightclub became the preferred haunt of several luminaries of the Lost Generation, including F.Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Tallulah Bankhead and Cole Porter (Haskins 1). Her autobiography, Bricktop, was published in 1983. Further information about her life and the impact of her work can be found in Being Geniuses Together, 1920–1930 (1968), by Kay Boyle and Robert Altman; Mabel Mercer: A Life (1968) by Jim Haskins; and Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern (2008) by Jayna Brown.
taking and homosexuality that was done in a light-hearted sort of way in Paris was serious business in Berlin. (134)

In Bricktop's memoir, the city is a variety show, the street and its inhabitants providing a stage and entertainment itself. In this way, Bricktop’s memoirs echo those of German actress Caroline Bauer. But in Bricktop’s memoir we see Berlin after the transformation Bauer loathed. Bricktop's Berlin is a stage and a site for transgression, but the serious business of nightlife and the entertainment scene is my main concern here. Berlin ushered black performers to its center stages while recreating them as consumers. Bricktop and her contemporaries were symbols of the capitalist undercurrent that characterized that corner of the European entertainment scene. They were also visual evidence for the mind-numbing variety of distractions on-hand in the city.

The business side of Berlin's charms was not lost on Bricktop, an entrepreneur, or the other performance workers who flocked to the city. Indeed, in her autobiography, Bricktop documents her attempt to break into the Berlin night club scene and the way in which her own notoriety and German’s perception of blackness prevented her from gaining traction (135). German commodification of blackness signaled a new opportunity for black performers looking for performance venues beyond Paris. And yet, these opportunities were limited to black performers who did not exceed the limits of reductive racial stereotypes, or rather, conformed to them. Bricktop attempted to partner with German nightclub figures to bring African American musicians working in Paris to Berlin. Bricktop tells us that “Negroes were quite a novelty in Germany, even in Berlin” (134) but that German understandings of race were particularly reductive: “you had to have kinky hair and all that” (135). In Berlin Bricktop was exposed to simplistic racist

---

26 Describing the popularity of Josephine Baker in Berlin and her relationship to European stereotypes about primitive Africans, Nancy Nenno has argued that "European response to Baker was predicated on an essentialization of the black body as African. The black body became a screen
stereotypes around blackness, including her discovery of the notion that Germans “had been brought up to think that all black people smell bad” (134). She explains that because of her light complexion, “they didn’t really think of me as colored” (134). Indeed, because of her light complexion, many people did not believe that she was "Bricktop," the famed African American nightclub owner. In her autobiography, Bricktop’s negative business experiences in Berlin are partially attributed to her inability to perform blackness in conventional ways and the fact that she does not appear to be black in German eyes. Bricktop was not black enough to succeed as a performer in Berlin. The kind of African American experience she presented on stage and in her business practices was considered inauthentic and was thus unmarketable and unwanted.

In the midst of all of this, the vortex of international influence is the importance of America as a concept and an important commodity on the European stage is unmistakable. Here, Shane Vogel's work is indispensable in terms of mapping a framework of influence between Europe and the United States. Vogel interprets Langston Hughes’s description of his affective response to Blues performances in the Paris nightclub in which he worked as a dishwasher. Vogel notes that "the confluence of the Seine and the Mississippi within the crowded walls of the tiny club points to the movements and intersections of European and American cabaret, night club and jook joint, as they echoed and reverberated across the ocean, across the room, and across the page" (57). And yet, at that confluence of the Seine, the Spree, and the Mississippi we find a kind of black performance that is entirely different from that which existed previously in the United States or on which European desires for authenticity were projected" (147). Furthermore, "in contrast to America where lighter skin tone was prized, European audiences set a premium on black performers with darker skin, believing that the authenticity of the primitive was legible on the surface of the body" (147). In terms of practical matter, this meant that Baker and other black performers in the shows in which she worked could not powder their skin to make it appear lighter, as they would have done in other contexts.
elsewhere before the modern era. What European nightclub owners and their patrons were listening out for, and hoping to catch a glimpse of, was an echo of what they imagined African American culture to be. The ideal they sought was just that, a concept existing mainly in the white imagination. This phenomenological blackness was often filtered through a set of stock characters and stereotypes quite divorced from the reality of black life and performance, but attuned to the needs of transatlantic audiences.

These reverberations also point to the impact of black culture on European cabaret culture and hint at the problematic aspects of that transatlantic encounter. Representations of blackness made their way onto the cabaret stage even in its early incarnations, in the absence of black performers, through the performance of Negersongs by white artists who traded on the general popularity of America minstrel show-style songs. According to theater historian Peter Jelavich even “seemingly liberal critics praised black entertainment... in a manner that perpetuated racial stereotypes: African Americans were equated with a healthy, ‘primitive’ vitality, a sensibility derived from the African ‘jungle’” (Jelavich 7). As the Jazz Age progressed and the influence of African American artistic culture grew, “German conservatives, horrified by jazz and the black entertainers, engaged in vicious and unambiguous racist attacks against ‘Negro culture’” (Jelavich 7). While African American culture and the performance of blackness was valued for its ability to fill seats and translate into dollars, it created racial encounters that were too close for conservatives. In Berlin, there was an irreconcilable tension between the desire to consume black culture and the danger posed by that consumption.

It would be a mistake to suggest that black performers in this era were simply pawns or victims of a racist society in which power was thoroughly circumscribed. Bricktop's encounter in Berlin, and even her failed attempt to gain a foothold in the Berlin night life scene, exposes the
entrepreneurial side of black performance in Berlin and the ways in which black performers could capitalize on their own novelty. This is the economic freedom so eagerly touted by African American newspapers like the Indianapolis *Freeman*. While Bricktop describes herself as mainly a consumer of Berlin's entertainment culture, she is able to realize how the commodification of her own blackness could be profitable in that sphere. The black stage presence was a crucial element on the European variety circuit. Because it was a rare commodity, it was much sought after by nightclub owners and managers. It was also a point in which Paris excelled at, in comparison to Berlin, much to the consternation of Berlin's theater owners. Readers of Bricktop's autobiography also get a sense of the ways in which Paris and Berlin competed with one another by way of popular entertainments. Each capital offered its own strain of nightlife, both thriving on some form of the outré and racialized other.

I cannot prove that Berlin was a more important venue to Black entertainers than Paris, but the competitive tensions between these two cities provides some of the most enlightening readings of transatlantic black performance during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Entertainment is a business and it was certainly so back then. Theater impresarios and agents in Berlin were in competition with Paris and London for tourist dollars and international attention. The question of what made Berlin special was one that piqued the interest of German entertainment managers. Its answer, they hoped, would draw audiences to their stages instead of their competitors. Very often, it was a matter of Africanist influence.

Shane Vogel has shown that in the early twentieth century, a complex system of cultural exchange and translation occurred between the European cabaret scene, specifically its Parisian manifestation, and the New York based cabaret. Vogel is particularly interested in the way the Harlem cabaret scene evolved from an American understanding of the Parisian cabaret tradition
and the performance opportunities that that scene created for black culture. He groups the outcroppings of that scene, including literary productions, under the umbrella of the Harlem Cabaret school. Vogel specifies "that cabaret attempted to codify a mode of American nightlife performance in respectable terms; what was previously denounced as the questionable morality of the lower classes could now be consumed under the banner of European sophistication" (Vogel 54). American cabaret was always already transnational. I suggest that the trussed up, respectable mode of black performance featured in American cabarets was informed by European mass entertainment, including Berlin Kabarett and variété. Here again, we see the way African American performance traveled forth and doubled back, changing in meaning but remaining constant in its importance to the formation of culture and identity on both sides of the Atlantic.

While I do not attempt to convey a full history of the Kabarett here, some clarification is needed if we are to disentangle various forms of mass entertainment which thrived in Berlin during the era. Many of the boundaries suggested by such clarifications are quite porous, if not all together fictional. We do know that cabaret made its German debut in Bavaria, an area with a history of supporting artistic endeavors, thanks to the legacies of King Ludwig II, who sponsored the renowned composer Richard Wagner. Ernst Von Wolzogen brought cabaret to Berlin in 1901 with the founding of the Überbrettl.27 Early Berlin Kabarettts were literary in their orientation and their

27 The Überbrettl cabaret was founded by writer Ernst von Wolzogen (the librettist ofStrauss'sFeuersnot), in association with poet Otto Julius Bierbaum and playwright Frank Wedekind. Peter Jelavich has suggested that a line from Otto Julius Bierbaum's novel Stilpe (1897), "We will give birth to the overman [den Übermenschen] on the stage boards [auf dem Brettl]" (29) inspired the name of von Wologen's establishment. Although it was only open for one year, between 1901 and 1902, the cabaret became legendary. With the Überbrettl, von Wolzogen sought to innovate the cabaret scene “to a level of iconoclastic seriousness,” (Kennedy 1) in part by including poems recited to music to nightly sets. Composers who contributed songs included Alexander Zemlinsky, Oscar Strauss, and Arnold Schoenberg, who wrote eight Brettl-Lieder and whose melodrama Pierrot Lunaire (1912) displays influence of the cabaret (Kennedy 1). In spite of the Überbrettl's
main emphasis was on artistry and wry social commentary. In these venues, “the appearance of intimacy and improvisation was kept up, and so was the ‘conférencier’, who […] interspersed his witticisms, caustic and satirical remarks about current events, bon mots and sarcastic gibes at the audience between the various readings, recitations, chansons and literary sketches and thus gave the whole show – if such we may call it – its keynote”. This description of the Berlin Kabarett draws on what Peter Jelavich has described as the ideal cabaret, one in which

A small stage in a relatively small hall, where the audience sat around tables. The intimacy of the setting allowed direct eye-to-eye contact between performers and spectators. The show consisted of short (five- or ten-minute) numbers from several different genres, usually songs, comic monologues, dialogues and skits, less frequently dances, pantomimes, puppet shows, or even short films.

(Jelavich 2)

The form was always a hybrid one. Jelavich writes that “the history of cabaret cannot be written without considering developments in theater, vaudeville, nude dancing, revue, and agitprop – as well as operetta, popular music, dance crazes, film, and many other facets of public and commercial entertainment” (Jelavich 3). The precursor to Kabarett was variété. And yet, the two forms informed one another. At times, Kabarett could evolve into variété. Variété often masqueraded under the name of Kabarett in the stiff competition for tourist and entertainment dollars. Regardless of the name, I argue that an unvarnished attempt to monetize and profit from blackness, among other kinds of otherness, characterized both spaces.

liberal veneer, von Wolzogen was an anti-semite; he blamed Jewish people for the failure of his business.
On May 5th, 1912 in an editorial for Das Programm, Leo Herzberg, President of the I.A.L., explained that while it was typical for American tourists to visit cabarets in Paris or Berlin, Americans were unable to truly understand the form or its nuances. The passage is worth reading in its entirety:

American globe trotters or summer voyagers have certainly not failed to visit cabarets in Paris or Berlin, but probably all that they have taken away with them is the idea that the cabaret is a nocturnal resort patronized by the jeunesse dorée and its camp followers, by the blasé men-about-town and their “lady-friends,” and by students and artistes and their female companions and that as a side issue in the eating and drinking, these patrons listen to a motley lot of singers, watch a few dancers and allow themselves to be bored by a variegated assortment of instrumentalists. That’s all they saw, that’s all they noticed, and that’s all they understood. What these transatlantic trippers never perceived is that very something, that indescribable something, that touch of Bohemianism, which really makes the cabaret.

That “touch of Bohemianism” is the clincher for Herzberg, the thing that not only makes cabaret a form impossible to comprehend by non-Europeans, but impossible to recreate outside of Berlin.

The question of what made a cabaret real, and where one might find a real cabaret, was both a matter of aesthetics and business. In its answer lay the hopes of German night club owners and Berlin-based performers hoping to establish their ascendancy over their Parisian counterparts. Again, Herzberg muses,
there is yet something to the real cabaret which is almost impossible
to describe to an American. It is that peculiar state of mind, that
buoyant humor, that merry spirit of Bohemianism in which the
audience finds itself in these places. The German calls it
“Stimmung”, but search as we may, we find no American or English
word which implies the same meaning. The cabaret is no place for
tight-laced people, for prudish zealots or narrow-minded bigots, yet
do not for a moment think that the folks who patronize them on that
account relish any part of their respectability. In short, a real cabaret
is just as much of an impossibility in America as a frenzied revival
meeting is in Europe.

Here we see that the cabaret scene that strikes Herzberg as most authentic is decidedly German,
even though black musicians would bring stylized forms of revival music into the heart of
European entertainment space. Moreover, since *Stimmung* is a product of Berlin's nightlife, and
cannot be recreated outside of the city, even in Germany, very few places meet Herzberg's strict
requirements. The buyer must beware. In Berlin and other German cities, there may be "cafes and
restaurants where light entertainments are given, but these are not cabarets". Furthermore,
Herzberg warns his readers that there are many German nightspots which call themselves cabarets,
but they are decidedly inferior.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{28} The editorial explains that "There are also a number of inferior places in the metropolis as well
as in the provinces which sport the name of the cabaret without being at all entitled to it. Of the
kind we have above referred to there are not more than a dozen or so in Germany; all the rest are
more or less successful imitations and some of them are nothing more than modernized “tingle-
tangels” or café chantants. In Berlin night licenses are no longer granted by the authorities; most
entertainments must close at 11pm. Hence and, since “Stimmung” cannot easily be got up in gay
Berlin before midnight, they are not also the real ones".
And yet, it must be said that Berlin *Stimmung* was not just about a certain quality of giddiness or sentiment that could only be got up after hours, but a sensation that resulted in encounters that traversed social, and sometimes racial boundaries. Because it was rooted in mass culture, *Stimmung* was a product of internationality and taboo intimacies. The cabaret was a site of transgression, an inversion of the hierarchical and regimented world of late Wilhelmine Berlin. Social, sexual, racial and political boundaries were crossed again and again. It was a place where the world came together and was remade, recommodified, repackaged, reoffered to many bidders. The porous boundaries of the *Kabarett* made it special, but difficult to control and define. It was a place in which both the audience and the performers were in close quarters, and that made it difficult to control. This potential for intimate and transgressive encounters is actually what made *Stimmung*. Thus, *Stimmung* was not a purely German thing, but the culmination of those heterogenous forms of culture that create heterotopic spaces. The thing that made Berlin's nightlife special was not its purity, but the fact that it offered participants, or rather customers, a chance to feel worldly, out of place, or all places at once.

In spite of the necessity of internationality, the threat of foreign intervention, or cooptation of what made German cabaret special was quite real for Herzberg and members of the I.A.L. Maintaining Berlin's position as the preeminent center for cabaret on the continent and in the world was crucial. It is a matter of aesthetics and tourist dollars. Herzberg also writes that:

Cabarets are multiplying not merely in New York but in a number of other American cities” and in fact, “it is quite American-like to copy anything European without getting within a mile or two of its real inwardness and then flattering themselves with having got the real genuine, eighteen carat, simon pure superior article. Americans
are quite on top of the invention of mechanical contrivances, display a wonderful lot of technical ingenuity, but in many other matters which come natural to “effete and decadent Europe” they rarely get much beyond skin depth or beyond the “make-believe” stage. And that is surely the case with their ‘Cabarets’.

What we see in Herzberg's editorial is the way in which even in it's earliest incarnations, in spite of the will of its biggest boosters and promoters, Berlin's cabaret scene was deeply enmeshed in transatlantic circuits of cultural exchange. Cabaret attracted American tourists, responded to their need to entertainment and provided them with a glimpse of European nightlife, and its demimonde. What is unaccounted for in Herzberg's essay are the ways in which such an exchange, already so heavily predicated on tropes of nationalism and regionalism, also provided a cover for intimate racial encounters. As we have also seen, it was a fact not entirely lost on entrepreneurs like Bricktop.

Blackness in its most reductive form was explicitly and implicitly linked to performative consumer culture in Berlin. A modern drive towards imperialism and consumerism influenced the representation and reception of black performers in Berlin. Racial ideology permeated popular culture and consumer culture. Black bodies represented the conflation of these desires and signaled modernity, sophistication and urbanity. In this way, Germany was situated squarely in what Paul Gilroy has termed the black Atlantic. The vortex of Germany's involvement in colonial expansion and the specter of racial violence attended that project informed that position. Indeed, Paul Gilroy explains that "the arts of darkness appear in the West at the point where modernity is revealed to be actively associated with the terror legitimated by reference to the idea of ‘race’" (57) even while black performance culture exists outside, or alongside, mainstream culture in an asynchronous
relationship that is defined by its otherness and impact on European norms. As I have previously suggested, one of the ways Germans sought to conceptualize their own encounters with blackness was through an appeal to American racial formations. Notorious cabaret star Anita Berber’s *Golliwog’s Cakewalk* dance\(^{29}\) underscores the truth of this fact in the modern era. In addition, we must also remember that the conceptualization of blackness and its performance happened alongside an exodus of African American performers fleeing America's crushing racism.

**Blackness as Material Excess of Empire**

Germans reached towards African American music and culture because it symbolized newness and authenticity. The underlying premise of this chapter is not that black bodies and black performance meant the same things to audiences and viewers in both the United States and Germany. It is that black bodies signified in Berlin with important similarities and differences which were called into political and social uses. Embodied performances of blackness were summoned in service of empire and in ways that often ran contrary to the wishes and interests of the black bodies who labored in performance. Black bodies were imperial set pieces. But black performers mobilized around this fact in different ways. German's associated black style with a

\(^{29}\) Anita Berber was a talented dancer and actress who gained notoriety for her sexual affairs and drug use in Weimar Berlin. A blackface interpretation of Debussy's "Golliwog's Cakewalk" performed by Valeska Gert, a contemporary of Berber’s, is generally remembered as “a homosexual duet considered indecent by the German police (Toepfer 236). Berber would perform her own version at the Blühner-Saal, Berlin, in January 1919, of which it was said: "the light-hearted number is yet another variation on the Debussy ragtime favorite. Golliwog (Anita), the popular doll character with a fixed smile, leans back, high kicks, and struts its way around stage" (Gordon 48). Whether or not Berber's dance was performed in blackface remains to be determined.
vital primitivism and, at times, a deviant sexuality that informed popular culture, while finding numerous ways to commodify that style.\textsuperscript{30}

Here, I am reminded of Harvey Young's contention that "an idea of the black body has been and continues to be projected across actual physical bodies" and that the "misrecognition of individual bodies as 'the black body' creates similar experiences" (Young 4). Young famously extends Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the habitus to incorporate a consideration of the black body in performance. Young tells us that

the theory of habitus -- thought in terms of a black habitus -- allows us to read the black body as socially constructed and continually constructing its own self. If we identify blackness as an idea projected across a body, the projection not only gets incorporated within the body, but also influences the ways that it views other bodies (20).

This theory of the habitus also incorporates a sense of imbrication and sedimentation of the many layers of meaning that accrue around the black body. In this section, I extend Young's argument to think about the ways black bodies create experiences in viewers and popular culture through the

\textsuperscript{30}Angelika Hoelger explains that “Around 1903, a new era in Berlin's dance history was launched when more and more American dances and music made their way across the Atlantic. Ragtime music became tremendously popular, along with a number of dances that had originated in the United States - or that were at least advertised as being American. One of the earliest dances that was introduced to Berliners was the "Cakewalk", followed by the "Boston," "Two-step," and "One-step," the latter also coming under various animal names, such as "Turkey Trot", "Grizzly Bear", and "Fishwalk."The appeal of these new dances was due not only to ragtime music, but also to their complete rupture with conventional dance movements. All of these dances were soon summarized as "shuffling" and "wiggling" dances (Schiebe- und Wackeltanze). The German prefix Schiebe is believed to be rooted in the word Schieber, a term that applies to a small-time crook, dealer, or pimp. This association with crime and the underworld was reinforced by the explicit physicality and eroticism of these dances” (Hoelger 231).
variety stage. Furthermore, the "black body" recreated and repackaged as a commodity in transatlantic contexts also created opportunities for haptic encounters with blackness.\textsuperscript{31} Blackness, as the material excess of empire, manifested itself as connective cultural tissue in Berlin.

When we consider the black habitus in transnational contexts, a new set of interrelated concerns emerge. The idea of blackness is borrowed from the New World and harnessed towards Old World concerns and anxieties. Speaking of black women performers specifically, Jayna Brown understands

the urban variety stages as marking a crucial moment in the development of modern identities and pleasures. They were key sites at which the black female urban presence was articulated and expressed, and they were important nodal points in the circulation of expressive forms. (5)

Of course, this fact holds true for Berlin variety stages that featured African American entertainers during the period. But unlike black Europeans, the source of intense racial anxiety and hatred in Germany, African American performers "came from a particular kind of colony, travelling with the wind of ultra modern prosperity behind them. They traveled the cities and provinces of Europe as representatives of the New World, of its expanding technological advances and cultural markets" (244). African American performers consciously, and often quite successfully, manipulated the tropes of consumption that developed around them. This was often done through a conflation of the black body and that most seductive of consumer goods, clothing.

\textsuperscript{31} Rizvana Bradley explains that "the haptic can be understood as the viscera that ruptures the apparent surface of any work, or the material surplus that remains the condition of possibility for performance" (Bradley 1).
In *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Identity* (2009), Monica L. Miller demonstrates that an attention to black style “reveals the value of blackness in a global market of identity formation in which, at different times and place, the cost of embodying blackness can be both too cheap or too dear” (Miller 25). She writes extensively about W.E.B. DuBois’s novel *Dark Princess* and the ways in which Matthew Towns, “as a dandy embodies the Negro artist and symbolizes the power (and problematics) of recognizing art’s potential in the fight for racial justice (147). For Miller, “Matthew personifies the estrangement or the queerness of the “intelligent and masterful” black man in transatlantic modernism. He is out of place in America and in Europe, not able to actualize his desires or ambitions in either locale” (150). Miller’s attention to the uses of black sartorial style is useful here because of the way she recognizes Berlin as a central location in the circulation of black style and aesthetics. Miller’s work points to the centrality of black style to the modernist project. It allows us to see the link between black sartorial style and performance.

In this transnational circulation of blackness, the cakewalk is an important form, a “combination of African and African American dance, music, and dress styles with parody as a method of recognizing and circumventing authority and authenticity” (Miller 124). In *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (1993), Eric J. Sundquist explains that by the 1890s, the cakewalk was “the most popular element of the minstrel and early black theatrical stage, usually a grand finale with elaborate choreography and costumes” (Sundquist 277). He is also careful to note that “the cakewalk occupied a liminal territory with a significant potential for resistance, a psychological and cultural space in which the racist appropriation of black life in offensive mannerisms gave way to an African American reversal of the stereotype” (Sundquist 277). Cake walkers dressed in imitation, and mockery of wealthy whites who they also mimicked
through dance. Again, Monica Miller explains that “for blacks, the performance enacted a bridge between the old and new, slavery and freedom, while whites considered it an entertaining homage” (Miller 124). In *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850 -1910*, Daphne Brooks outlines the history of the cakewalk on the vaudeville circuit and emphasizes its subversive potential. The cakewalk is essentially a dance in which black performers mimic the gestures and movements of wealthy white elites. Originating as a social dance in enslaved communities, cakewalking is still a site of contention in debates around racial authenticity; "fundamentally at issue is the question of who is 'imitating' whom" (271).³² Too often, the seeming ease and joviality of the cakewalk tempts cultural historians and critics to ignore the social critique inherent in the form. According to Brooks, an "insistence of locating the presence of 'Africanisms' within the cakewalk is a crucial element in coming to terms with the representational significance of the dance, for such arguments reveal the political currency of the act as an embodiment of cultural identity" (Brooks 271).

The cakewalk unites ideas of blackness as a specific set of performed gestures and a particular sartorial style. The impact of these ideas in a transatlantic context can be found in advertisements for cakewalking couples prior to the First World War found in German trade periodicals. These couples include Dora Dean and Charles E. Johnson, a cakewalking duo who are frequently credited with introducing the cakewalk to Broadway [Figure 8]. They embarked on their first European tour in 1901. In Berlin, they performed at the *Wintergarten* variety theater. Their act successfully deviated from the standard format of the minstrel show. The couple was so

³² More specifically, “according to the black musician and former slave Shepard Edmonds, the cakewalk was a Sunday dance performed for their own pleasure by slaves, who “would dress up in hand-me-down finery to do a high-kicking, prancing walk-around. They did a takeoff on the high manners of the folks in the “big house,” but their masters, who gathered around to watch the fun, missed the point” (Sundquist 278).
successful that they spawned several knock-off cakewalking duos that also toured Europe extensively, including Duke Johnson and Mae Wells, an African American team who were noted for their "chice costume [sic]" [Figure 9], and Brodie and Brodie, ",That' Mulatto Duett," or "The Original Quadroon Duo." Johnson & Dean literally changed the discourse around performance and blackness. In Germany, the term "creole" became synonymous with cakewalk couples and black performers who carried an air of refinement and wore fine clothes. Johnson & Dean's style of performance became a model for black diasporic performance. In one advertisement, "Two Diamonds," an African duo, strike a Johnson and Dean-esque pose and are billed as "the only coloured singers and dancers from the Cape-Colonies" [Figure 10].

In Out of Sight: Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895 (2003), Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff recall that "Charles E. Johnson and his wife, Dora Dean, became the Creole Company’s particular cake-walking stars" (162). The Kentucky born child of a formerly enslaved woman, Dora Dean's given name was Luella Babbige. Light in complexion and tending towards heaviness, Dean was nevertheless considered stunningly beautiful [Figure 11]. Bert Williams and George Walker idolized her in one of their early songs, taking her stage name for its title. 33 Dean and her husband Charles E. Johnson began their 1901 European tour in Germany, the same year in which cabaret came to Berlin. Reporting on "the Colored Performers Abroad," for the Indianapolis Freeman Carle Browne Cooke wrote that "foreign critics say that

33 The lyrics for the song are as follows:
Oh, have you ever seen Miss Dora Dean,
She is the sweetest gal you ever seen.
Someday I'm going to make this Gal my Queen.
On next Sunday morning, I'm going to marry Dora Dean.
Dora Dean is one of the handsomest and best formed women now playing in high-class variety" (5). On March 15, 1902 the Indianapolis Freeman, reported that

Ernst Hellman [sic], one of Germany’s foremost artists, has finished a lifesize painting of Dora Dean . . . posed in a cake walk attitude. The picture will be hung in the spring exhibit of the German Academy. Miss Dean is the first colored woman to be honored with a sitting by a European artist. She with her husband . . . initiated the German public into the peculiar poetry and motion of the American ‘coon song.’

In fact, neither Johnson or Dean were known to have been particularly talented singers or dancers. Dora Dean was most praised for her ability to strike a pose. Displays of expensive dresses were a constant feature of their act and Dean was known to have several "thousand dollar" dresses, a phenomenal sum for the time (Johns 164).

A photograph of the Ernst Heilemann portrait [Figure 12] was included in a feature on the artist published in a 1902 Berliner Leben article written by Hermann Boll. In it, Boll describes Heilemann's admiration for women and his role as a society painter and tastemaker. Dora Dean was in high company. Comptesse Beroldingen, "one of the richest and most popular beauties of the German court" (Cunliffe-Owen 408) is among the women whose portraits are represented in the magazine. Dora Dean's portrait appears on the first page of the article, along with those of a Spanish "gypsy" and "Frau Dr. O Eysler." Dean wears an elegant light-colored gown whose many frills and folds are lifted to reveal her neat black shoes. She is tastefully bejeweled. The movement of her gown and her pose recall the moves of the cakewalk for which she and Johnson became so well known and which earned them entry into the parlors of Europe's elite.
Another article in *Das Organ der Variétéwelt* noted that Johnson and Dean's costumes were provided by the Pruschinski costume studio in Berlin. Founded by tailor William Budzinski, the Oraninenburger Tor costume studio employed a number of talented designers. Budzinski was known for creating haute couture gowns made specifically for certain acts and performance venues. The Pruschinski studio also clothed “Brodie and Brodie” and is also credited with providing the "beautiful gowns and mantles" for “the Washington Trio”, those "sable fashion plates," otherwise known as the "most elegant [sic] dressed trio on the continent." [Figure 13] Pruschinski would eventually make costumes for Ida Forsyne and Rastus and Banks, too. The studio made a point of not only catering to black clientele, but publicizing their design work by way of African American performers. At the moment, I can find no other examples of similarly influential fashion designers working with African American performers in Berlin during this period. With their work for black performers, specifically dancers, the Pruschinski studio seemed to be on the cusp of product placement and marketing trends that dominate our current celebrity culture. On its most basic level, the Pruschinski studio's costumes illustrated the commodification of black style. In Pruschinski's advertisements black bodies and black styles are conflated in ways that have become standard in our contemporary world. But more than just illustrating black style, at the turn of the century, the Pruschinski studio made black style attainable through material goods.

In an Ida Forsyne advertisement [Figure 2] that ran in *Das Programm*, the copy makes it clear that Forsyne will wear her Pruschinski gown during the number in which she sings "You Made Me Love You," the James Monaco and Joseph McCarthy song made popular by Al Jolson. Forsyne wears the gown in the last of a series of three photographs of her in costume, and presumably in performance. In the first shot, furthest to the left, Forsyne is dressed in a harlequin suit and dunce cap, arms akimbo, one leg in the air. In the central photograph she is dressed in
what appears to be a burlap sack with straw sticking out of it. In this photograph, Forsyne also wears a crown of straw and a large grin. This is the costume in which she will perform her famed "sack dance". And yet, in her Pruschinski gown, Forsyne is depicted at the height of fashion and modernity, representing an evolution in black consciousness and black style. The ruffles on the bottom of her dress and her posture suggest a controlled movement that stands in contrast to the unrestrained gestures of the kind her Topsy character was known for. This refinement also calls attention to Forsyne's mimicry of Al Jolson and his minstrel act. It is a double signification. If the Das Programm advertisement invites us to consider Forsyne's Topsy as the genuine, refined African American article, then her Pruschinski gown firmly fixes her as a product of the modern world.

It was common for variety performers during this period to buy their own costumes. In this way, the variety stage was already a forum for fashion advertisement among members of the trade. Fashion on stage was also a form of self-promotion. When an artist like Dora Dean displayed a thousand dollar gown, she was signifying on the success of her act and her earning potential. These significations created a European market for haptic blackness. The association of black performers with Pruschinski's luxury brand made black style desirable and attainable for other white European performers. In advertisements for black performers which use fashion to highlight a connection to Pruschinski, what we are witnessing is evidence of the black habitus and the haptic elements of embodied black performance. Pruschinki's dandy suits and gowns contain recognizable traces of the ideal black body in performance. When wearing a Pruschinski gown, one embodied an international ethos of black performance, an ethos that was tailored to display the twists and turns of diaspora as performed by cakewalkers and their relations. What this also suggests is that the black habitus not only has a material form, but that material form is inexorably linked to the haptic.
The reduction of blackness to not only material goods, but fabric itself, points to the possibility for a sensual experience of blackness. In their visual representations, the feel of gowns is highlighted by black bodies in motion, the rustling of skirts palpable in each frame. In its coverage of fashion and performance, German media went so far as to contain textural representations of blackness. European performers could perhaps feel black by living and moving in a Pruschinski costume.

Black style, embodied by performers, demonstrated through the cakewalk, and worn on stage, signified the height of modernity. African Americans were harbingers of modernity for German audiences. They combined the promise of America with the vitality of the primitive. The dandy-inspired style of black cakewalk duos illustrated the evolution of black people from primitive stereotypes. In many ways, it distinguished African Americans from their colonial black counterparts. It also marked America itself as a site of progress. Europeans were fascinated by the seeming contradictions embodied in such representations of black refinement. Act upon act capitalized on this fascination. In many cases, the name says it all, as with the “Darktown Aristocrats”. As the “Washington Trio's” advertisement [Figure 13] reminds us, "it is not what you used to be, but who you are today" or rather, "it is not what you do, but how you do what you do".

**Conclusion**

We have seen the way encounters with the black diaspora shaped German commerce and commercial spaces and the ways in which lines between the act of shopping, racial capitalism and entertainment spaces were blurred. I argue that these phenomena are concrete examples of the presence of heterotopic performance spaces in Berlin. In the midst of all of this, the presence of blackness, as filtered through the presence of African Americans, or the presence of an American spirit, becomes crucial to the German metropolis seeking to stake its claim to modernity. In this
period, black bodies in the performance of art and labor were needed to legitimate the modern metropolis. Many scholars have noted the importance of American culture to Germany during the Weimar period and in the era leading up to it. In the previous chapter, we touched upon the ways racialized labor in the American South provided a model for German imperialism in Africa. In this context, black bodies themselves can be considered heterotopic spaces in their capacity to contain the contradictions inherent in Americanness and blackness, or the primitive, those two defining features of modernity.

My understanding of the significance of the black body to Berlin in this way is not only linked to the archival research I have outlined above, but to real life encounters with archives of blackness in the city. In the summer of 2015, I attended the first Internationaler Kinoorgel-Wettbewerb in Berlin. I took the opportunity see a silent film with live musical accompaniment as a way of taking a productive break from my German language lessons and writing. I chose to see Berlin, die Sinfonie der Großstadt (1927) more due to matters of scheduling convenience than research. If anything, it was a curiosity. While the film famously offers viewers a montage of life in Berlin at the turn of the century, it is never discussed as an example of African American performance. And yet, the film itself celebrates modernization of the city in real time, the turn from old to new, from day to night, and many of the contradictions inherent to that process. As such, I should not have been surprised by the traces of black performance that were present there, and what I have since learned is that those traces tell us about the ubiquity of African American-styled American influence in the city and what that influence exposes. Unexpectedly, this screening has helped me to conceptualize the European metropolis as a hidden archive of blackness.

34 See Eric Zimmerman’s Alabama in Africa
Directed by Walter Ruttman, *Berlin, die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (1927) is a montage of Berlin city life in the 1920s, from early morning until midnight. The film is noted for conveying a sense of the heightened pace of life within the modern city over the course of one day. In keeping with its symphonic title, the day is broken into five acts “in which time is arbitrarily measured by the mechanical clock according to the work-a-day life of wage laborers” (Hillard 80). To create a sense of realism, Ruttman shot much of the footage on hidden movie cameras concealed by various means. The film was first conceptualized by Carl Mayer, but Mayer and Walter Ruttman had irreconcilable artistic differences. Mayer backed out of the film's production over objections to Ruttman's formalist style. Viewers are invited to understand Berlin as a mass of visual contradictions, a series of clashing, yet somehow overlapping depictions of classed and gendered quotidian events and social experiences. Upon its initial release, film critic Sigfried Kracauer found the *Sinfonie’s* fragmented depiction of urban life unpalatable. Many others have criticized the film’s shallow politics. And yet, some contemporary critics have been struck by film's proletarian sympathies and progressive politics. Sabine Hake argues that Ruttman’s film is the first to present Berlin as “the home of the masses” (243). Anke Gleber writes that "although Ruttman's metropolitan symphony is not a production of a "feminist" modernist, it does present multiple images of New Women on the screens and streets of modernity, elucidating, and illuminating, in a first step, the many facets of women's presence in modern spaces" (Gleber 76).

Like many others, I am specifically interested in the heterogeneous nature of urban Berlin life that *Sinfonie* conveys. And yet, perhaps due to its lack of protagonists and its unfocussed

---

35 According to Eric Hillard, “viewers have commonly assessed Ruttman’s film as an aestheticization of the machine, or a fetishized urban spectacle. Within this interpretive framework, Berlin is seen to whitewash social difficulties, provide a detached depiction of urban space, and falsify reality through its emphasis of unresolved visual contrasts” (78).
nature, the film also contains a sense of timelessness and the universal. "The Symphony of a Great City" makes a case for Berlin’s pretensions as a world city.

In spite of its rocky beginnings, *Berlin, die Sinfonie der Großstadt* is now considered a classic work of German cinema and an important example of German modernism. Its premiere was an unabashed celebration of modernity. The film premiered in the Tauenzienpalast on 23 September 1927, with a live orchestra playing an original Edmund Meisel score. The advertisements for the film highlighted both its urban themes and its architectural construction principles, with one poster featuring little but unadorned red façades with empty window squares and angular sans serif type fonts. Displayed in theater lobbies and published in *Illustrierte Filmkurier*, another series of photomontages [...] emphasized Weimar Berlin’s debt to the American high-rise city and its culture of speed, noise, and mass consumption. (244)

Interestingly, a special jazz score with a seventy-five piece orchestra was commissioned for the film, and the film was edited to accompany the jazz music. That piece is no longer extant (Wizansky 1). And yet, the lost jazz score signifi es the importance of African American culture to European conceptions of the metropolis while hinting at larger traces of a distinctly American influence within the city. Here, as elsewhere, I argue that that American influence is also expressed through the weighty presence of African Americans on stage. In Ruttman’s work, we can still sense the impact of the black presence, even though it is often shielded from view.

In the fourth act, Ruttman turns his attention to the city’s nightlife. Lights in the courtyards of the altbaus make way for grand marquees and brightly lit shop windows catering to the night
crowd, the garments themselves seemingly made to reflect the glitter of the street lamps. Again, we are reminded of the importance of capitalism to the city's prosperity. Ruttman pauses on the marquee of the renowned Scala before he takes us inside one of its dressing rooms, the stage, behind stage, and among the audience.\textsuperscript{36} The Scala's showgirls are as resplendent as their American counterparts.\textsuperscript{37} This is not a Kabarett, but the famed Berlin variété, a performance as multiplicitous as the entertainment offerings of the outside city. After the bicycle act and the juggler, four black men in tailcoats appear on stage. Their act is not filmed in detail; Ruttman’s directorial gaze soon returns to the chorus line.

I suggest that the momentary glimpse of black performers in such a meticulously edited work underscores the importance of these men's brand of difference to the German variety show. The quartet’s inclusion in the sequence lasts only a few seconds, but it is long enough to understand that they are singers. Furthermore, I argue that this group, who appear to be the Four Black Troubadors, are part of a tradition of black European variety quartets modeled on earlier African American quartet who made names for themselves on the European continent. Although their onscreen presence in fleeting, it is significant because it may be the only time the Black Troubadors were caught on film. Furthermore, I argue that the narrative logic of the film, which depicts Berlin as a world city, teases viewers into searching for such hints of racial difference throughout the film to support the city's pretensions as a Großstadt. The inclusion of black performers offered in Walter

\textsuperscript{36} By some estimates, 80 to 100 percent of Scala acts contained foreign content until the start of WWI. After WWI, foreign performers were allowed back in Germany on April 1st, 1924. When they were, Scala resumed its foreign programming.

\textsuperscript{37} Eric D. Weitz explains that "Dance reviews were a regular feature of Berlin cabaret. Like the famous Rockettes or the Cotton Club dancers in Harlem, the 'girl' acts of the wildly popular Berlin cabaret featured lines of women in bodysuits, dancing with military precision -- a curious combination of Prussian militarism and Weimar sexuality, as the critic and social theorist Sigfried Kracauer noted in one of his famous essays" (312).
Ruttman’s *Berlin, die Sinfonie der Großstadt* demonstrates the ways blackness accented the Berlin cityscape. At the time of the film's premiere, "Berlin, itself, was widely perceived as the paragon of urban living – viewed in fact by many Europeans as Europe’s most *American* city" (Wizansky 1). Indeed, without the presence of black performance, the city could hardly lay claim to greatness in a world setting.

Thus, the fantasy of "blackness" continued to create venues for the performance of European identity as "whiteness" across the city, shaping commercial and leisure interactions, quite often blurring the two. The impact of blackness was present even when it wasn’t always visible or audible, as in the strains of Ruttman’s lost jazz score, and when it was simply gestured to, as in Anita Berber’s Golliwog dance. Black performance functioned for empire, necessitating the creation of “cathedrals of consumption,” bringing Germany the products that would create spaces for the performance of identity and citizenship, contributing to that binary against which European modernity must always define itself. And yet it was loved. And yet it was loathed. In both ways, it was indispensable. African American performers calculated the cost of this burden again and again on Berlin’s famed stages and its streets.
CHAPTER THREE: THE BLACK PATTI ABROAD

I found Berlin more to my taste than London, and occasionally I had to admit that in some things it was superior to Paris. In Berlin I especially enjoyed the orchestral concerts, and I attended a large number of them. I formed the acquaintance of a good many musicians, several of whom spoke of my playing in the highest terms. It was in Berlin that my inspiration was renewed.

-- James Weldon Johnson, 
*The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*

I sing this life in testimony to tempo rubato, to time stolen body by body by body by body from one passage to another; I sing tremolo to the opus of loss. I sing this story staccato and stretto, a fugue of blackface and blued-up arias.

-- Tyehimba Jess, 
"Sissieretta Jones"

Indignities Imposed: African American Vocalists in U.S. and German Concert Halls

Germany’s role as a center for musical education, more specifically, its international reputation for musical excellence and the attendant cultural capital makes it an important site of inquiry when focusing on black performers who travelled abroad. This reputation has numerous roots. Before the advent of the phonograph and other modern music recording technologies, live music was a regular feature of life in German speaking countries and throughout Europe, including England (Trinder 1). Germans were known as good musicians. Employment was often limited for Germans within the Prussian Empire, and musicianship became a popular profession among the working class. Parts of West Pfalz, Germany became known as the *Musikantenland*, or musician's
belt due to the number of travelling musicians produced there.\textsuperscript{38} The popular Brother's Grimm fairy tale "Town Musicians of Bremen" draws on similar vernacular traditions. The work of composers like Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner, ensured Germany's position as one of the leading centers for opera music, outside of Italy. This remains true today. As the capital of the Prussian empire, Berlin held pride of place in this late-nineteenth century musical schema.

Mainstream American newspapers and periodicals, which crossed the color line and made their way into African American homes, often bolstered such claims. These claims were repeated in African American newspapers and periodicals, too. For example, in late 1889 the \textit{Cleveland Gazette} published a brief international history of music conservatories. Locating early music conservatories in the ancient city of Thebes, and thus, in Africa, the anonymous writer makes a claim for a black diasporic tradition of musical education, asserting Egypt's influence on Roman and Greek music. Skipping over several centuries, the unknown author then states that it was not "until a comparatively late epoch that the cities of Germany became the nurseries of the higher branches of composition."\textsuperscript{39} And yet, they are there, in keeping with a tradition of musical

\begin{itemize}
\item[38] Rainer Lotz, "Black Entertainers in Imperial Germany".
\item[39] In an unattributed article entitled "The Nurseries of Music" a breezy history of world music is given:
\end{itemize}

\begin{quote}
The scepter of musical supremacy has moved about strangely from place to place during the centuries of which we have any record of music. In the earliest times we get a glimpse of a music conservatory in no less a place than ancient Thebes, and we can believe that this system of music had some influence upon that pursued at a later epoch in that musical center, Jerusalem. But it was Alexandria in Egypt that was the Mecca of the ancient musician from the first century of the Christian Era. It was here that great water organs were made for the Roman market, those mystical instruments which were heard in all the ancient theaters; it was here that the Roman and Grecian youths came to study music in its best state, and it was here that the original peace jubilee was held, in which 600 skilled musicians took part...Then came the Flemish cities and it was not
education established in Africa. Furthermore, in the two extant editions of Amelia Tilghman's *The Musical Messenger*, the African American periodical widely known for setting the standard for reportage on black concert music in the African American press, we see biographies of Handel, Haydn, and a description of the way music contributed to Germany's victory over France in the Franco-Prussian War.

The affinity between African Americans and Germans in the world of music extended to higher education. Formally trained African American musicians were embedded in an educational system that looked towards Germany for inspiration and technical training when it came to music. Aspiring African American musicians who were able to gain admission to American institutes of higher musical education often found themselves in classrooms taught by instructors who had studied in Germany. The best example of this phenomenon could be found at Oberlin College. Oberlin's musical pedagogy was informed by German musical pedagogy on a structural level: "two students were assigned the same hour with a given teacher. While one performed, another listened, watched, and hopefully benefited from the other's performance" (Carter 13). Outside of violin

Born and educated in Washington, DC, Amelia L. Tilghman was a gifted singer, pianist, director and producer. She performed alongside several notable African American musicians of the period, including Marie Selika. In addition to her career as an educator, journalist, musician, and performer, Tilghman wrote poetry for *The Musical Messenger* and other African American women’s magazines. Publication of *The Musical Messenger* was short lived (beginning in 1888 and ending sometime in 1891), but the journal had a relatively wide circulation. Amelia Tilghman’s take on the arts was comprehensive: she published new ideas about music instruction and theory, the activities of notable black musicians and composers, and new African American musical compositions.
lessons, Oberlin's harmony classes were distinctly influenced by German musical instruction. The Oberlin Conservatory's Director and two of its piano teachers had attended the famed Leipzig Conservatory and the Leipzig Conservatory's texts and practices became Oberlin's standards (Carter 13). The influence of German musical education on American music academies probably prompted one of Oberlin's most talented students, William Marion Cook, to pursue advanced musical training in Berlin.

One of the places where German musical innovation became apparent on the continent and in the United States was in the concert hall. Germany was home to architects who were at the vanguard of acoustic technology and concert hall design. Theories of acoustical science and design flowed back and forth between the United States and Germany in a rich cultural feedback loop. While Boston’s Symphony Hall in 1900 became the first modern American concert hall to be built in accordance with acoustical science in 1900, the acoustical innovations that informed that structure, and similar venues, relied on a steady flow of technical information between the United States and Europe. Boston Symphony Hall’s early supporters hoped for a success similar to that of Martin Gropius and Heino Schmieden’s New Gewandhaus in Leipzig (Thompson 16). The American venue was designed by McKim, Mead and White, with consultation from American acoustician Wallace C. Sabine, who published his treatise on reverberation in 1900, too (Von Fischer 68). Recently, it has been demonstrated that the work of Wallace C. Sabine, early acoustical science pioneer and architectural acoustician, was influential to the work of Adolf Loos, Austrian architect and acoustician (Von Fischer 68). Adolf Loos himself would become interested in black performance in the Jazz Age, getting caught up in Bakermania during the 1920s and eventually designing a house for Josephine Baker in 1927.
Michael Barron explains that the New Gewandhaus “served as a worldwide model of excellence before the Second World War” (Barron 83). Hope Bagenal, the modern English acoustician, described the experience of listening to a concert at the New Gewandhaus as follows:

the Gewandhaus is a true instrument to the music produced within it. … There is no exaggeration in its reputed excellence for orchestral music. … Tone is both “full” and bright, and at the same time notes are distinct. … To hear indeed the highly trained Leipzig orchestra in the Ninth Symphony, each phrase exactly presenting itself to the ear for a fraction of a second before it is resolved in the great onrush of the scherzo, to feel control of sheer loudness maintained by the conductor, is a musical experience of considerable interest to the student of acoustics. (Barron 83)

Other German and Austrian concert halls, including the Bösendorfer Hall in Vienna and the Berlin Philharmonie, “successfully created aural environments and can be read as benchmarks in the erratic development of the acoustic dimension of architecture” (Barron 1). On the surface, these German architectural and acoustical developments seem separate from the concerns of African Americans performers. However, I argue that they were a significant element in the cultural context in which black performers understood themselves as artists and political subjects.

These technological advancements in the world of sound and music, coupled with other reports about Germany’s politically progressive nature, created an arena in which Germany was understood as a desirable destination for African American performers travelling on the European continent. German innovation contributed to a context in which the location of black performance and spectatorship was highly politicized, as was the matter of listening. By way of contrasts, Berlin
sounded different from America and musical performance resonated differently there. I mean this in both a practical and figurative sense. Unsurprisingly, turn of the century African American concert singers were barred from fully experiencing the many acoustical innovations that America had to offer. Boston's Symphony Hall opened with much fanfare in 1900. But it was not until 1923 that Roland Hayes would become the first African American to sing on stage there. It is commonly believed that Hayes was the first African American to be accompanied at Boston’s Symphony Hall by a major orchestra.41 And yet, like other African American concert musicians before him, Hayes had availed himself of opportunities to work in advanced European musical facilities and receive formal training in Europe long before Symphony Hall's doors were opened to him.

Thus, space, race and sound emerge as prime concerns for black performers during this period. These mutually constitutive elements of performance were highly politicized in the African American press. For example, in 1895, only months after the highlights of her European tour, which included engagements in Berlin, were announced in black newspapers all over the United States, W.C. Wright invoked the name of opera singer Sissieretta Jones in an article entitled "Indignities Imposed". Wright explained to readers of The Cleveland Gazette that

The greatest indignity imposed on our people at the south to me seems to be that of riding in "Jim Crow" cars. A "Jim Crow" car is an ordinary car with a partition in the center; one half is used as a smoking apartment by white passengers, some of whom are very filthy. An Afro-American cannot go into the same depot waiting

---

room with the whites, no matter who well he may be dressed. A separate lunch counter is run for the benefit of Afro-American travelers. Implicit in W.C. Wright's report is an understanding of the ways segregated travel had practical ramifications for black performers, people who travelled for a living. Some of the most successful black entertainers of the day avoided these indignities and impediments to mobility by using their own private train cars. To whit, Marta Effinger argues that the Black Patti Troubadors used their own private train cars specifically to avoid white hostility while travelling West in the United States.42

Discriminatory public indignities made their way into the concert hall, too. Reading African American newspapers, we gain a sense of the ways in which segregation in public spaces tainted the world of musical performance. In "Indignities Imposed" Wright also spoke out against segregated concert halls, particularly that space that readers of Carl Van Vechten's Nigger Heaven (1926) would become familiar with during the Harlem Renaissance, the upper balcony reserved for black patrons. Wright noted that

A place is set apart in the top galleries of the theaters for our people, where circus seats are provided. This section is not patronized by the best of our people. The manner in which some conduct themselves, however, causes the managements to so place all Afro-Americans, which is certainly unfair and wrong. It is true some Afro-Americans act more like monkeys than human beings. Madam

42 Marta Effinger Crichlow, Staging Migrations Towards an American West: From Ida B. Wells to Rhodessa Jones, 80.
Sissieretta Jones, while in the south, was not patronized by the leading Afro-Americans, because they were compelled to go up in the loft when she sang in that section.

Southern segregated seating practices may have differed from those of Northern venues like Cleveland's Euclid Avenue Opera House, but segregated performance spaces were certainly not limited to the South. Reports like Wright's came hard on the heels of news of Jones's success abroad and were meant to highlight the injustices of American racism faced by the black elite. What did it mean for African American audience members to have to go to the top galleries and experience compromised forms of listening? How did these compromised listening experiences shape the way African American performers were received domestically? How did they influence the ways African American performers framed themselves?

I posit that these reported experiences are a window into cultural practices of listening in the African American community and provide another lens through which we can understand the impact of international performance for black artists. In Wright's article, we see how receptions of performances by artists like Sissieretta Jones were used as a barometer of social tolerance in the African American press. We also see the ways in which segregated seating sections were connected to questions of class and merit within some segments of the African American community. Racist listening practices were considered unjust by elites like Wright because they prevented Jones's "leading" fans from hearing her properly. They also forced upwardly mobile African Americans into close quarters with people they felt themselves to be superior to. Wright's editorial suggests that the black elite deserved more because they could afford to pay more, in spite of their relative social standing.

---

43 Cleveland Gazette notices suggest that the local African American community made frequent use of the hall, one of the leading performances spaces in the country at the time.
of their color, not simply because all people deserved to hear good music. But for those who could swing it, there were ways to avoid these unpleasantries, including travel. Temporarily sidestepping these controversies through their work in European cities like Berlin, African American performers created different kinds of listening experiences than those available to them in the United States. They also succeeded in making their work in those exclusive spaces available to wider audiences through print.

In this chapter I illustrate the relationship between sound and text for racialized performers who worked in transnational contexts. In Chapter Two, we witnessed the way African American artists like Bricktop and a number of variety performers took advantage of new opportunities to live and work in Europe as racial fantasies were imported to Germany from the United States in the form of protest novels, popular culture and other consumer goods. These fantasies shaped the urban landscape in Berlin, signaled new forms of transnational encounters to tourists and residents, and created hybrid performance spaces. Now, I delve deeper into the nature of German performance and the performance opportunities African American women encountered with close attention to sound. I am particularly interested in the importance of black women's sound as a social object and the ways black artists shaped the quality of that object for personal and political gains. I suggest that for African American women vocalists, the German popular stage provided a location to both steal away to, and to reemerge from with new ways of making themselves heard.

Sound studies methodologies are generative here because of what I view as insufficient engagements with the material products of black women's work abroad in the past, and a persistent critical insistence on a lack of evidence, notably sonic ephemera, in considerations of late nineteenth and early twentieth century black women's performance. More specifically, I see this work as making critical intervention into the field of Sound Studies. Many scholars investigate
black women who worked as musicians, but with little attention to the literal sounds they made, even though that music, those sonic qualities, were highly important to those women's careers and political projects. And yet, archival evidence points to the ways in which the transmission and transcription of sound was important to black women performers, who often went to great lengths to control their sound and manage its quality. Black women used subversive recording and listening practices to subvert the structural racism that subtended their American performances. It is impossible for me write about these critical tendencies without recognizing the ways in which racism robs black women of agency in this vein of critical discourse. While work by scholars like Jayna Brown and Daphne Brooks has shifted the discourse of black performance in important ways, scholarly criticism that recognizes the artistic agency of black women as cultural producers is still too rare. Thus, it seems that race still creates sonic gaps in discourse just as it created sonic gaps through a lack of recording and performing opportunities. Within this critical discourse, I am particularly aware of the relationship between visibility and audibility for African American women performers and the way these two qualities informed these women’s career choices.

Given these conditions, I will perform a close reading of African American opera star Sissieretta Jones's performance reviews and interviews. As the preeminent African American diva of her day, Jones's 1895 Berlin tour is particularly deserving of scrutiny amidst my examination of the imbrications between the American, African American, and German popular stages. Sissieretta Jones's international work reveals the multifold complexities surrounding nineteenth century African American women’s performances. In spite of her reputation as a genteel, if not meek, race woman, the way she deployed her German performance reviews reflect a deep understanding of the transgressive social and political uses of black femininity. I am particularly interested in the ways Jones seized on the international stage as a site for the articulation of identity
and the recording of sound. While I concluded my last chapter with a consideration of the haunting influence of black music over the German metropolis, here I reverse my focus to consider the use black women made of the European city as a conceptual space and a place in which alternate modes of sound recording, and listening, could take place.

As I have insisted, black transatlantic encounters were important not only because they marked a formative moment in the construction of white identity and the European cityscape, but because of the ways they impacted black performers. African American performers, including vocal musicians, understood the European metropolis as holding a cultural capital unavailable in the United States and culturally superior to that which they were denied in their own homeland. They were Americans who ardently struggled for acceptance as Americans in their homeland, but who wished to be recognized for the distinct contributions of people of African descent. And yet, their domestic performances were constrained by racial tropes that dominated the American popular stage.

The problem of insisting on the importance of Europe to black performers is a sticky one. In doing so, I hope to avoid suggesting a deep Eurocentricism on the part of the black performers mentioned here or elsewhere. Doing so would be to suggest a kind of self-loathing and self-abnegation that is unsupported by my archival research. Instead, perhaps counter intuitively, and in spite of many of the ways racism proliferated on stage and European popular culture, and continues apace, black American artists who travelled on the European vaudeville circuit and to Europe's great capitals in search of new business opportunities during the late nineteenth century found an invigorating interest in their work. Engaging in European travel did not free African American performers from a sense of Americanness or the burden of blackness. Instead, it often provided a lens with which they would further scrutinize American racial violence and systemic
racism and gave them greater cultural authority in these matters. For African American performers, European travel did not represent a return to ones roots or the strengthening of pan-African ties in the way travel to Africa or the Caribbean would and did. But their travel to the European continent was important. These journeys represented a mastery of cultural tropes and the acquirement of significant forms of cultural capital that were privileged in mainstream America but were out of reach for many of its inhabitants, both black and white, and which African Americans could put to practical and political use.

My decision to focus on the work of black women who worked in this context is deliberate. Early stage performances by African American women emerged from a severely limited artistic sphere. Minstrelsy proliferated during the nineteenth century in American theatre and popular culture. Many black actors first gained access to the American stage via black face minstrelsy. Yet, American blackface minstrel companies did not allow black women to perform as minstrels. In their exclusion from minstrel roles, black women were effectively denied access to mass audiences as actresses. In response, black women who desired to perform before mass audiences (read: white audiences), were forced to generate alternative strategies in order to reach the stage. Travelling and performing for international audiences broadened these women's professional horizons. The political significance of these women’s work should not be underestimated. Performing in roles that emphasized their femininity and mastery of stereotypically feminine musical pursuits, African American women affirmed their own self-worth and called for more expansive notions of womanhood in the face of a white supremacy that sought to deny their humanity, both at home and abroad.

Within this context, concert hall performances emerged as a crucial site of racial and gender opposition, in addition to being politicized in other ways. For white pre-Civil War American
audiences, Elizabeth Greenfield’s performance underscored the humanity of African Americans by demonstrating their ability to master “high culture,” thus reinforcing the abolitionist cause. During the late nineteenth century, jubilee singing companies featuring women performed worldwide, singing stylized versions of traditional Negro spirituals. Race often complicated the reception of these performances. The late nineteenth century also witnessed the debut of African American women in vaudeville and burlesque arenas as singers, dancers and comedians. The arrival of black women on the U.S. stage disrupted patterns of representation that were developed in minstrelsy’s heyday. Like other activists, African American women used their stage presence as a means of social commentary and to draw attention to political causes, even in international contexts.

Dark Star of the Evening: Sissieretta Jones Sings in Berlin

She was born Matilda Sissieretta Joyner, in Portsmouth, Virginia, on January 5th, 1869 to parents who had once lived in a North Carolina where slavery ruled. Her father, Jeremiah Malachi Joyner, worked as a carpenter and was a leader of the African Methodist Church in Portsmouth. Her mother, Henrietta Joyner, was a talented singer and musician, in addition to working as a laundress. The Joyners moved to Providence together in 1876 but would separate in 1878. Their daughter Sissieretta began singing in local churches in Portsmouth at a young age. She began her formal musical training at the Providence, Rhode Island Academy of Music in 1883. Sissieretta’s formal entrance onto the popular stage took place on May 21st, 1885 when she appeared at the Armory Hall, in Providence, with the legendary black diva Flora Batson.

Sissieretta Jones became a prototypical race woman: a classically trained opera soloist who sang before four U.S. presidents and in venues like Carnegie Hall and Madison Square Garden. In
the United States, Jones embodied the potential for African Americans to master traditional European (white) art forms and was celebrated in the African American press. After making her New York debut in 1888, Sissieretta Jones soon became an international sensation, touring the West Indies, South America and Europe, in addition to the United States and Canada. But like many black performers in her day, Jones's career was severely limited by racism. The tension between the kind of performer that Jones strove to be and the one that audiences were ready to receive shaped her life and her legacy. After failing to find mainstream acceptance and performance opportunities as a singer of art music, Jones headed her own successful black variety troupe, The Black Patti Troubadors, whose rotating cast members would eventually include superstars like Aida Overton Walker, George Walker, Bert Williams, Ernest Hogan, Ida Fosyne, J. Rosamond Johnson and Will Marion Cook (Lee 117).

Jones’s life has been documented by scholars and biographers including Maureen Lee, Sonya R. Gable-Wilson, Willia Daughtry and John Graziano but she remains on the fringes of contemporary popular consciousness. Her fame has faded with the rise in interest of more popular forms of black music. But towards the end of her life, Jones received a brief nod in Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926) when Adora, an ex-Music Hall performer reminisces about her role in the Golden Age of the New York's black theater scene (83). More recently, Sissieretta Jones has been the subject of a short play, *The Unsung Diva* (2011), written by Angela Dean-Baham and performed at the New York International Fringe Festival. Jones has also inspired contemporary poet Tyehimba Jess, whose prose poem “Sissieretta Jones” deals with the artist's complicated relationship with Europe, black performance and the black diaspora.

\[44\] In an interview about his poem, Jess admires Jones’s name, joking that hers is one of the “blackest names” he’s ever heard and that he wanted people to remember her for her name, Sissieretta Jones (McNulty). Speaking from Jones’s perspective, in her voice, Jess writes:
It has become typical to claim Sissieretta's Jones's victim status when thinking about the limitations she faced in the American entertainment world. In earlier drafts of this project I have been guilty of trotting out such notions. The fact that Jones was not able to establish a solo career as a classically trained opera singer, as she had hoped in her youth, is the standard line and accepted tragedy of her life. But I am increasingly convinced that that is not, in fact, the real story. Many famous, and talented, performers die in obscurity long after giving up their art, and end up being forgotten by the world and their communities. But none of this is really the case with Sissieretta Jones. While she died in poverty, she appears to have been a treasured member of the black community in Providence, Rhode Island. Nor is Jones someone whose legacy needs urgent resuscitation. Her personal effects are housed at Howard University and she continually reemerges as a critical subject, albeit outside of mainstream popular culture. What is significant, but often overlooked, about Jones is the way she chose to shape her career, and successfully managed to do so, in spite of the limitations placed on her because of her race and gender.

One of this ways this fact can be most fully understood is through an examination of Sissieretta Jones's European tour and the turn it marked from her work primarily as an opera singer to someone more willing to dabble in popular entertainment. Her European tour helped her earn lucrative forms of cultural capital and provided the conceptual seeds with which she could build her own successful entertainment empire. Her later work with the Black Patti Troubadors was modeled on the kind of work she did in European performance venues. Travel freed Sissieretta Jones's ad libitum.

I sing this body ad libitum. Europe scraped raw between my teeth until, presto, “Ave Maria” floats to the surface from a Tituba tributary of “Swanee.” Until I’m a legato darkling whole note, my voice shimmering up from the Atlantic’s hold; until I’m a coda of sail song whipped in salted wind; until my chorus swells like a lynched tongue; until the nocturnes boiling beneath the roof of my mouth extinguish each burning cross. (1)
Jones to perform in previously unheralded ways, but in ways that made her increasingly difficult to classify. It also presented her with new ideas about how she could make her voice more widely heard.

Searching for the presence of Jones’s voice in the archive, I also seek evidence of her humanity beyond the role of exceptional race woman. One of the problems with fleshing out a more three dimensional version of Jones is that while much was written about her, little was written by her, and few traces of her voice exist within the archives. I mean this in a quite literal way. Although Sissieretta Jones travelled to Germany, the center of the music publishing world and sound recording in the late 19th century, no recordings of Jones’s performances abroad, or in the United States, have been preserved. The closest that we can get to listening to the singer involves working through the archives to discover accounts of her stage performances by reviewers and in person interviews by Jones. This is ironic, given her career as a singer. A further layer of complexity is added when we consider that her "official" nickname “Black Patti” was later adopted by a successful record label, one whose outputs Jones distanced herself from. If we are to discover Jones’s voice in the archives, then, we must do so through an unorthodox approach to written text, an artifact that is itself an attempt to visualize her sound.

So how can we get to the more revealing and relevant parts of Jones's legacy? I suggest that we approach her life with an ear for sound even as we read. I ask, what might it mean to "listen" to Jones through the texts that she herself constructed, limited though they may be? Doing so reveals the way productive readings of Jones's work can emerge from the spaces in which text and sound overlap. No known audio recordings of Sissieretta Jones's voice exist. But Sissieretta

45 “German manufacturers of music dominated the world market other than the USA prior to World War I” (Lotz, Black People, 19).
Jones’s interviews and newspaper reviews are sonic records. As she labored in performance, Sissieretta Jones embodied blackness, reproduced that blackness for her listeners, and actively recorded it through textual means. I suggest that this jerry-rigged process of recording her sound at a moment in which records of Black lives and deaths were a matter of utmost urgency reflects the political necessity of recording her voice in its texture and context. International performance venues acted as laboratories for these experiments in sonic transcription, with Germany emerging to the forefront as one of the most significant sites for sound preservation in the late nineteenth century. Written reviews made her work almost equally accessible to audiences black and white around the world. Furthermore, readers could use these reviews to imagine and approximate her sound.

Black women who performed art music were formally excluded from early phonographic recordings, but they and their work continued to exist in relation to it. This argument becomes clearer in light of Louis Chude-Sokei’s propositions about the mechanics of the black female body and its connection to sound. Discussing the implications of the relationship between race, technology and sound at the beginning of the modern era, Louis Chude-Sokei writes that "blacks were linked to technology and new techniques, which also established links between race and that other significant twentieth-century sign of otherness, the machine" (32). In Chude-Sokei's estimation, the minstrel and the robot were doubles and reflections of one another in nineteenth century culture. While many scholars have written of the relationship between the Jazz Age and mechanization, including, famously, Adorno, Chude-Sokei finds that this relationship preceded that time period. In fact, it directly overlaps the period in which African American women like Sissieretta Jones made their way onto the stage. Chude-Sokei notes that "the nineteenth century was when contemporary meanings of technology would begin to congeal, as would the current
meanings of race and culture" (36) and that "as a system, the plantation was a precursor to the regimentations and formal, time-driven depersonalizations known as Fordism and Taylorism" (37). This understanding of the relationship between the black body and the machine extended to the very beginnings of American mass entertainment, when naive audiences thought Joyce Heth, the star of P.T. Barnum's early empire, was a machine.46

I refer to the way Louis Chude-Sokei attempts to draw connections between black performance, automata, and the phonograph in order to reinforce my own argument about the relationship between black women and phonography. Sokei argues that the automata, which expressed a loss of certainty about what it means to be human for European audiences, evolved into the phonograph in both technical and cultural senses (43). Like minstrels, anthropomorphized machines threatened to supplant white male labor and authority (44). Thus, black performance, including Ida Forsyne's aforementioned Topsy dance, was a spectacle of the lack of reason and a demonstration of other than humanness. In Sokei's schema, there is a linkage between Negro dolls and automata, which exist as masks of each other (48). Again at the turn of the century, ventriloquism and masquerade became increasingly prominent properties of technology (68-69).

Furthermore, "there was a general belief that black voices had a tonality better represented by the new medium" (Chude-Sokei 51). Given this slippage between the black female body in performance and the machine, I suggest that there are a number of ways in which we can understand Sissieretta Jones's relationship to textual records of her voice through sound technology, particularly phonography.

46 Barnum experienced early success displaying Joyce Heth "(advertised as George Washington’s 160-year-old nurse) in 1835" (Brooks and Ertan). Recently, Louis Chude-Sokei and Uri McMillan have explored the relationship between this moment and larger phenomenon of embodiment and automation in American popular entertainment.
From the beginning of this association, black women were understood to ventriloquize whiteness. They embodied a particular kind of machinic otherness. Lifelong comparisons between Sissieretta Jones and Adelina Patti marked a through line between Jones’s work and the careers of other black divas whose nicknames helped readers approximate their sound by way of racial binaries, from Elizabeth Greenfield (aka The Black Swan), to Arabella Fields (aka The Black Nightingale). Opportunities to hear Sissieretta Jones in concert might have been limited, but one might get a sense of Jones's voice by way of her reviews and recordings of Adelina Patti's voice. Furthermore, the timbre of the black voice was a concern to both listeners and performers, as was an attention to the ways this racialized sound was recorded and circulated, often in the absence of the audio-record. In this vein, as I will later demonstrate, an awareness of the phonograph’s early existence as a dictation device further emphasizes phonography’s role in bridging the gap between sound and writing.

My case rests partly on a consideration of Chude-Sokei's theorization of black bodies, machines and sound, but also on the multiple implications of the recorded word and sound in African American print culture. Perhaps, to some extent, all writing is meant to reflect sound or the spoken word, but our understanding of the terms and our expectations of written language have changed over time. Sound archivist Patrick Feaster explains that

Phonography belongs to a family of interrelated terms – including phonograph, phonographic, and phonogram – that combine the Greek phone (sound, voice) with graphe (writing) or the related gramma (something written) and are usually glossed in terms of “sound writing” or “voice-writing. This terminology is generally understood as referring not simply to writing about sound as subject
matter but the writing of sound – that is, to the project of embodying
the transient motion or perception of sound itself in writing as
enduring objects. (139)

Feaster’s explanation is important here because it lays a groundwork for understanding the hybrid
nature of sound, and the ways in which our understanding of sound recordings are inextricably
linked to text and visual culture. The process of phonography becomes even more complicated
when we consider the intimate relationship between sound, text and body. Voice and text compete
for meaning although they are not easily separated. As such, as Alexander Weheliye notes, “the
voice, even more so than writing, represents the pure interiority and the proper domain of the
sovereign human subject” (Weheliye 27). And yet, until relatively recently, it was only as a written
language, or a record, that the voice could be archived or transcend time and space. The
sovereignty represented by the voice was fragile and always temporal for the marginalized subject.

Five years after Jones made her stage debut, visitors to the Columbian World’s Fair, held
in Chicago in 1893, were introduced to the phonograph in the Exhibition’s elaborate Electricity
building and phonograph parlors began to appear in major American cities. This technological turn
was ground breaking for racialized performers. In *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-
Modernity* (2005), Alexander Weheliye explains that “the invention of the phonograph at the end
of the nineteenth century offered a different way to split sound from the courses that (re)produced
them, thus generating a new technological orality and musicality in twentieth-century black
culture” (Weheliye 19). Theodor Adorno, convinced of the potential of the writing that emerges
from the curve of the gramophone needle, wrote that "as music is removed by the phonograph
record and the realm of live production, and from the imperative of artistic activity and becomes
petrified, it absorbs into itself, in this process of petrification, the very life that would otherwise
vanish". Adorno's treatise suggests that there is an essential, ephemeral quality to sound that is only present in recorded form. And yet, in spite of this rich theoretical work, I believe that our frameworks for understanding how black women intervened into such discourses using limited means remains insufficient.

I would like to consider, then, what it means to record sound in the absence of the artifact of the traditional phonograph record. For black women performers like Sissieretta Jones, the ability to separate her voice from her physical presence, through the recording of her voice as text, provided an opportunity not only to be “heard” by audiences around the globe, but to shape her public identity. Sissieretta Jones used textual representations of sound to expand her listenership and shape audience perceptions of her voice. My interest lies in a consideration of the way her voice was preserved—in performance reviews that described what she sang and the quality and often racialized tone of her voice. I am also interested in where those reviews came from and in the emphasis Jones placed on transnational performance and international recognition. Indeed, the scrapbook she collected her reviews in is made from a Bank of Nova Scotia of Canada ledger and reveals a heavy emphasis on her international work. My current investigation seeks to expand our understanding of the powers of phonography as a means of restoring the humanity of minoritized performers who have been excluded from audio archives. Read quite literally, records of black voices and black presence in their artistic and cultural dimensions, are political acts.

In the absence of any personal written records, archival records, including her scrapbook and its selections reveal the ways in which sound was central to Sissieretta Jones's understanding of herself and her role as a spokeswoman, and formal voice, for her race. The voice that she wanted to be heard remains present in these records. This urge to record tells us much about the importance of sound and literature to our conception of the human. Questions of sovereignty and humanity
accrue around the voice. Without evidence of our humanity, the rhythmic vibrations of our voice, our interior etched into stone, our selfhood can be called into question and dismissed, as are the achievements of African American singers. Just as enslaved people of African descent were denied the opportunity to connect to the written word, a forced separation between the self, sound and language can occur through exclusion from technology. And yet, in the reassembly of words and images on the pages of her scrapbook, Sissieretta Jones partially mends this rupture.

Finally, I believe that we must remain cognizant of the fact that for African Americans, the act of testifying, and of recording that testimony, were especially significant. Here, I briefly turn towards Ida B. Wells's *Red Record* (1895) to consider the number of ways in which the act of black recording was an imperative for Wells, the ways in which those records exist within different mediums, and the ways in which Black voices were systematically expunged from public record. Speaking of the political nature of recording, Wells writes: "It becomes a painful duty of the Negro to reproduce a record which shows that a large portion of the American people avow anarchy, condone murder and defy the contempt of civilization". The racial record that Wells refers to takes numerous forms, including bodily inscription. Highlighting the complex intersection of sex and gender in the recording of these race records, Wells also notes that:

True chivalry respects all womanhood, and no one *who reads the record, as it is written in the faces of the million mulattoes in the South*, will for a minute conceive that the southern white man had a very chivalrous regard for the honor due the women of his own race or respect for the womanhood which circumstances placed in his power.
Wells's work highlights the unique role of black women in the spectrum of racial violence that rocked America. It also underscores the plasticity of the public record and the ways in which the very act of recording is made visible through the black body. While I hope to avoid dwelling too long on what might be considered simple word play, I believe that viewing Sissieretta Jones's textual reproductions of her voice as analagous to producing and keeping a race record can help us to further understand the nuances of black performance at the dawn of the twentieth century.

**Recontextualizing the Black Patti's Performance Reviews**

Two separate, spurious reports in the African American press point to a fixation on Europe as a space of increased opportunity for black women vocalists in general, and for Sissieretta Jones in particular. While Sissieretta was in New York, she reportedly visited the famous soprano Madame Nellie Melba at the Hotel Savoy, as per an article published in the *Cleveland Gazette* on March 31st, 1894. Born Helen Porter Mitchell in 1861, Nellie Melba was an Australian born soprano who enjoyed international fame up until the time of her death. Her stage name was adopted in tribute to Melbourne, the city of her birth. Melba performed at several high profile international venues including London's Covent Garden, which she referred to as her spiritual home. Jon Tolansky explains that Nellie Melba "acquired the status of an international society personality and was one of the highest-paid performers in history" (Tolansky 1). The ice-cream dessert *pêche Melba* and Melba toast are both named after her, a sign which the late music critic Desmond Shawe-Taylor read as evidence of the commercial value of her name during the period (Shawe-Taylor 1). Nellie Melba visited New York in 1894 and performed there at the Metropolitan Opera House to great acclaim.
The *Gazette* claimed that during her 1894 visit, Sissieretta Jones sang several selections for Melba, who “immediately told Mme. Jones that her voice was grand and also stated that Mme. Jones should go to Paris and finish under her instruction, and volunteered her services at the benefit for the same”\(^{47}\). Melba herself had trained in Paris, thus the career advice that she gave to Jones was kind of advice that she had personally benefitted from. The *Gazette* also reported that Sissieretta intended to take Melba’s advice and that “in a short time one of the greatest concerts ever given in New York will take place. The main artist will be Mme. Melba and the proceeds will be to finish the musical education of Mme. Sissieretta Jones in Paris”.

The meeting would have been an exciting one in spite of the women's racial differences. The two divas had much in common. In their respective communities (black America and the British colony of Australia), they were equals in terms of cultural importance. Both Melba and Jones were relatively young women from marginalized communities intent on establishing their careers in the cultural capitals of the world. They were also close in age. In spite of Melba's paternalistic attitude towards Jones, Nellie Melba would have been only twenty-two years old at the time of their reported meeting. Sissieretta Jones would have been twenty-six. Like Jones, Melba had also begun her career singing in churches and at local concerts. Like Jones, Melba was also no stranger to scandal. Nellie Melba's tumultuous marriage to the abusive Charles Nesbitt Frederick Armstrong ended after rumors of her affair with Prince Philippe, Duke of Orléans reached a fever pitch. Sissieretta Jones's own turbulent marriage to David Richard Jones was documented in her divorce petition (Lee 124) and vaguely alluded to during personal interviews in the African American press. Years after their reported meeting, Jones would file for divorce

\(^{47}\) [Mrs. Clara Brown; Newton; Mrs. David Lowe; Washington; Residence; Sympathy]. *The Cleveland Gazette*. 31 March 1894.
from David Richard Jones after he fathered a child outside of their marriage. In Nellie Melba, keen Gazette readers might have seen some of what Sissieretta Jones could become.

Unfortunately, according to Jones’s biographer Maureen Lee, there is no evidence that this meeting between Nellie Melba and Sissieretta Jones ever took place or that Melba gave any benefit concert to pay for Jones to study abroad (Lee 84). Still, these anecdotes are important because they reveal the way Sissieretta Jones relied on an association with European musical education and white art musicians to legitimate her own claims to mastery and professional accomplishment. Completing her musical education in Paris, or another major European city famed for art music, would have been both a feather in Jones’s cap and a professional necessity. Up until her alleged meeting with Melba, Jones had "finished some form of musical training" at either the New England Conservatory or the Boston Conservatory, schools which both began admitting black women after the Civil War, but her name never appeared on the enrollment records (Effinger 64). Sissieretta Jones’s opportunities to perform art music in American venues built for that purpose in New England were notoriously limited and would remain so for her entire life. Although it was constructed while she was still actively touring and performing, opening fifteen years after her debut, New England's most prestigious venue, Boston's Symphony Hall, was off-limits to Jones and other African American divas of her day.

The second European report of note emerged shortly after the Melba incident. Perhaps buoyed by the excitement surrounding the alleged Melba incident, Sisseretta Jones began her European tour the following year, not in Paris, but in Berlin. The tour was organized with the help of Carnegie Hall's Morris Reno, and manager Rudolph Voelkel (Daughtry 71), whom Jones would maintain a friendship with throughout her life. Afterwards, she publicly insisted upon her success in Europe, and expressed a desire to stay there for an extended period of time at a future date. The
African American opera singer went so far as to tell the *Indianapolis Freeman* that she would like to live in Europe permanently after her first (and only) trip to the continent\(^{48}\). According to reviews that she and her managers provided to African American newspapers, Jones performed at the Winter Garden in Berlin for three months. Sissieretta Jones also claimed to have performed for Wilhelm II, the German Emperor and Prussian monarch, at his palace and to have been presented with an elaborate diamond brooch for her performance\(^{49}\). Kira Thurman notes that Jones "returned from Europe with an even more impressive resume than before, and the years following her visit were filled with numerous successes, great wealth, and a way of life that befitted a prima donna" (66). Thus, the European tour was a triumph for both Jones and her community.

This narrative of both a smashing overseas success and a triumphant return was one of the most important aspects of Sissieretta Jones's journey. News coverage of her trip is reminiscent of the considerations of "the sophistications of modern urban power" which Farah Jasmine Griffin sees as characterizing African American migration narratives (10). In this case, the modern sophistication on display in Europe was aligned with social advancement and progressive race relations. These advancements must have allowed Jones to experience the urban landscape in ways that were impossible in the United States. The fact that Europeans openly recognized her accomplishments must have made her accomplishments even sweeter for Jones and her readers. The same can be said for many other black performing artists of the time. In part, one went to Europe, and performed in Europe, in order to be able to say that one was successful in Europe. This triumphant narrative became a trope in African American newspapers for Sissieretta Jones and other African American performers. A number of African American newspapers devoted

\(^{48}\) “Mme. Sissieretta Jones”, The Indianapolis Freeman. 4 May 1895. Page 1.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.
columns to the work of African American entertainers abroad and these syndicated columns even made their way into the Canadian black press. But these narratives did not always correspond to the actual facts of the journeys undertaken.

In fact, there is evidence to suggest that Sissieretta Jones’s European tour did not go as smoothly as Jones and her German-American manager Rudolph Voelckel would have readers believe. Coverage of these events in the archives of major German newspapers is often elusive and contradictory. For years, stories of Sissieretta Jones receiving a diamond cross from Kaiser Wilhelm were a recurring item in black newspapers. This anecdote was used to cement Jones's claims to European success. For example, in 1897, "the collection of songs, Melodic Gems from Voelckel and Nolan’s Black Patti’s Troubadours features on its cover a photograph of a youthful Jones draped in her medals and surrounded by images of the “Crowned Heads of Europe" (Effinger-Crichlow 69) for whom she supposedly performed to great acclaim. But some initial reports only claim that Wilhelm would have a diamond cross commissioned for Jones, not that Jones had been presented with one. While there are several depictions of Jones wearing many medals [Figure 14], there are no extant photographs of Jones wearing the Kaiser's diamond cross. It is not among the Sissiretta Jones medals stored at the Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, although this absence might be attributed to the fact that Jones sold off the majority of her possessions towards the end of her life. German newspapers are largely silent on the matter of the performance, which leads me to believe that, like the meeting between Jones and Melba, this anecdote may be a fabrication.

50 “A Diamond Cross To Be Presented Madam Jones by the Young Emperor of Germany”. The Cleveland Gazette. 11 May 1895, page 1.
Furthermore, the reports Jones and her managers provided to African American newspapers take great pains to highlight her debut at the Wintergarten, but are silent about a preceding, rather problematic "Black Patti" engagement at Berlin's Apollo Theater. When it comes to this point, several advertisements from the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* throw a spanner in the works. On February 14th, "Black Patti" debuted at the Apollo Theater.\(^{51}\) The next week, Sissieretta Jones was also listed among Berlin's stage attractions, billed at the Wintergarten Theater as “Die Wirkliche Black Patti.”\(^{52}\) Soon, readers of the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* and Berlin audiences in general would be challenged to choose between the Wintergarten's “Die Wirkliche Black Patti” and the Apollo's “Die Echte Black Patti” [Figure 15].\(^{53}\) No, Jones was not performing in two places at once. Kira Thurman explains that another black soprano named Jenny Bishop arrived in February 1895 to perform, and she also went by the name the "black Patti" (Thurman 66). In fact, even though she never reached similar heights of fame, Jane Bishop's tour of Europe as "Black Patti" outlasted Sissieretta Jones's. Jeffrey Green, Rainer E. Lotz and associates also note that a "Jane Bishop was billed a "Black Patti" in Denmark in 1896" and that "in January 1897 she and George Jackson were associated with a Cabin show at the Centralhalle in Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany" (Lotz *Black Europe* 29).

We know little about Bishop professionally or personally. Jane Bishop's previous foray onto the American stage with the Union Square Panorama Company in 1892 involved the use of the moniker "the Black Jenny Lind" (Abbott 243). Bishop may have also have appeared at New York's Worth Museum with "The Colored Minstrels" in the fall of 1894 using the Jenny Lind pseudonym (Abbott 388). But her success in the United States was limited and it is not clear that

---
\(^{51}\) *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, 12 February 1895, page 20.  
\(^{52}\) *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, 20 February 1895, page 16.  
\(^{53}\) *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, 24 February 1895, page 20.
she had a strong background in the forms of art music that Jones specialized in. Nevertheless, Sissieretta Jones's brief tour opened the door for Jane Bishop's own European tour and a chance for greater fame.

In point of fact, Jane Bishop was not the first performer to be associated with the name “Black Patti”. Selika Williams and Flora Batson had both been referred to as “Black Pattis” in the white press (Daughtry 44). But the audacity of Jane Bishop’s move to claim the title herself and establish an international career is still striking. The Jane Bishop incident underscores the unruly nature of the European vaudeville circuit, where black performance acts were easily copied, repackaged, and remarketed to undiscerning audiences. On the domestic front, Jones herself would become embroiled in another naming controversy in 1895 as black newspapers criticized her for the use of the name “Queen of Song,” a moniker that had previously been bestowed on her mentor Flora Batson.54

News of the ersatz Black Patti’s upcoming performances appeared in the kind of trade German publications Jones used to publicize her own success. I encountered this fact as I made my way through the archives at the Stadtmuseum Berlin Bibliothek in search of more primary sources about Jones's trip. Der Artist reported that “a certain Black Patti, who has developed a reputation as an excellent singer, is scheduled to appear at the Apollo Theater. She supposedly surpasses all colored and non-colored (female) singers performing on vaudeville/cabaret stages by

54 In an article entitled “Madame Sissieretta Jones Borrowing a Title,” it is reported that although Jones was given the moniker “Queen of Song” by “a committee of gentleman”, with African American Sen. Blanche Kelso Bruce acting as spokesman there was to be “but one ‘Queen of Song’ in this country among Afro-American singers and that one is the polished ‘Queen of Song’ Miss Flora Batson”. The politics of naming stars moves to the forefront here. The writer claims that Sissieretta Jones’s usurpation of the title “is unfair to Miss Batson and an imposition on the public”. She also suggests that Batson has the more legitimate claim on the title because it was given to her by “the leading musical and political press of this country and the Queen of England”.
far." But imitation does not always result in flattery. Jane Bishop’s February appearance at the Apollo was potentially damaging to Jones’s reputation and career. By March, a reviewer from *Der Artist* reported that

with their March program, the *Apollo Theater* yet again hit the nail on its head. After Black Patti, who, while rather good, was neither all that black nor all that Patti, has disappeared from the repertoire, other first-rate performers have taken her place. Mariot, the irrepressible humorist who keeps coming up with new witticisms and jokes, and Minnie Cass, the petite soubrette, have stayed; Mlle. Foy, the fantasy dancer in her downright magically lit dancing performances, among which “The Silver Butterfly” and “The Mirror Dance” especially stand out, is the star of the evening. Her productions are truly unsurmountable, exceedingly graceful, and, with regards to the costumes, of rare taste.

The reviewer may well have noted that the Black Patti was also not all that *Sissieretta*. This botched opportunity was a particularly costly one for Sissieretta Jones. The Apollo Theater’s conductor that season was Paul Lincke, the legendary father of Berlin operetta. Jones’s failure to appear, or the appearance of her impostor, probably resulted in the loss of untold opportunities for collaboration and performance of the kinds of art music pieces Jones longed for in America.

---

57 From 1893 to 1897, Paul Lincke was the conductor and resident composer at the main variety theatre in Berlin, the Apollo. Afterwards, Lincke worked at the most famous European vaudeville house, the Folies Bergère in Paris. He then returned to the Apollo-Theater with new compositions to the. Lincke also founded his own successful publishing company, Apollo-Verlag. In 1908 Paul Lincke became principal conductor and composer for the Metropol Theater, whose spectacular
Questions of authenticity and veracity emerge in Sissieretta Jones’s lost *Der Artist* reviews. It appears that, just as it did in the United States, the question of being a “Patti” dogged Sissieretta Jones in Berlin. In German, the term “die Patti”, or in this case “der Vergleich mit der Patti” is used to describe divas, such as “die Dietrich,” or “die Callas,” similar to the French use of the term “la Bernhardt.” It seems that the Italian diva Adelina Patti cast a rather long shadow over Jones’s career. Jones’s reported inability to measure up to Adelina Patti in the eyes and ears of German audiences reveals racialized expectations of German audiences who had long held a fondness for *negersongs*, but were not only unaccustomed to formal black divas performing solo, but who were insensitive to their political significance in the United States. So, the *Der Artist* reviewer grudgingly admits that

> the dark star of the evening, however, is Miss Sissieretta Jones, the
> Black Patti, though that star might as well glow brightly in the realm
> of music, as Miss Jones is a very good singer, even if the comparison
> with Patti seems a bit audacious.\(^5^9\)

Thus, in the German reviews of the Wintergarten engagement published in *Der Artist*, which were not collected by Jones or circulated, we see a much more measured evaluation of her performance. In another “Letter from Berlin,” a *Der Artist* reviewer writes that “The Wintergarten, with its hit program, is sold out almost on a daily basis, serving as proof of the rare prowess of its

---

\(^5^8\) For this brilliant point, and other translation assistance, I am indebted to my friend and colleague Sabine Engwer and her partner Philippe Van Der Veken.

\(^5^9\) “Letters from Berlin”, *Der Artist*, No. 527

revues were Berlin’s biggest attraction. According to Andrew Lamb, “Orchestral items such as the ‘Glühwürmchen-Idyll’ from *Lysistrata* (1902) achieved wide international popularity, while songs such as the march from *Berliner Luft* (1904) established him as a symbol of Berlin, as Offenbach was of Paris, or Johann Strauss of Vienna” (Lamb 1).
management. There is hardly another establishment that has the same level of success as the Wintergarten,” and yet, descriptions of Sissieretta Jones’s performance take a backseat to less refined entertainments. The Wintergarten was no Carnegie Hall. For example, a reviewer from Der Artist wrote:

Mlle. Valentine Petit is the foremost attraction of the Wintergarten.

Her Serpentintanz allows for a plethora of sensational variations, as has been proven by the artist’s performances. Mlle. Eugenie Marten, a Russian-French singer, is also a brilliant appearance who receives plenty of applause, although her voice seems to lack talent.

It appears that both Jones and Bishop were featured in lineup that included exotic dancers, a fact also suppressed in African American sources. The "serpent" and "mirror" dances that threatened to eclipse both the real and fake Black Patti's reviews were certainly not standard fare in American art music venues. And yet, performing on stage in this context might have helped Jones make the transition from concert hall to variety stage in the United States.

Located in the Central Hotel on Friedrichstraße, the Wintergarten was "a landmark for everything modern, glamorous and technologically avant-garde" (Guerin 196). The Central Hotel's Wintergarten was designed by the architecture firm Hude & Hennicke, who would later go on to build the Lessing Theater in Berlin, a performance venue with a particular attention to acoustics. When the luxurious Central Hotel opened in 1880s it featured an elaborate greenhouse, or Wintergarten. The first concerts at the Central Hotel's Wintergarten were held in 1884, with acrobats, musicians, and other Variété acts making their way to the hotel's stage by 1888. Among its many features, the theatre's "Bayreuth-style orchestra circles" (Guerin 197) modeled on those at Richard Wagner's famed Beyreuth Festspielhaus, promised its guests a cutting edge listening
experience. In November 1895, months after Sissieretta Jones's engagement there had ended, the Wintergarten became the first theater to hold a public film screening. By the Weimar period, the Wintergarten contained "a 20-meter wide revolving stage, the first of its kind in the world, and an auditorium that seated some 3,000 guests." During that period, the Wintergarten Varieté theatre was only steps away from a major recruitment hub for black performing artists in Berlin, Café Central, which was affiliated with the Central Hotel (Aitken 153). The Cafe became an informal gathering spot for non-German performers of all ethnicities from all over the world (Aitken 153) even as the Wintergarten's stage gained a reputation for presenting premier international acts.

At the Wintergarten, Sissieretta Jones sang as a representative of American culture in spite of being marginalized at home. From Der Artist we learn that “German is hardly spoken at the Wintergarten, as almost all performers are English, French, Americans or Swedes.” While Jones's Berlin appearance might have been read in African American news sources as a triumph for African Americans, for German audiences her race was closely bound to her nationality. One might argue that Jones sang as an object of curiosity because America itself was exotic to German audiences.

Finally, while Sissieretta Jones’s Wintergarten performances were highly publicized in the United States, my archival research has revealed she was actually a short-lived attraction at that renowned venue. If we are to judge by the reviews in Der Artist and advertisements in the Berliner Börsen Zeitung, it appears as if Jones's engagement at the Wintergarten lasted only eight weeks, one month less than she had led folks back home to believe. By mid-April Jones had ceased to receive billing at the Wintergarten theater while more popular acts like the “5 Barrisons,” a group

---

61 “Letters from Berlin”, Der Artist, No. 527
of Swedish sisters often billed as the “Wickedest Girls in the World,” were still being heavily promoted\textsuperscript{62}.

My evaluation of Sissieretta Jones’s European tour are not limited to an acknowledgment of a lack of primary sources and faint praise in selected German press clippings. In an article entitled "About Our Performers" published in Kansas's \textit{Leavenworth Herald}, an acerbic commentator writing under the name of "Man Behind the Scenes" floats his opinions about the days' crop of black divas and Sissieretta Jones's European tour in particular, explaining that:

- to speak of her merits as a performer, it is acknowledged by capable music critics that Sissieretta Jones is far above the ordinary. Talk is that she received $1,000 for every concert she gave while in Berlin recently. I don't believe a word of it. There are a [sic] many fabulous stories about the enormous piles of money concert singers receive; these stories are lies, pure and simple. It is reasonable probably that Mrs. Jones did not receive much over $1,000 during her entire travels through Germany. (2)

As the "Man Behind the Scenes" suggests, $1,000 would have been a phenomenal sum for the day; it is a figure that translates into over $28,000 in current U.S. dollars.\textsuperscript{63} At that rate, it is a wonder that Jones ever returned to North America. But she did come home, and Jones took her paycheck to the bank by using her performance notices to improve her earning potential at home. Notices of foreign travel by prominent African American speakers and performers were widely

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Berliner Börsen Zeitung}, 12 April 1895, page 14.
\textsuperscript{63} https://futureboy.us/fsp/dollar.fsp?quantity=1000&currency=dollars&fromYear=1895
published in African American periodicals and functioned as a form of cultural capital that could be monetized. Thus, news items like "Sissieretta Jones is in Europe singing for the small sum of $1000 a week" translated into American contracts like those she held with Proctor's Pleasure Palace in New York City, where she was actually paid $1,000 per week after her return from Germany, a far cry from the $150 per week she had earned only three years earlier. Following her European tour, Jones became the highest paid female African American entertainer of her time (Lee 98).

I have been able to delve deeper than researchers like Maureen Lee into the details surrounding Sissieretta Jones's Berlin engagements through archival research, particularly at the Stadtmuseum Berlin Bibliothek. The discrepancies surrounding her trip are most significant for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the way the act of travel and ensuing international acclaim formed a rebuke to the lynching culture that had spread rapidly through the United States at the time of her journey. Jones took a calculated risk by travelling abroad and she was able to translate her international work into financial gain and domestic cultural achievement. One of the ways she was able to do this was by being selective about the kind of performance reviews she made available in the United States, or by being strategically attentive to her sound and the ways in which it circulated. In spite of the actual difficulties she faced, Jones's Berlin tour was celebrated as communal achievement and a vindication of the musical talent of African American women in the African American press. Her work on the German stage also underscores the importance of

---

64 Race Laconics; Leavenworth Herald (Leavenworth, Kansas) • 11-30-1895 • Page 2
65 In 1892 Jones signed a contract with Maj. James B. Pond, a powerful impresario whose American Leture and Musical Agency counted Charles Dickens, John Greenleaf Whittier, Mark Twain and Paul Laurence Dunbar among its clients. At a rate of $150 per week, Jones would have been earning many times more than the average American worker (Lee 39-40).
textual performance records to black female vocalists as they attempted to assert themselves in American popular culture.

“Die Wirkliche Black Patti” and the Color of Sound

The content of the German reviews Sissieretta Jones chose to share with the Cleveland Gazette reveal much about the international context in which she sought to stake her claim to divahood. They also illustrate some of the theoretical leaps Jones and her followers had to make when locating her work in an international context. German racism is a particularly dominant theme. Speaking of the nickname "Black Patti, a reviewer from the Berliner Fremdenblatt insisted that "the singer’s pleasant delicately bronzed face protests against the first part of this name, but the enthusiastic applause her singing called forth, proved the epithet to be true at least." Put more coarsely, the writer seems to argue that Sissieretta Jones was still a Patti, though the adjective "black" may have been too harsh a term. The Berliner Fremdenblatt writer assured their readers that “the admiration awakened by the singer was not wholly due to her interesting appearance and her tasteful costume, but was in great part a tribute to her really remarkable ability." In great part, but certainly not in whole part. In a similar vein, a writer from the Post explained that

Miss Sissieretta Jones, known in her American home as the Black Patti, made her debut in the Wintergarten last evening. Only half the name fits, but fortunately the better half. “Patti” we may rightly call her, although we protest against the adjective “black.” Miss Jones is a young woman of most pleasing appearance, and only her full

---

67 Ibid
lips and delicate brown tint of her complexion betray her mulatto
blood. The only thing “black” about her is her shining hair.\textsuperscript{68}

In some senses, Jones's performance of art music as a means of racial uplift might have been the blackest thing about her. Those performances locate here within a definitive genealogy of black women's performance during the nineteenth century. However, Jones's on stage refusal of racial stereotypes surrounding black womanhood distanced her from "blackness" when it came to white European viewers. Through Jones's reviews, we see the way that for white European audiences, African American women's performances of art music in Germany threatened to destabilize the connection between race and performance. Black women typically appeared on European stages in roles that reinforced notions of white supremacy and justified colonial impulses. The only way the discrepancies that performances by women like Sissieretta Jones could be reconciled by white European viewers was to deny the presence of their blackness, or to mute it. To be sure, Kira Thurman notes that "one way critics distanced singers of art music such as Sissieretta Jones from popular black entertainers was by describing these musicians as much lighter in appearance then their African counterparts in Völkerschauen and circuses" (Thurman 67).

German reviewers refused to register visual evidence of Sissieretta Jones's phenotypical blackness in spite of the fact that she was born to two African American parents. All visual materials and photographs of Jones produced during her lifetime depict her as a dark skinned woman who would have trouble passing for anything other than African American in the United States. In her German reviews, an insistence on her lightness, or a denial of her darkness, seems

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid
analogous with praising her musical talent. German reviewers simply could not say that Jones was a good singer while calling her "black." Thus, a reviewer from the Borsen-Courrier wrote that

Our trans-atlantic cousins have not exaggerated comparing their country-woman with Patti, but the adjective “black” seems to us unnecessarily impolite. Miss Jones is evidently of Negro blood, but not alone of Negro blood. She is a mulatto of bronzed complexion and pleasant expressive features, with full lips and high forehead and the bearing of a lady, even to the choice of her costume.  

Questions prompted by Chude-Sokei's work are relevant here, too. Was Jones an authentic representative of African American culture? Or did she merely ventriloquize whiteness? How was her humanity made manifest in performance?

As in the previous description, Jones's "full lips" call the reader's attention. For a readership steeped in nineteenth century racial theory, Jones's mouth signified "a rather dull gross nature, and of some indolence in the disposition" à la European phrenologists like George Burgess. And yet, astoundingly to some, she was a more than competent singer. This focus on Sissieretta Jones's ethnic background and physiognomy reveals German fascination with phrenology and eugenics. Social Darwinism had begun its cataclysmic reign on German thought by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Prior to its contributions to the deadly anti-Semitic thought that would give rise to Hitler and the holocaust, German eugenics leaders focused their studies on Africa, hence the rise of the Völkerschauen. Seeking out degrees of racial purity in Jones, her reviewers supported racial theories by eugenicists like Eugen Fischer, who believed that people of African and European descent "were fairly intelligent" and even "superior to full-blooded black Africans,

69 Ibid
but still "far inferior to Europeans in their creative abilities" (Weikart 121). People of African descent were unable to labor or create without the guidance of whites. They were machinic and yet childish in their orientation to the world. In the schema Louis Chude-Sokei’s outlines, they are reminiscent of automata. On a larger scale, such theories would be used to justify forced labor within the German colonies.\textsuperscript{70} In the German concert hall, being subhuman meant that Jones was not able to produce authentic sounds of her own, but merely parrot the sounds of more authentic and talented white women like Adelina Patti.

Still, Jones subverted these racist ideas throughout her performances. Having the bearing of a lady, in costume and comportment, differentiated Jones from the depictions of laboring black women that were popular on stage and in the surrounding culture. It certainly distinguished her from figures found in picaninny shows and human zoos. Nothing could have been further from traditional portrayal of black womanhood on the popular stage presented by impresarios like P.T. Barnum, \textit{à la} Joyce Heth. In her costume and her choice of staging, Sissieretta Jones resisted the ethnographic tendencies that characterized typical portrayals of black womanhood in the United States and on the international Vaudeville and \textit{Variété} circuit.

In spite of her publicity efforts, Jones was unable to filter out less savory aspects of her reception, including German fixations on color. For example, from the reviews published in \textit{The Cleveland Gazette}, we see that readers of the \textit{Kreuz-Zeitung} were assured that Jones was the “true Black Patti,” that “singer of repute in America,” but also that she was “a mulatto of pleasing appearance”. German reviewers were hard pressed to overlook the contradictions between what

\textsuperscript{70} For more on the relationship between race and the treatment of blacks in the United States and German colonies vis-à-vis labor theories, please see Andrew Zimmerman's discussion of economist Gustav Schmoller in \textit{Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, The German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South}, pp.109-110
they were hearing and what they were seeing when it came to Sissieretta Jones, but they were willing to credit her performance in spite of the difficulty. Sissieretta Jones's performance challenged received stereotypes about African American women performers even in transnational contexts.

Analyzing the German reviews published in the *Cleveland Gazette*, I am fascinated by the way Sissieretta Jones's voice produced discordant visual effects, troubling developing German rubrics about black humanity through performance. Black women who performed songs from the repertoires of white divas were understood as curious facsimiles of white sound. And yet, Jones's provisional acceptance by German audiences was interpreted as a true measure of her talent by her African American readers in ways that reviews by white Americans were not.

There can be little debate as to whether the German newspaper clippings Jones and her management provided to newspapers were racist: they were. But what are we to make of the fact that Jones provided these racist clippings to the *Gazette*? What sorts of nuanced differences between American and European listenership did they represent to Jones and her African American readers? Sissieretta Jones's German reviews contradict the ways she framed Europe in the press. Marta Effinger argues that Jones revealed "as much about Europe as she does about the United States, particularly how the press and audiences marked her" (Effinger-Crichlow 67). In an interview in the Toronto newspaper *The Empire* which she saved in her scrapbook, Jones claimed that

> in Europe there is no prejudice against my race. It matters not to them what is the color of an artist’s skin. If a man or woman is a greater actor, or a greater musician, or a greater singer, they will
extend a warm welcome, no matter whether he be Jew or Greek or Gentile. It is the soul they see, not the color of his skin.

Statements like these appear to have been taken at face value by her readers and critics. They matched standard tropes about travelling in Europe while black during the late nineteenth century. But given Germany's increasing investment in racial hierarchies in continental Europe and Germany’s African colonies at the time, they are striking. From Jones's perspective, what made Germans better equipped than Americans to see beyond the skin and into the soul? How can we understand the difference that race makes to transnational listeners during the late nineteenth century? How is it possible that the differences in what Germans heard and saw could be used to Sissieretta Jones's advantage?

There is a discrepant reading practice at play among the African American reading public. These records openly contradict the story Sissieretta Jones tried to tell about her European tour. One of the things we witness in Jones's descriptions of her German reviews is an early example of a kind of colorblind ideology that Jones used to bolster her personal project of racial uplift. Sissieretta Jones's insertion of these German reviews into African American newspapers shifts the conversation from a context in which race itself was blinding and threatened to blot out other senses, especially the audial, and quite literally prevented her from being heard by segments of the population. Sissieretta Jones's reviews suggest that in Berlin, a place where race was unseen, or improperly interpreted, Jones could truly be appreciated by white listeners. Thus, her voice had the power to blur the color line.

There is also a sense in which this commentary signifies on the interrelated nature of place and sound. Her reviews suggest that foreign spaces contained white audiences who were able to hear her in ways that were impossible on U.S. soil. This also means that Sissieretta Jones's German
reviews could reveal a clearer picture of what she sounded like than those reviews written by white Americans. Jones's description of her German reception signifies on stereotypes surrounding German affinities for music and acoustical knowledge and may have functioned as a coded challenge for white American listeners while vindicating African Americans. Thus, Jones leveraged Eurocentricism and racial capitalism against American whites on their own turf.

The focus on what German audience members could, or could not, see and hear also speaks directly to the problem of racial uplift that black art musicians sought to address. African American women who performed art music in the public sphere had to prove that they had talent in spite of their appearance, and that finely trained voices and black bodies could be intertwined. It is precisely that which was denied to them in the white American press. Writing about American coverage of black divas, Teresa L. Reed explains that

    like much propaganda of the period, pejorative remarks about dark skin and kinky hair were meant to diminish the black soprano's allure, her courage and talent notwithstanding. Although she could sing, white journalists cited the soprano's "African" traits as proof that she could only approximate, but never quite attain, the goddesslike stature of true "diva".

Thus, the question of what it means to be a true Patti, or to have one's voice recognized became a weighty issue again, in spite of Jones's repeated claim that the nickname annoyed her (Nash 57). Jones's performance of racial uplift certainly made her appear less "black" in the eyes of German audiences. As such, the transnational performances of art music by black divas that were so central to the project of racial uplift, disrupted that which they sought to represent -- a more expansive understanding of black life, art, creativity and talent.
Further complicating the matter of her appearance on stage, and the ways she might or might not conform to white European audience conceptions of race, is the rumor in the American press that Jones may have attempted to lighten her skin. Jones's husband David was rumored to have taken her to Europe in 1890 "to obtain a 'make-up treatment' that would lighten her complexion and narrow her 'Negroid features" (Effinger-Crichlow 64). Some have suggested that by “lightening up” his wife, David hoped she would gain unlimited acceptance in public" (Effinger-Crichlow 64). When an interviewer from The San Francisco Call suggested that Jones try to pass for white on stage in order to perform in the operatic roles she aspired to,

> The 'Black Patti' shrank back with a deprecating gesture. "Try to hide my race and deny my own people? Oh, I would never do that," she exclaimed; and with a ring almost of exultation in her softly modulated voice she added: I am proud of belonging to them and would not hide what I am even for an evening.

In this anecdote we see the way Jones almost literally sings out her racial pride and resists the temptation to pass on stage, as other classically trained artists were rumored to have done.71

Had they been true, such rumored efforts at passing, including David's plan, may not have translated well in the European venues she sought to gain a foothold in. Although white Europeans audiences were fixated on color, their expectations around the "right" skin tone for African American performers were different from preferences displayed by white American consumers of

---

71 For more detailed descriptions of African American women passing on the white stage, see Brenda Dixon Gottschild's discussion of African American dancer Marion Cuyjet's experience with a white ballet company in the 1930s in Joan Myers Brown & the Audacious Hope of the Black Ballerina (2012), pp. 4.
popular culture. As illustrated by the Bricktop anecdote in the previous chapter, by the beginning of the Jazz Age, Germans often associated darker skin with more authentic black performance.

Beneath the Wintergarten’s glittering glass ceiling, Sissieretta Jones sang popular American songs in addition to the art music songs that were part of her typical repertoire. Some of those popular songs were part of Adelina Patti’s repertoire, openly inviting comparison between herself and the Italian diva. Adelina Patti performed those numbers in Berlin with the Philharmonie only a few weeks before Sissieretta Jones made her debut there. Within the reviews Sissieretta Jones circulated we glimpse how she not only mimicked Adelina Patti, but made her repertoire sonically black. As I have suggested, being in Berlin prompted Jones to experiment with sound in new ways. In contemporary terms, we might think of Jones’s treatment of Patti’s set like a remix. Popular songs the two divas shared included "Maggie, the Cows are in the Clover", "Comin' Thro' The Rye", "Last Rose of Summer" and "Home Sweet Home" (Daughtry 199). We know that at the very least, from this shared list, Jones performed "Last Rose of Summer" for her Berlin audiences. In their depiction of a simple, pastoral life, the songs in the divas shared repertoire are markedly different from the Negro Spirituals that German audiences would have become accustomed to in concert settings that featured black performers, as with the Fisk Jubilee Singers. These popular songs and ballads are the inverse of Negro Spirituals in their of their depiction of an uncomplicated and unforced relationship to the land, rural life, and labor. Performing these songs, Jones actively resisted staged representations of black labor in favor of black leisure and pastoral innocence. These popular songs are also free of the overtly religious overtones that characterize the Negro Spiritual tradition.

---

Notably absent from Jones's reviews are any mention of her performance of Stephen Foster's minstrel song "Swanee River," which she regularly sang for American audiences. What's more, popular ragtime coon songs were not part of Jones's repertoire and that was probably a disappointment for German listeners, too. It is a glaring omission, given that, even more than the Negro Spiritual, which fueled the wild success of choral groups like the Fisk Jubilee Singers, ragtime coon songs had begun to be recognized across the globe as truly American music (Abbott 3).

Finally, it is quite possible that Jones also pushed the boundaries of black performance through her choice of vocal technique. In Berlin, Jones was praised for her use of bel canto. Writing about her own work reconstructing Samuel Coleridge Taylor's Setting of Paul L. Dunbar's "A Corn Song," researcher Tsitsi Jaji explains how certain styles of vocal inflection can call forth black diasporic meaning. Of her own project, Jaji writes that

my decision to sing the entire song in bel canto style (and primarily in head rather than chest register) prioritizes Coleridge-Taylor's Afro-British interpretive reading and this emphasizes the gap of the Black Atlantic, whereas if I had chosen to employ such US black vocal techniques as tone bending, greater chest resonance, and a triplet-based rhythmic feel in the section representing slaves in song, the poem's internal tensions might sound more starkly. (202)

Because of the aforementioned lack of audio recordings or detailed accounts of her artistic process, we have a limited understanding of the choices Jones made on stage. But in keeping with Jaji's contemporary description of her own artistic choices in her performance of black diasporic
art music from the nineteenth century, I wonder if what are witnessing in descriptions of Sissieretta Jones's voice from her Berlin engagement is Jones's attempt to demonstrate the ways in which race influenced her musical style? For instance, a reporter for the *Borsen-Courrier* wrote that Jones possessed "that which no schooling can give, musical understanding and warm feeling."\(^{73}\) Could the natural musical affinity the writer describes express more than just his understanding of black music? Was it a performance of black musical style? Color and vocal range are so closely intertwined in these reviews it is hard to imagine otherwise. For example, Wilhelm Tappert of *Das Kleine Journal* explained that

> It is not only the dusky complexion that is real about her, the clear full-toned voice, a soprano with a range of two octaves, has the true ring. The colored singer’s voice has been well-endowed by nature, it possesses agreeable tone, color and flexibility.\(^{74}\)

Within this discourse, one must note the repeated insistence that in Jones's voice there was a tonality that goes beyond that which is human and sensate, or which could be educated. I suggest that, in their insistence that Jones was unconscious of the effects of her voice and artistic choices, analogies can be made between Jones's vocal presentation and the work of the phonograph. For example, *Norddeutsche Allegmeine Zeitung* readers learned that

> in the easy, natural manner of her singing [,] there is no seeking for effect, *only the endeavor to render music and text their true effect.*

---

\(^{73}\) Reprinted and translated in "Mme. Sissieretta Jones", The Indianapolis Freeman. 4 May 1895. Page 1.

\(^{74}\) Ibid
Her voice has power and fire, and the florid passages remind one of the rapid flow of a mountain brook.

For Jones to seek effect, or to seem to seek effect, would be for her to break yet another illusion accompanying the performance of race on the German stage. In denying Sissieretta Jones's artistic agency and reducing her performance to an almost ethnographic demonstration of innate musical talent, these reviewers aligned Jones's performance with a history of unthinking black labor represented by foremothers like Joyce Heth, but also like the unthinking hordes of machinic black workers who populated the global south.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have argued that Sissieretta Jones's use of German performance reviews reveals articulations of her voice, or evidence of the ways Jones positions herself as a global subject whose textual self-construction reveals a resistance to American racism. Within her personal scrapbook in particular, special care is taken to collect reviews that mention Sissieretta Jones’s voice. An addendum written after her death, kept in the Howard archives, is entitled, "Some Quotes From Her Personal Scrap Book About Her Voice" and contains the following:

A Phenominal [sic] Attraction...the upper notes of her voice are clear and bell-like, reminding one of Parepa Rosa and her low notes are rich and sensuous with a tropical contralto quality...In fact, the compass and quality of her registers surpass the usual limitations and seem to combine the height and depth of both soprano and contralto.”

75 From the Sissieretta Jones Scrapbook of Press Clippings.
The reviews she kept do not prevaricate on the nature of her vocal talent: “if Madame Jones is not the equal of Patti, she at least can come nearer than anything the American public has heard…Her notes are as clear as a mocking bird and her enunciation, perfect” (7). They also emphasize the importance of her achievement on an international level.

An article from *The Louisville Commercial* entitled “Not Pleased: The Black Patti Thinks Her People Not Well Treated,” contains a rare interview with the diva. Jones expressed displeasure about the segregation of her audiences into white and colored seats in spite of the fact that there were plenty of vacant seats in the white section, saying quite simply “I think people of my race ought not to be shut out” in that way. Jones also complained about the difficulty she and her accompanist, Mrs. Alberta Wilson, also African American, had finding lodging in Cincinnati: “We had so much trouble at the hotels in Cincinnati…We had to search and search before we…could find a nice place”. “Not Pleased” ends with a gloss on Jones’s plan to pursue music studies in England, “where people of her race are not only received, but when attractive by reason of endowment or acquirement in art, letters or science, courted”.

My analysis relies on an interdisciplinary approach to textual evidence of sound and an understanding of the complexities of these reviews within their historical context. The multidimensional nature of sound, and its ability to be read across genres, mediums and spaces is key here. In the words of Roshanak Kheshti, I work from the understanding that "sound form is a hermeneutical tool; a wavy and reverberant materiality, it reflects, is productive of, and also engenders through resonance" (Kheshti 111). Thus, I have argued that Europe was a place where the mechanical tendencies of black women’s sound were made manifest and manipulated on stage and in print. In spite of being on the margins of mainstream audio production, black women performers used the foreign stage to perfect their sound and make sound a visible aspect of their
stage craft. In doing so, they produced new ways of interpreting the world and making it bend to their will. In Berlin, Germany, and the rest of Central Europe, black women made sound visible through image and text, contributing to narratives of black culture and diaspora.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE COLORED MAN IS NO SLACKER: RACE, GENDER AND NATION IN WWI

PROPAGANDA

When Uncle Joe Steps Into France

When Uncle Joe steps into France,
with his Ragtime band from Dixie Land
See the soldiers swaying,
When Uncle Joe starts playing
A raggy-ditty,
so sweet and pretty,
when they play the Memphis blues
They will use a lot of shoes,
And fill them full of Darky gin
They’ll rag their way right to Berlin

Chorus:
Here they come, here they come,
don’t they look grand.
Hear that drum, hear that drum,
That’s the Regiment band, Oh!
Can’t they play, can’t they play,
that sure is sweet.
Can’t keep still, ‘gainst your will
You have to move your feet
They’re leaving Dixie-land today,
They’re going to take part in the fray,

Watch them step, watch them step
Each man in line
Full of pep, full of pep
See their faces shine, Oh!
Everyone has a gun,
and they can shoot
And you’ll find
Each one has a razor in his boot
Those sons of Ham are feeling fit
They’re going to cut up quite a bit

-- Lyrics by Bernie Grossman, 1918

Marching in Step: Visualizing Performances of Black Masculinity and Militarism

Throughout this dissertation I have argued that the city of Berlin became an important location for black performance in the late nineteenth century. I have demonstrated how the presence of black performers in Berlin allowed the city to distinguish itself as modern metropolis.
We have also seen how black performers who aligned themselves with Berlin found it easier to position themselves as modern cosmopolitan subjects in the United States. In this discussion of mutually constitutive performances of citizenship, identity and nationalism I have often focused on traditional modes of performance found on the popular stage. But some of the most important acts in this process of self-definition occurred off-stage in unconventional theatre spaces. Here I mean the theatre of war. The First World War concludes this study because it was a moment in which many of the performative acts I have charted among African American entertainers on the popular stage reached their peak. The war also fractured the social and political bases upon which Berlin’s popular stage thrived. The idea of Berlin as a fashionable and progressive space faltered in both the mainstream and African American press. The war provided African Americans at large with an opportunity to define themselves as American citizens unified against a German enemy. Thus, in this chapter I argue that the idea of Germany as a national enemy that developed around the First World War allowed African Americans to practice embodied citizenship through public displays of militarism. The reproduction and circulation of visual texts that codified performances of African American citizenship in WWI exemplify the complex relationship between African Americans and Germany that I have mapped throughout this project.

The theater of war has many stages, each space produced by performances of aggression, masculinity and citizenship. Performances of citizenship and gender were always implicated in black military participation during the Great War, but those performances were not always directed by black subjects. Thus I begin with a foray into the history of black military bands in World War I and the life of Lt. James Reese Europe, whose regimental band is satirized in Bernie Grossman’s
“When Uncle Joe Steps Into France” (1918). During WWI military bands populated by African American soldiers were a smash hit on the European continent, satisfying the bottomless European appetite for black performance and providing distraction from the horrors of the war to end all wars. James Reese Europe’s band was the most famous of these musical groups. They were the first to step into France, as it were. Lt. Europe’s 369th Infantry Regiment band docked in France on January 1, 1918, famously playing a jazz rendition of “La Marsellaise” upon their arrival. Europe’s ragtime band was “the official representative of the U.S. Army and, by extension, the American nation” (Williams 166). The men of the 369th regimental band played “concerts large and small, from venues in the Parisian capital to nondescript French villages, and before audiences that ranged from the highest French dignitaries to elderly French women.” For French audiences, African American bands “demonstrated the profound democratic possibilities of jazz to challenge racial, linguistic and national boundaries” (Williams 166). Throughout the early twentieth century, the American government strategically deployed black musicians in order to circulate fictions of American modernity (Von Eschen 2004). Black bands embodied American propaganda, sending forth a stylized vision of a modern and harmonious United States.

At home, the American press and popular culture found numerous ways to skewer the military efforts of African Americans, efforts that were crucial to the strength of the nation’s war effort and (African) American self-definition. “When Uncle Joe Steps Into France” clearly satirizes the phenomenon of Negro regiments, but more importantly, it exemplifies the appeal of

---

76 James Reese Europe was born in Mobile, Alabama in 1880. His father was an Episcopal minster and postal worker. His mother was a piano teacher. He was a classically trained violinist. Known for his ability to book “society gigs,” among his other accomplishments, Eubie Blake credited him with coining the term “gig” to describe a musical engagement (Nelson 10).

77 Recently, Adam McKible has analyzed the stereotyped depiction of black military veterans in Hugh Wiley’s Wildcat stories, which were published in the Saturday Evening Post from 1919-1934.
such satire to white American audiences (and thus their anxieties around Black accomplishment and recognition). In the lyrics to “Uncle Joe,” the threat of Negro regiments to the American status quo is nullified through black soldiers own incompetency, as demonstrated by the black soldiers likeness to minstrel show darkies. With their “Darky gin”, guns and razors, they are ready to fight, each other, if not the enemy. Richard Slotkin has noted that razors were “the weapon of choice classically attributed to Blacks in Minstrel shows” (150) and commonly associated with Black soldiers in the mainstream press. In a brief New York Times story entitled “American Colored Troops Excel at Killing Germans,” the writer asserts that Black servicemen “prefer to close with the bayonet, because of their ‘partiality for the razor.’” Furthermore, “in an editorial cartoon a Black soldier holding a razor ‘high jumps’ into a trench and asks a terrified Hun, “Hair cut or shave [?]” (Slotkin 151). Little close reading is needed to grasp the ways black military men in “When Uncle Joe Steps Into France” were figured as black minstrels. The seeming ridiculousness of black pretensions to public recognition, civic engagement and travel are made obvious in the lyrics, as is the black troops utter lack of sophistication, and, quite frankly, plain idiocy. Uncle Joe’s band is hardly courageous enough to fight yard birds, much less the Germans. Missing from the lyrics are the particular ethnic lilt that would have placed the song securely within blackface minstrelsy territory, although it can be found in audio recordings. “Uncle Joe” became one of Eddie Cantor’s hits. To a great many white Americans, black soldiers, like those in Lt. Europe’s regimental band, whose embodied public performances of citizenship represented a commitment to the movement for civil rights, were the source of anxious laughter.

78 See Collins and Harlan’s vocal performance of “When Uncle Joe Steps Into France,” by Billy Winkle, recorded June 12, 1918, Victor 18492 www.loc.gov/jukebox(recordings/detail/id/4854/
In reality, Lt. Europe was widely known as a gifted musician, producer and community activist. In that capacity, he had long been accustomed to the convergence of military display and black performance. Before the outbreak of WWI, Europe produced and directed all-Black musical comedies, one of the first of which was *The Shoo-Fly Regiment* (1906-1907), “which capitalized on the popularity of the Spanish-American War” (Slotkin 45). Europe frequently performed at white high society functions with Irene and Vernon Castle and even composed the “Castle House Rag”. For James Reese Europe, the relationship between black art and activism was foundational to social progress. In 1908 he founded “the Frogs”, union of black professionals including actors, artists, writers and scientists. In 1912 he wrote a march for the famed 369\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Regiment, “The Strength of a Nation,” before the black regiment had even fully materialized. Europe’s performance and organizational background resulted in an unusual ability to coordinate and produce entertainment that catered to the tastes of white elites while agitating for social change. Europe’s depth and range of experience exemplified the ways in which turn-of-the-century popular entertainment that traded on worn stereotypes and catered to racist audiences could also present opportunities for black subversion and political agency.

As the head of a regimental band and an officer, Lt. Europe repeatedly turned public space, city streets in particular, into stages for embodied performances of Black masculinity and citizenship. Claiming city streets as spaces for black performance entailed reconfiguring symbolic blackness by making strategic artistic and directorial choices, and using material that was typically beyond the control of African Americans. The subsequent changes to public space/ the urban stage were not entirely radical. These public spaces remained gendered, masculine spaces, even though conceptions of American masculinity were broadened through black participation. Performances produced by Europe unfolded in this manner:
Marchers assembled outside regimental headquarters, a place often referred to simply as “The Corner”. They were men of color, some still teenagers, others in their forties, waiting beneath the theatre’s broad marquee or standing out in front in the shade of an elm tree dubbed the “Tree of Hope” and thought to be lucky. Some of the marchers wore suits, while others patched together makeshift uniforms. Some were used to wearing the uniforms of doormen, porters, waiters, redcaps, theater ushers, and elevator operators. The Lafayette Theater served as their armory... (Nelson 2)

The American streets that the 369th Infantry, or “Harlem Hellfighters,” paraded on were spaces upon which nascent rights and privileges could be modeled and performed for both black and white audiences. In a practical sense, the military parades that occurred in Harlem after the onset of WWI were an important means of military recruitment for the 369th Infantry Regiment. Black military parades were an alternative form of propaganda and promoted projects not fully bound to the desires of the nation state. Through an apparent compliance with white hegemony, black Americans made a thinly veiled called for civic plurality.

The shows did not always hit the intended mark. Directors like James Reese Europe were ever vigilant of the ways their coordinated displays of black masculinity could be absorbed into standard and ubiquitous minstrel narratives. Seemingly innocuous details could derail an entire show. For example, in a parade in which “some of the men carried broomsticks instead of rifles. The men with broomsticks were told to march in the middle of the formation, where their lack of proper equipment would be less conspicuous (Nelson 2). This positioning not only camouflaged the lack of adequate funding for military equipment, it literally shielded marchers from association
with professional black minstrels. Broomsticks had long been a common prop in minstrel shows and were used as drum substitutes in Southern ring shouts (Rosenbaum 37) and were thus antithetical to modern performances of black respectability. And yet, such positioning could not always subvert dominant perceptions. Black bodies claiming public space were always conspicuous and hesitantly received. Take the case of the 369th Regiment. It was founded in 1913 and was originally known at the Old Fifteenth, Harlem’s branch of the Negro National Guard. Describing an early 369th Regiment parade at a Harlem rally, historian Richard Slotkin writes:

> At the head of the parade on a big white horse rode Bert Williams, the Negro vaudeville comedian, smiling and waving. Whites who watched the show snickered at the spectacle of “darkies playing soldiers.” The papers compared the Old Fifteenth to the “Mulligan Guards,” the ragtag Irish unit from Edward Harrigan’s long-running Broadway comedy. It was as if the military pretensions of the race had been brought out to be publicly mocked. It did not ease the pain that Williams was qualified as any man to ride that horse: he was a commissioned captain in the California National Guard. (Slotkin 47)

One reason that these kinds of responses from white audiences eventually became delegitimized was the fluidity and movement, the quite literal circulation, of black bodies abroad. The circulation of embodied black masculinity, the way in which that masculinity accrued cultural capital, and an increasingly firm sense of the way African American performance defined America, led to a more enthusiastic public reception at the end of the war. The homecoming celebration of the “Harlem Hellfighters” was “a spectacle like nothing New York had ever witnessed” because,
among other things, “it represented an impressive display of the potential of civic interracial democracy on the grand New York stage”. The scene prompted Arthur Little to suggest that “upon the 17th of February, 1919, New York City knew no color line” (Williams 217). Writer James Wilson Johnson wondered

how many people who are opposed to giving the Negro his full citizenship rights could watch the Fifteenth on its march up the Avenue and not feel either shame or alarms? And we wonder how many who are not opposed to the Negro receiving his full rights could watch these men and not feel determined to aid them in their endeavor to obtain these rights? (qtd. in Williams 218)

Military parades were one way of staging black citizenship and endeavouring to obtain civil rights. World War I visual propaganda was another means by which African Americans figured and performed their own tenuous citizenship against the backdrop of Europe. World War I was figured as battle between civilized Western nations and savage Germans, although this configuration became more or less apparent at times. The Germans were a shadow enemy. Engagement with the German enemy, who was occasionally figured as black, and understood to be a potential ally of disenfranchised African Americans, provided a means for African Americans to shape their own representations of citizenship at home and abroad. The relationship between African Americans and Germany was a political battleground during the World War I era. As has been amply documented, it represented an implicit and explicit, multi-pronged threat to the state (Kornweibel 1976, 1998, 2002). African American publications across the political spectrum reconsidered the affinity between Africans and Germany. During this period black self-
representation frequently occurred in military contexts, forcing us to what it means for marginalized subjects to partake in the aestheticization of war. In this project I ask how, with its attendant links to white hegemony, wartime propaganda distinguishes African American visual culture and performance? My work focuses on visual texts and the self-performances contained therein, including spectatorship and the manipulation of visual tropes, but I am deeply interested in the kinds of physical and ideological spaces these performances opened up for Black artists and citizens. Bound up in this examination of the uses of propaganda is an examination of the limits of hegemonic visual tactics.

The collision of racial and cultural stereotypes in the U.S. government’s ham-fisted warmongering resulted in a flourishing field of contradictions. African Americans organized themselves around and against the anti-Germanism of the Great War at the very same time race (and racism) inflected American war propaganda. Embedded in this project is an examination of various works of World War I era propaganda and ephemera, and an analysis of the ways in which these materials were deployed and a critique of modern visual culture as it relates to the performance of race and gender. I apply the term visual culture, as Nicholas Mirzoeff does, to mean the visualization of history and to highlight those moments where the visual is contested, debated and transformed as a constantly changing place of social interaction and definition in terms of class, gender, sexual and racialized identities” (Mirzoeff 2012: 6). Thus, I focus not only on the visual object itself, but the impulse to “visualize existence” (Mirzoeff 2012: 6), the reception of and responses to such visualizations and the way the ability to assemble visualization manifests the authority of the visualizers (Mirzoeff 2011).

This application of the term is necessarily bound to the field of performance studies and practices of embodiment. Both the objects of visual culture and performance that I identify here
involve calculated acts of display. By studying these objects alongside each other I also hope to highlight the ways black performance was informed by visual culture and vice versa. The affinities between these two methodologies have come under scrutiny before. Performance Studies scholar Shannon Jackson explains that

the term ‘visuality’ has a kind of parallel…in the term ‘performativity’. Both are theoretical concepts that percolate throughout the humanities and that are derived often from philosophical explorations into subjectivity. They both sound like they belong to particular sides of the cutting-edge disciplinary equation (visuality to visual culture, performativity to performance studies), but are in fact, terms with which some but not all visual culture and performance studies scholars identify. (168)

The cross-fertilization of visual and performative tropes I examine here took place in contested and often forgotten spaces. The limits and uses of pro-Germanism as a productive tool for black liberation during the World War I era can be read through in the pages of African American periodicals, postcards and posters. The Messenger, a radical African American journal published by two ardent leftists, Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph, regularly took up the cause of defending German culture on U.S. soil.79 On the opposite end of the spectrum, journals

79 Leroy Hopkins provides a brief gloss on an incident involving the Messenger, explaining that in 1918 the journal published an editorial with the provocative title “Pro-Germanism Among Negroes”. The editorial described the happenings of an NAACP convention in Cleveland on August 4th in which Justin Carter of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, had publicly criticized racist outrages committed against black American soldiers in France by their white comrades. Such criticisms were widespread among black veterans and formed the bedrock of the early Civil Rights movement. But Carter’s comments at the convention provoked a Department of
like W.E.B. DuBois’s *Crisis* encouraged African American participation in the war effort as a means of proving to mainstream (white) America that African Americans were worthy of enfranchisement. A consideration of the means by which American Anti-German propaganda took up tropes of black savagery that circulated during Reconstruction and proliferated from the Red Decade onward is illuminating here: officially sanctioned U.S. government depictions of Germans leaned heavily upon the racial stereotypes ascribed to black men as a way of galvanizing support for the war effort amongst a multi-ethnic public. African Americans were cognizant of the difficulties of situating themselves within this graphic milieu and cultural debate. World War I propaganda posters by African American artists and intended for African American audiences emphasized African American leadership and participation in the war effort. In African American Intelligence officer who was monitoring the proceedings to state that African-Americans had become the dupes of German propaganda. The Messenger’s editorial was construed as being seditious, the publication was denied second-class mailing privileges and its publishers were sentenced from one to two-and-one-half years in prison (Hopkins “Spiritual Fatherland” 34). In my own research I have discovered a *Messenger* editorial entitled In a *Messenger* article entitled “Germany and the Schools,” in the Messenger’s editors eviscerate xenophobic educators opposed to German content in public school curriculum because the United States was at war with Germany. In a biting satirical rant, they proclaim:

It makes no difference how many sciences are extensively developed by German authors. Down with Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Tannhäuser. They were not musicians, sure enough. They belonged to the tom-tom age of music! Away with Erlich! That Erlich-Harta’s “606” — the only specific for syphilis — is a fraud of medical quacks. No more study of Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative or his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Those books are not real philosophy. Alexander Humboldt’s *Cosmos* was a poor production, as was Haeckel’s “Riddle of the Universe.” Weisman’s work on heredity were elusive attempts to build up fine German soldiers to murder the world. He was no biologist. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were conniving little rascals who foresaw how to sow the seeds of sedition in the Socialists, and the Senator La Follette, which balks the United States in making the world safe for Democracy. As a psychologist, why Munsterberg was a joke! He must have bribed Harvard University for his appointment. And Goethe never could write worth a tinker. (7)
print culture, depictions of African American men and women were often mapped onto mainstream American gender ideals. Wartime images of African American women emphasized their femininity and competency on the home front while African American men were placed in direct opposition to German troops and shown as fully embodying American nationalism.

As such I investigate the power dynamics at play in the reception of visual and performance material as well as its production. Locating the act of looking in a framework of postcolonial power relations, Nicholas Mirzoeff has written extensively about the way the act of looking and freedom exist in a historical network of racial domination and exploitation. The right to look is “the claim to a right to the real” (2011: 26), regardless of political motivation, the right look is never entirely innocent. In Mirzoeff’s “decolonial history of visuality” (2011: 8), the “plantation complex”, “imperialist complex” and “military industrial complex” are delineated and identified as pivotal locations in the formation of visual culture. Mirzoeff’s study establishes the centrality of visuality to the modern era, beginning as far back as antiquity and culminating in Thomas Carlyle’s association of visual blackness with anarchy and disorder in the 19th century. The ensuing modern period can be characterized by a shift in imperial visions and visuality that began during the Great War and fed into fascism. Mirzoeff argues that

the high imperial worldview collapsed in the First World War. Far from being abandoned, it was intensified by bringing colonial techniques to bear on the metropole and the aestheticization of war, a merger of formerly distinct operations of visuality under the pressure of intensification” (2011: 17)

It should come as no surprise then that the military industrial complex that enveloped African Americans was heavily dependent on the visual tropes of the “plantation complex” and other forms
of imperialism. But it is the unique possibilities for cultural subversion and discrepant visual practices which erupted under the command of African American creators that piques my interest here. Black military heroism was frequently covered in newsreels, newspapers, documentaries and race films during the Great War. Drawing on existing forms of propaganda, African American visual texts from the modern era exist in a complex relationship with mainstream regimes of white hegemonic visual culture. But while self-fashioning and resisting many aspects of racial hegemony, African American visual texts often bolstered hegemonic regimes and did the active work of new imperialism.

Marching in step, then, becomes a metaphor for embodied participation in dominant hegemonic culture. As practiced by men like James Reese Europe, black militarism was a significant performative gesture. Regimentation, standardization, and mechanization are all rungs on a disciplinary ladder that African Americans believed would lead to freedom. The links between mechanization and hegemony fan out across African American military and cultural endeavors in the modern era. The military discipline so closely aligned with white hegemonic power finds its double in the means of artistic and literary production in this period. The mechanisms of the printing press and the inner workings of the camera allowed standardized images to be produced and reproduced at stunning rates and with previously unparalleled sophistication and uniformity.

The influence of Frantz Fanon’s “crushing objecthood” continues to reverberate throughout the field of black visual studies and provides a crucial link between the practices of visuality and performance and the physical and mechanical process of visualization. Fanon’s anecdote about being interpellated into a black subject position is most often revisited as a foundational moment in the theorization of black visuality. Recently, Darby English, Nicole Fleetwood and Michelle Ann Stephens have called for renewed attention the centrality of Fanon’s
work in analyses of contemporary black art and visual culture. For these scholars, the moment at which Fanon is hailed as a “Negro!” (111) is one in which he begins to conceptualize what it means to be recognized as black in the world and in which black visuality marks its primacy in public space. And yet, most critical descriptions of Fanon’s significance rest upon the spoken word whereas the very structure of Fanon’s treatise rests upon the basic act of visualization, the raw processes of seeing, to racial embodiment.

If we trace Mirzoeff and Mitchell’s timeline of visual culture we can recognize the ways the mechanical processes of visual production give rise to hegemony and contribute to the totalizing gaze. Here, too, Fanon’s work is critical to unlocking the puzzle. At the beginning of “The Fact of Blackness” the Fanon outlines processes of black self-consciousness that are closely aligned to the visual realm, particularly photography. Black self-realization develops the way a photograph would, in the darkroom as a result of physical and chemical processes. Fanon writes:

Sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseechingly to others. Their attention was a liberation, running over my body suddenly abraded into nonbeing, endowing me once more with an agility that I had thought lost, and by taking me out of the world, restoring me to it. But just as I reached the other side, I stumbled, and the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in a sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye (109).

Through abrasion, friction, movement, we see the crushing mechanization of self-becoming. Fanon, the black subject, becomes a material object via the workings of the white gaze almost in the way a Polaroid picture would. The self, the object that is at once unknown, is given form, rearranged and reformed through the movement of the white gaze. And yet, as the self is likened
to a photograph, it becomes a thing whose meaning is open to multiple interpretations and beyond the control of its subject, a thing whose potential for reproduction and recirculation are limitless, and a contradiction emerges. While black countervisuality is predicated on anarchy, photography and visual production hold mass disciplinary functions.

Postcards, posters and periodicals produced by and representative of black subjects typically denied freedom of mobility and the luxury of unimpressed travel form one of the main building blocks of this dissertation. It is of no small importance that the images I analyze travelled quite literally, crisscrossing back and forth across the United States and the Atlantic, like the black variety artists in previous chapters. The blackness that circulates through visual culture is frequently a source of disruption and repetition. It is the thing itself and the thing unknowable. Alessandra Raengo argues that the black body is “the ground for an enduring ontology of the visual – one that is modeled after that particular body” and that it acts “both as an agent of corporealization and an agent of abstraction” (Raengo 4). Excessive in its meaning, visual blackness nevertheless manages to fix itself in the public gaze, perhaps through its primacy of place in the Western imagination. Nicole Fleetwood explains that

visual representations of blacks are meant to substitute for the real experiences of black subjects. The visual manifestation of blackness through technological apparatus or through a material experience of locating blackness in public space equates with an ontological account of black subjects. Visuality, and vision to an extent, in relationship to race becomes a thing-in-itself. (Fleetwood 13)

I am especially interested in the ways those subjects themselves leveraged self-depictions in the creation of national identity. Like Nicole Fleetwood, I am concerned with “how black subjectivity
itself is constituted through visual discourse and performed through visual technologies” (12). What is at stake here is a focus on the production of self-representations by African Americans and the ways in which they figure themselves amidst an international conflict and transnational intellectual histories.

In this chapter I analyze mainstream American propaganda which sought to code the German enemy as black in order to rally white American support for the Great War. I use these propagandistic works as the starting point for my analysis of African American propaganda during the period. I argue that African American propaganda also sought to distinguish Germans and German culture from American culture. But black propagandists did this work in order to bolster their own sense of Americanness. Such work also contradicted mainstream American discourses around the role of blacks in the military and their suitability for full participation in civic life. Thus, the question of pro- or anti-Germanism informs the work of artists like E.G. Renesch, Jennie Louise Toussaint, the Four Black Diamonds and black soldiers who depicted African Americans in uniform and mediated some of these tensions through performances of citizenship and belonging.

**Blackening the Germans: Destroy This Mad Brute and Mainstream Propaganda**

The propaganda poster *Destroy This Mad Brute* [Figure 16] is a vortex in which racial stereotypes of African Americans and Germans converge, leaving both firmly outside of the realm of Americanness. *Destroy This Mad Brute* says everything and nothing about the way Americans have illustrated black masculinity and which means everything and nothing about the response of black Americans to anti-Germanism and xenophobia at the dawn of century. Everything, because black masculinity and violence depicted in the poster were yoked together forever in the American
cultural imagination after the Civil War. Nothing, because the multiple ways this sexuality and violence have been deployed are wantonly and willingly forgotten, even though they continue to circulate so very widely. Everything, because the specter of black sexual violence deployed in the work could be so easily called upon at a moment’s notice to elicit a bloody response. Nothing, because the distinct threat of Black violence and rape as depicted in *Destroy This Mad Brute* are such common signifiers. Nothing, because the distinct threat that it must have signified in the black press barely signifies now. To be everything and nothing also speaks to the problems of race and American citizenship at the heart of the poster and World War I propaganda efforts.

The most widely known work of WWI propaganda, *Destroy This Mad Brute* was designed in 1917 by Harry Ryle (H.R.) Hopps for a propaganda campaign sponsored by nine businesses including at least two German American owned lithograph companies. The poster was created only a few months after the U.S. entered World War I. Among other things, *Destroy This Mad Brute*’s sponsors may have bottom lined its publication in an effort to prove their American loyalties to the general public, a symptom of the accelerated attempts at assimilation, and the deflection of xenophobia, made by German Americans in the wake of World War I hysteria (Rippley 218). The publishers' ethnicity put them in a unique position in the field of racialized propaganda; printing was a field in which German immigrants had distinguished themselves in the United States by the time of the poster’s publication (Rippley 218). Printing was a field in which German immigrants could help their countrymen gain a foothold in America. For example, the Schmidt Lithograph Company was founded by German American immigrant Max Schmidt in 1873. Louis Traung was a former Schmidt employee. Traung left Schmidt and eventually opened his own highly successful printing business, the Traung Label and Lithograph Co., introducing
innovative techniques to the printing process.\footnote{\textquoteleft{Herman Diedrichs, a longtime employee later recalled that “Louis Traung was the first one to install a four-color press. He had Harris make the first four-color press that was ever built” (Teiser 42). The technique was innovative because “nobody thought you could print four colors at one time. They thought the colors would be too wet to print on top of one another. So, it proved a success” (Teiser 43).}} The interrelated histories of the Schmidt and Traung companies illustrate a typical route of mobility within the German community during this period and shows the strength of communal connections among European immigrant groups.

The Schmidt Lithograph Co., Traung Label and Lithograph Co. and their collaborators did not publish \textit{Destroy This Mad Brute} under the direct auspices of the Division of Pictorial Publicity (DPP), an important division of George Creel’s Committee on Public Information (CPI) which had been created to “ensure the quality, form and content of the propaganda posters” (Knutson 214). And yet, \textit{Destroy This Mad Brute} was not unlike other unsanctioned CPI and DPP posters in its negative depiction of German culture and the German nation as a whole, although it lies at the extreme end of the spectrum. The U.S. government was quite careful in its efforts not to alienate white war supporters. While “Germany” was figured as an outside threat to American life and values in anti-German propaganda, German Americans made up the largest population of foreign-born Americans until even after the end of the First World War (Rippl 222). Recognizing the scope of the German American population, the federal government sought to make a distinction between atrocities committed by the Kaiser and the German military and the relatively blameless German American citizenry in officially sanctioned propaganda.

Artist H.R. Hopps’s disregard for these conventions was typical of unsanctioned U.S. army recruitment posters. Anne Classen Knutson posits that WWI army recruitment posters “were generally more aggressive in tone than the navy’s and more frequently used non-DPP sanctioned artists to do their poster work” (Knutson 200). But \textit{Destroy This Mad Brute} was spectacular in its
own right. Perhaps because of its unorthodox take on outreach, or his understanding of populist sentiment, Hopps’s work “had a more lasting impact than many of the federally sanctioned posters” (Knutson 198). The poster’s hyperbolic tone is possibly an example of its sponsors need to overcompensate in the face of mounting Anti-German sentiment in the United States. Perhaps in its utility as a form of cultural assimilation, the production of *Destroy This Mad Brute* can be likened to blackface performances by European American immigrants.

Harry Ryle Hopps was actually a native Californian. He worked for the United Glass Art Company of San Francisco in 1918 and was likely employed in San Francisco at the time *Destroy This Mad Brute* was published. Although he is listed as a painter and craftsman in public records, little information is available about Hopps’s formal artistic training and education. Hopps’s almost certain lack of formal artistic training or relationship with any major American art academy meant that he was probably not a member of the DPP (Knutson 199), whose ranks were culled from the prestigious New York Society of Illustrators and whose members included Charles Dana Gibson, N.C. Wyeth, Joseph Pennell, Montgomery Flagg and Norman Rockwell. Thus, Hopps was also not formally affiliated with the CPI. However, the working class Hopps did come from a family of artisans and likely developed sensitivity to the elements of design and popular culture at an early age. H.R. Hopps’s father was George Hopps, a designer of stage sets. Anne Knutson surmises that the younger Hopps, exposure to the “exaggerated visual rhetoric of stage sets may have influenced the character of his ape poster” (Knutson 195). Of particular importance to my study is the way the “visual rhetoric” of race derived from the popular stage is mediated through H.R. Hopps’s propaganda.

The cross-pollination of racial signifiers illustrated in *Destroy This Mad Brute* demonstrates profound imbrications between performance and visual culture. The racialized
constellation of cultural images that Hopps (and likeminded propagandists) drew on in his depiction of the German ape relied heavily on tropes common to blackface performance and performances of white American citizenship. For the artist and his intended audience, the poster’s subject, the “Rape of Belgium,” may have instinctively called to mind what had by that time become a somewhat standard signifier of wartime chaos on U.S., unbridled threat of rape embodied in the form of free black men in post-Reconstruction America. As in the blackface performances that potentially graced the stages of Hopps’s youth, visual displays of black masculinity were frequently used to concretize white identity in American popular culture. This node provided a point of entry for European Americans with tenuous claims to Americanness to assert their difference from the enemy through visual culture. Representing Germans as nightmarish black figures and doubling down on associations between Black masculinity and rape allowed the German Americans and working class white Americans of the Schmidt Lithograph Co., Traung Label and Lithograph Co., and their associates, to affirm their own loyalty to the U.S. state.

Destroy This Mad Brute had a reach that extended well beyond its intended aim. In World War II, Destroy This Mad Brute served as inspiration for Nazi propagandists in Germany (Paret 24). Years later, it would serve as a model for King Kong and Fay Wray as well as Annie Liebowitz’s controversial photograph of LeBron James and Gisele Bündchen [Figure 17]. In 1918, although responses to the war effort varied within the community, African American intellectuals, writers and artists who saw Destroy This Mad Brute would certainly have understood that this ostensibly anti-German work of propaganda was not meant to appeal to African American viewers. With its overt gestures towards the rhetoric of lynching propaganda, Destroy This Mad Brute harkened back to post-Reconstruction efforts to demonize black male sexuality and rallying cries
for anti-black violence, thereby bolstering critiques of the war that laced African American publications.

War crimes committed by German soldiers against innocent civilians as they invaded Western Europe made international headlines and were publicized in a way that was reminiscent of reports of rape in the South during Reconstruction, especially because of their focus on the defilement of white womanhood and the ensuing threat posed to law, order and high culture. In both contexts we see the way that race, gender, and sexuality are used to construct national identity and mobilize public affect. During WWI, reports of “German atrocities” were legitimated through *The Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* (1915), otherwise known as *Bryce Report*, a study chaired by British academic Viscount James Bryce. Although few of the reported crimes in the *Bryce Report* were verified and almost all have since been discredited, the report successfully galvanized pro-War and anti-German sentiment on a number of fronts. Rape was a recurring theme in the both volumes of the report, which catalogued accounts of terror at the hands of German soldiers and identified those offenses and claims most likely to be true. While the threat of violence towards German Americans was by no means comparable to that faced by Africans in the period, Germans in America did become the target of lynch mobs. The most famous case of this kind of lynching is that of German-born American citizen Robert Prager, who was murdered in Collinsville, Illinois, in April 1918 because of rabid anti-German and anti-Socialist sentiment (Luebke 3).

*Destroy This Mad Brute* was a direct visual response to Germany’s “Rape of Belgium,” or the strategic invasion of Belgium by the German military. Eyewitness accounts from Belgian refugees comprised some of the most damning testimony in the Bryce Report. H.R. Hopps left few things to chance in this visual catalog of race and nationalism. The words “Destroy This Mad
Brute” are writ large in orange capital letters. Beneath them stands a hulking black ape, both hands bloody. In one arm the ape holds a blonde damsel, hair streaming, breasts exposed, blue dress blowing in the wind. In the other hand the ape wields a bloody club emblazoned with the word *Kultur*. The bloody end of the club is bumpy and uneven, like the stump of a severed limb. The ape’s wiry blonde mustache curves upwards in a U-shape. The peak of his cap, with militarism printed boldly, is the same color as the letters and its tip connects the word “Militarism” to “Madness”. In the background, across a body of eerily green water evoking the Atlantic, Europe lies in ruins, the charred buildings, an approximation of the sacked Belgian town of Leuven. The animal has planted his feet firmly on American soil; he stands on the word America. The ape’s eyes are wide and large. He appears mid-scream, insatiable, on a rampage. His open mouth bares gigantic teeth. The threat of German invasion to American citizens is made clear. U.S. Military effort is not only about Europe, it is about protecting American soil and American values, everything the militaristic ape is wont to destroy.

The ape was, and still is, an easy shorthand for anti-Black racism. Hopps likely took his cue for the stylization of the ape from Edgar Rice Burrough’s Tarzan novels; “both wartime Tarzan novels and the posters were working out the same dialectic of German/ape, vulnerable white woman, and strong white man/Tarzan” (Knutson 204). Anne Knutson also points out that “Hopps’s black German ape carrying the lily-white skinned, fair haired woman has a close similarity to a 1912 magazine illustration of Jane’s first abduction in the serial novel Tarzan of the Apes” (Knutson 206). Burrougths described the apes that Tarzan encountered throughout the novels as “representatives of an earlier stage of man’s development,” and “fierce hairy progenitors of primitive man” (Knutson 204). The black ape offered white American viewers a means to reposition black subjects within a white supremacist colonial framework. It almost goes without
saying that there are numerous 19th and early 20th century American treatises comparing “the body types of ‘negroes’ to chimps or orangutans” (Knutson 205). These illustrations bolstered white national identity in a number of ways during the Great War: “the gorilla and hunting trope, cleverly used by the propaganda artists, functioned to reassert American identity and masculinity — two issues central to war” (Knutson 205). The motif of the Black man as ape appears in post-Civil War American novels and early American film. In Thomas Dixon’s novel The Clansman (1905), ex-slave Gus is described as ape-like during the scene in which he rapes young Marion. Depicted on the big screen by D.W. Griffith in Birth of a Nation (1915), the scene incited both riot and protest. Griffith went on to revise that scene for Hearts of the World (1918), a World War I propaganda film in which German soldiers are also depicted as animalistic sexually violent predators.

We must also note that Germans were occasionally depicted as dark skinned, if not plain black, in WWI propaganda. The precise meaning of the blacking-up of Germans in the visual imaginary during the war still eludes many critics, perhaps because it also relies on gradations of whiteness. These gradations were meant to distinguish citizens of German from other “Nordic races”. Even within the relatively newly formed state of Germany, some Germans were whiter than others. In his WWI era work novelist Ford Maddox Ford “differentiates between south Germans whom he regards as ‘ordinary human beings,’ and Prussians who are monomaniacal and materialistic” (Kingsbury 92). Matthew Pratt Guterl explains that during the Great War the “Hun” was often imagined as a distinct race “with dangerously primitive qualities” (8). Within this context, Guterl argues that blackness was a “precise synonym not for “the Negro” but for sexual predation and brutality” (8). And yet, I submit that for American viewers, it would have been impossible to separate blackness from stereotypical conceptions of “the Negro” and that depictions
of black male sexuality were naturally bound up with depictions of sexuality violence and brutality in American popular culture by this time.

The ape holding a club inscribed with the word *Kultur*, demonstrates what happens when culture and education fall into the wrong hands. *Kultur* indicated German civilization and was a focal point of the German imperial regime. The ape’s gesture does not only signify the supposed opposition of German high culture to civilization. Through its association with violence and brutality the bloody club called into question the values of a liberal educational system with a history of providing access to higher education for elite African Americans. Long before Germany’s imperial ambitions came under scrutiny, German culture and civilization was revered in the United States and throughout Europe. As we have seen, to some Americans, German *Kultur* appeared to be free of much of the racism that infused American high culture. German universities had long welcomed black students studying for degrees, dating back as far as the early 18th century when Anton Wilhelm Amo earned a Ph.D. at the University of Halle. As we have already seen, by the end of the nineteenth century W.E.B. DuBois, Mary Church Terrell and Will Marion Cook had all studied in Germany. Alain Locke would follow in DuBois’s footsteps in 1910 by studying at the University of Berlin. Furthermore, as part of Germany’s imperial project, African professors were brought into German universities to teach German officers the language of the countries they would help colonize. These intellectual and cultural exchanges with Africans and African Americans (the results of which contributed directly to Germany’s cultural and intellectual accomplishments, and economic prosperity), while not indicative of a lack of racism, revealed an understanding of the possibilities for cultural cross-fertilization beyond the color line. These moments also made German *Kultur* vulnerable to charges of brutality and degradation.
The Colored Man is No Slacker: Depicting African Americans in WWI Propaganda

Although World War I officially began on July 28th, 1914, the majority of the propaganda I analyze in this section was not published until 1918, well after the war had started. Significant works of American propaganda did not emerge until that time because the United States only entered the war on December 7th, 1917. Furthermore, Jennifer Keene explains that America was at war for nearly a year before the CPI began focusing on ways to mobilize support within an increasingly demoralized black community, shaken by governmental decisions to place the vast majority of black soldiers in noncombatant positions, reports of widespread mistreatment of black soldiers within the armed forces, and a violent race riot in East St. Louis. (Keene 211)

The backdrop against which African Americans were asked to affirm their loyalty depended a great deal on the demonization of the Germans and required antipathy towards German culture and people on the part of African Americans. Official U.S. government efforts to reach the African American community included the deployment of “Four-Minute Men,” speakers who gave short talks to black audiences on the government war effort between film reels and officially sanctioned posters that encouraged African Americans to buy war bonds and thrift stamps. While the sale of thrift and war stamps provided the U.S. government with much needed funds, indeed over a billion dollars were raised through their sales, the black laborers behind the funds were discounted and disposable. Tepid outreach efforts figured African American involvement in the war as an ancillary concern to national security and failed to address pressing issues within the African American community and skepticism towards black involvement in the war effort. While “both the CPI and the Food Administration depended on cooperation from the black press, black businesses, and
black fraternal and religious organizations to convey the message of wartime sacrifice to the African American community” (Keene 215), such sacrifice can also be understood as another means by which African Americans were exploited by the state without any hope for enfranchisement. This reliance on the economic excess of black labor as an integral component of national building efforts is reminiscent of exploitative uses of black labor and an ambivalence towards black bodies during the antebellum period.

It has been estimated that over 200,000 African Americans served in WWI. Some scholars place the number even higher, at around 370,000 (Hayes 3). Overall, African Americans enlisted in higher numbers than their percentage of the population, but illustrations and acknowledgements of their service in mainstream media outlets was rare, although the topic was exhaustively covered in the African American press. In contrast to DTMB and other official posters meant to appeal to a mainstream American public, there were a number of unofficial posters designed specifically for African American viewers. African American journals like The Crisis published articles and advertisements in support of the war effort. African American soldiers also commissioned photo postcards of themselves in posing in their military uniforms. By necessity, these postcards circulated both nationally and internationally. Like mainstream propagandistic work, these forms of visual propaganda rallied support for the domestic war effort and increasing enlistment of black troops. This propaganda sought to contextualize African American military participation in a larger framework in which black military efforts reflected the rights of African Americans for Civil Rights protections and freedoms. Black claims to advancements in civil rights through civic and military participation were figured through depictions of African American masculinity and the African American domestic sphere in ways that hewed closely to hegemonic ideals. And yet, the
conservative aims of African American war propaganda, the ways mainstream images were recycled and redeployed occasionally contained the seeds of subversion.

Jennifer D. Keene asserts that “rather than simply establishing two parallel propaganda campaigns, over the course of the war the government and the African American community used visual imagery to engage in an ongoing conversation over the ultimate significance of valorous wartime service” (Keene 208). Koritha Mitchell has written about the ways in which the lynching plays that were so much a product of this time were foundational to African American drama as a whole and to community conversations about citizenship and racial violence. Examining some of the tropes which Keene and Mitchell identify, I suggest that for African American viewers, propaganda posters acted as a uniquely modern form of self-affirmation, self-actualization and covert protest. Depictions of black military service were significant because they allowed African Americans to position themselves amidst the growing divide between American culture and European intellectual and cultural traditions, much like mainstream America. Popular narratives regarding the domestic safety and comfort vs. anarchic violence from abroad did not always attain for African American viewers. In black WWI propaganda, black loyalty to the state was set in relief against the backdrop of white German threat to American freedom. I suggest that these depictions of black militarism troubled larger depictions of white nationalism and contributed to national conversations about race and citizenship for African Americans.

WWI propagandist E.G. Renesch is an elusive figure, but his work is a striking counterpoint to Destroy This Mad Brute. Four posters published in Chicago by E.G. Renesch in 1918, The Colored Man Is No Slacker [Figure 18], True Blue [Figure 19], and Emancipation Proclamation [Figure 20], all depict complex iconographic configurations of nation, race and gender that are unique among Great War visual efforts in their focus on African Americans and
their placement of African American war efforts into a larger narrative of freedom and belonging. The posters were made in two styles, both photographs and paintings, each depicting scenes on the battlefield, on the home front, the living room, and in the military base. They all depict African American military participation as an aspirational and powerful element in the positive trajectory of black life in America.

In spite of the significance of this artistic work, biographical information about Renesch is scarce. If census records are to be believed, it is most likely that E.G. Renesch was one Edward George Renesch, born in Cincinnati, Ohio on July 19th, 1879 to Clement Renesch and Barbara Weber, French and German immigrants, respectively.81 In 1910, Renesch occupied an office in the Eureka Building, the “finest office building on the West Side,” which was “air power furnished for artists”. His occupation was listed as secretary in the city directory.82 Married to Ella Renesch, by 1920 a 39-year-old Edward George Renesch lived in the Woodlawn, an area just south of the University of Chicago, then a predominately European immigrant neighborhood. A self-employed portraitist, Edward Renesch is described as having not attended school. In 1920, Edward and Ella Renesch were the parents of two children, Mary and Helen. That is all. Thus, we may never know what prompted Edward Renesch, a white American artist with German roots, to get into the business of printing African American propaganda posters, works that were at once capable of being interpreted as seditious and easily incorporated into military training manuals. The extent of Renesch’s personal involvement in the design of each poster is also unclear. As a self-trained artist

and self-employed small business owner, it is highly possible to imagine that an ambitious Renesch would have designed the work produced by his company as a direct response to the market demands of the time and perhaps direct outreach from the CPI. A more farfetched theory might locate an unnamed African American artist in the midst of Renesch’s printing shop, a gifted artist and apprentice and with her ear to the ground and a sensitivity to the graphic needs and wants of the black community in Chicago and nationwide. This unknown African American artist would be attentive to the needs of African American viewers seeking to participate in the war effort and establish their Americanness.

My interest in the unnamed and presently unknowable black artist behind Renesch’s Black wartime propaganda brings me back to the contingency of black life in theories of black visual culture. The aestheticization of war by Black subjects who bring Black subjects to bear on the formation of the nation state is necessary and necessarily troubling. While Black labor and manpower has always been indispensable to the Western Imperial projects and endeavors, it has also always been subjugated and funneled towards projects that benefit the state. In this context composing black work that directs the white gaze is audacious. While such visual work might maintain a nation state, it is not the nation state that (a white) one would necessarily have hoped for. Black art already represents a loss of control of the means of production. Black self-realization through art is thoroughly antithetical to national projects, even as they appear to bolster such projects. Black wartime propaganda is a bait and switch. It allowed black subjects to create the self, to fix that self into the fabric of the hostile nation, but creation of the visual self was never the sole object of propaganda. Black propaganda troubles the black subject through compromise, forcing its submission to the mechanisms of white hegemony.
At first glance, *The Colored Man is No Slacker* (1918) presents a mundane, if not heavy-handed view of African American military participation and the social ambition that undergirded such hopes. The poster presents viewers with a condensation of various fantasies of heteronormativity, American nationalism, class, race and gender. An African American soldier in khakis embraces his lover on a rose clustered walkway while his comrades march behind him, waving an obligatory American flag. Blue clematis flowers make their way up a set of white columns to their left. The woman he is with wears a neat blue dress with an oversized lace-trimmed collar, and black shoes with white spats. Her hair is neatly pinned back. They hold hands in a chaste and friendly manner. They are quietly resigned to their future, this parting. There is a sense in which, even though they are outside, they in the midst of a familiar landscape, on the threshold of domesticity. The soldier and his comrades are willing to sacrifice this idealized American domestic front for military encounters on foreign soil that are not visualized and perhaps impossible to imagine at this stage of war.

The similarities between *The Colored Man* and the cover of the sheet music of Jimmie Marten and Mitch LeBlanc’s popular wartime song “Nigger War Bride Blues” (1917) are striking [Figure 21].83 But while the sheet music traded in black figures with over determined, grotesquely caricatured features reminiscent of blackface minstrels, *The Colored Man is No Slacker* relied on depictions of Black strength and respectability. The quiet resignation of the soldier and his fine-featured lover reflects a maturity that was typically denied to black soldiers and their families in popular depictions of partings for military service. The tender stoicism that anchors the work hints at “The Strenuous Life” ideal that would prove the fitness of African Americans for full civic

83 As a result of protest by the NAACP, the name of the song was later changed to War Bride Blues. The Negro in 1918-1919: An Annual Encyclopedia of the Negro. 105
participation and civil rights to the popular press and political class.\textsuperscript{84} Their love is righteous. During the war, a cropped version of \textit{The Colored Man is No Slacker} was also used in military campaign against venereal disease to represent “a clean-living soldier returning home to his sweetheart disease free, a man of whom his sweetheart, comrades and nation can be proud” (Keene 228). All in all, the poster stood as a rebuttal to mainstream depictions of black life and a testament to the masculine potential of black soldiers.

\textit{The Colored Man is No Slacker} is a precursor to the scene depicted in \textit{True Blue} (1919). The beautifully appointed home depicted in this Renesch poster is aspirational and speaks to broad ideals of American consumerism and family values. A pantheon of American saints is contained within this idealized living space. Red white and blue dominate the interior. A young woman dressed in red, presumably a mother, stands in a well-decorated living room front of a blazing fireplace holding a young child in her arms. By her side stands a slightly older child, a little girl holding a black baby doll. Both children are dressed in white and gesture towards the mantelpiece. Behind them sits an older boy, too young to go to war, but dressed in khakis all the same. Centered on the wall above the mantelpiece is the portrait of a black soldier. Above him, two crisscrossed American flags. A Service flag, or Blue Star flag, hangs in the window, its one blue star no doubt representing the black man in the portrait. To the right on the wall is an even larger portrait of Abraham Lincoln. Resting on the mantelpiece are portraits of Washington and Woodrow Wilson. A cat sleeps in front of the fire. Roses abound on the wallpaper and in the vase on the windowsill.

\textsuperscript{84} Central to Theodore Roosevelt’s Progressive Nationalism was the concept of Strenuous Life, also the title of a landmark Roosevelt speech. According to Roosevelt, Strenuous Life was characterized by “the virility and warrior spirit” demonstrated by white Americans “who had conquered the wilderness and built the great corporations”. This willingness and ability to toil under difficult circumstances was directly related to American success and the maintenance of this spirit was crucial to America’s future prosperity. Roosevelt argued that a “virilized leadership class” who would “regenerate the manhood of the nation” was needed (Slotkin 20).
A very nice rug lies beneath their feet. They appear safe, happy, warm and loyal. An excess of patriotic symbolism that threatens to exceed the borders of the poster. In this anachronistically Norman Rockwellesque African American home the residents seem free from want and fear. The poster’s inspiration could have been taken directly from the pages of *Half-Century Magazine*: “Thousands of mothers and wives and sweethearts carry heavy, saddened hearts because of their absence from the fireside, but these men are for work and for war; these men are the saviors of democracy” (qtd. in Brown 6).

This domestic contentment, and accompanying adoration of white male patriarchal authority, and loving devotion to the nation-state is exactly that which was denied to African Americans in the white media. This rather tame scene of heteropatriarchal devotion raised alarm bells. A Florida postal worker took the trouble of sending it to the postmaster general and asked whether he considered it to be an example of seditious material (and thus banned under the Espionage Act of 1917). Jennifer Keen explains that the female postal worker “lumped *True Blue* together with articles in the *Favorite Magazine* titled ‘‘The White Problem,’ A Discussion of the White Man as a Problem,’ and ‘How Colored Girls are Ruined in Mississippi’” (Keene 224). Thus, “the pictured family’s material success and the implication that wartime sacrifice entitled them to inclusion in the democratic vision championed by Washington, Lincoln and Wilson served for this white woman as further evidence of insolence” (Keene 225). Furthermore, the poster contradicts other propagandistic works that encouraged African Americans to save, rather than spend, their surplus earnings, thus allaying “white concerns that a frenzy of war-fueled consumption by African Americans would threaten the racial status quo” (Keene 225). In the United States, regulating black consumption was an important part of maintaining white hegemonic power. Koritha Mitchell confirms that “Southern employers who were used to paying blacks low wages expected that
‘insolence to the whites…will probably be worse when the troops come home, flushed with the praises that they have received for their work in France” (Mitchell 98).

Published after the war had officially ended, E.G. Renesch’s abundant *Emancipation Proclamation, September 22, 1862* (1919) is bursting with sense of hopefulness for the future, racial reconciliation and American progress. In the center of the poster is an oval portrait of Abraham Lincoln presenting a page of the Emancipation Proclamation to the viewer. It reads “All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, A. Lincoln.” Lincoln’s portrait is decorated with six American flags, a stars and stripes shield and topped with a large, wide winged eagle. On his immediate right and left are two smaller portraits, Lt. Col. Franklin Dennison and Lt. Col Otis B. Duncan of Chicago’s 370th Infantry Regiment. “As the Eighth Illinois, its traditions reached back to the Civil War and were marked by the militant assertion of community and race pride: when asked ‘Where are the white Officers?’… ‘There’s not one in the Regiment’ was our proud reply” (Slotkin 256). To the left of Col. Dennison there is a scroll exclaiming “Look forward! There is enough room under the eagle’s wing’s for great achievements by both.” The exhortation surely refers to the dismantling of the 370th Infantry Regiment’s contingent of black officers. For a time, the 370th was the only regiment commanded by a Black man and one of the two regiments with Black field officers. Col. Dennison was a source of pride for Chicago’s black community (Williams 129). When Col. Dennison was relieved of his command in 1918 his removal was understood to be part of “a general policy of dismissing black field officers regardless of merit” (Slotkin 256).

To the right of Lt. Col. Duncan there is another scroll reminding viewers that “‘we have cleared the forests, reclaimed the land and are building cities, railroads and great institutions.’
Booker T. Washington.” Immediately above the quote we see a desk strewn with books and measuring tools, a testament to Washington’s educational philosophy. In the left upper hand corner there is an oval portrait of Paul Laurence Dunbar. In the right, there is an oval portrait of Frederick Douglass. Beneath Dunbar, a blonde woman in a pink robe and cap stands with her hands draped over a black boy and a white boy. They appear to be standing in a rose garden. The children look off into the distance, into the future really, and gesture towards it. The woman’s eyes are cast down. She is maternal, wise, and patient. Beneath Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington stands against a rural backdrop. A black farmer walks behind three mules plowing his field. Even further in the background, a steamboat and train move away from an industrial port, heavy with goods, one might suppose. This panorama of American wilderness and industry is reminiscent of the America Theodore Roosevelt imagined.

But the poster is not only a visual manifestation of post-Civil war hopes for racial equality and equal opportunity for all Americans. *Emancipation Proclamation, September 22, 1862* also articulates a wish for the future in the body of the New Negro. Beneath Lt. Col Otis B. Duncan there is a pair of smartly dressed young African Americans: he is holding a cane, she is dressed in red and white and carrying a book. He gestures towards another black couple in a sporty red car speaking to a well-dressed man on the street. That cluster has come to a stop alongside the curb of a bright red brick building, most likely a school, with children playing in front. A little further down the lane, a church appears in the background. Beneath Lt. Col. Franklin Dennison there is a scene of battle. Black soldiers in blue helmets waving the American flag charge towards a set of white soldiers flying, of course, the German flag. Three biplanes fly overheard and fire. Beneath their feet, lie the words “the bravest of the brave in defense of his country”.
Doing Our Bit: African American Women Visualize the Great War

One of the main premises of this chapter is that African American mass visual culture emerged from a system intimately connected with racial capitalism, even though white supremacist ideology was antithetical to its aims. Within this context, maintenance and adherence to strict gender binaries, and the attendant divisions of labor, public and private spheres, ensured that African American propaganda during the World War I era not only reinforced the primacy of patriarchal familial structures for the successful New Negro, it circumscribed the kinds of political participation and artistic output available to Black women. In other words, “the World War had the effect of masculinizing gender relations within the African American middle class, reframing discussions from black participation to black male participation” (Brown 6). For the most part, African American women did not travel overseas during the war. Addie Hunton and Kathryn Johnson, authors of *Two Colored Women with the American Expeditionary Forces* (1920) were among only a handful of African American women sent to France to support African American soldiers. Working class Black women earned increased wages in Northern cities due to the wartime manufacturing boom, but the monetary gains to the Black community that work facilitated were rarely recognized in either the black or white press. African American women participated in the war effort on the domestic front through the Club movement in organizations like the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), which encouraged middle class Black women to support the war through housekeeping, home economics, and encouraging their sons to enlist. This kind of boosterism was easily reconciled with the project of racial uplift. And yet, even on the home front and within the confines of racial uplift politics, there was room for disruption and protest within the visual realm.
A brief digression towards the work of Jennie Louise Toussaint Welcome is instructive here. Born on January 10, 1885, nee Van Der Zee, Jane “Jennie” Louise was a musician, painter and photographer as well as the elder sister of famed Harlem Renaissance photographer James Van Der Zee. Jennie and James Van Der Zee were born to John and Elizabeth VanDerZee, both of whom worked as servants to President Ulysses S. Grant in New York City. John and Elizabeth raised their children in relative economic comfort in Lenox, Massachusetts, a predominately white summer enclave for wealthy Northerners. Jennie attended Lennox High School and took private art and music lessons in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Marrying Ernest Toussaint Welcome, Jennie Louise painted under the name Madame Toussaint and promoted herself as “The Foremost Female Artist of Her Race” in a 1910 edition of The Crisis. The Van Der Zees were a tight knit clan and James Van Der Zee worked for his sister and brother-in-law for a brief period of time before WWI.

Jennie Louise and Ernest Toussaint Welcome produced the propaganda film Doing Their Bit in 1916 via their own production company, the Toussaint Motion Picture Exchange. They promoted Doing Their Bit (1916) as “twelve sterling chapters of two full reels each”. The film depicted “the military and economic role played by all races in the War of Nations both ‘Over Here’ and ‘Over There’” (qtd. in Klotman 17). The couple also ran a business called the Toussaint Pictorial Company that published “One Million Patriotic Postcards of Race Soldiers” and reproductions of a series of paintings of “black war heroes” by Jennie Louise. During that time, the Toussaint Pictorial Company published a commemorative book, A Pictorial History of the Negro in the Great War, which included photographs primarily from governmental sources, but also a few uncredited photos and one by “Toussaint Studios,” which may have been taken by James VanDerZee (Olin 104). Jennie Louise Toussaint Welcome’s Charge of the Colored Division: Somewhere in France (1918) depicts an African American soldier thrusting his bayonet into the
chest of a German soldier. It was accepted for use by the War Savings Stamp Committee (Olin 104) as an official poster “in the summer of 1918 after the third Liberty Loan drive ended. In fall, the image was used again…in support of the largest and most successful [war bond] campaign” (“We Are” 3). The painting was also adapted for a war bonds poster for the Commonwealth Liberty Loan Committee of Boston entitled We Are Doing Our Bit (1918) an obvious play on the Welcome’s earlier cinematic effort. African American newspapers reported Toussaint’s success in the war bond poster competition and many African Americans displayed the lithograph in their homes.

Toussaint’s painting is now held at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. It has darkened considerably over time and many of the original details are indiscernible. Although Jennie Louise Toussaint used photographs to model each of the soldier’s faces and each soldier was identified by name these individual features are no longer detectable. The historical inaccuracies of the details that remain reveal much about the Toussaint’s positioning of African American heroism against a European backdrop. Toussaint’s choice of uniform is revealing; Americans and Germans are outfitted in a way that foregrounded their nationality but was actually rather anachronistic. Noting Toussaint’s unfamiliarity with late WWI combat techniques, the Massachusetts Historical Society reminds us that “by 1918 German soldiers had long since abandoned their spiked leather helmets in favor of steel ones, and no flags, even tattered ones, flew over late-war battlefields” (“We Are” 2). However, the “soldier’s canteen cover bears the number ‘15’”, “a reference to one of the most famous American units in World War I, the segregated 369th U.S. Infantry Regiment. The original designation of the 369th referred to themselves as “Rattlers” (the symbol of the “old 15th” was a rattlesnake), but they were to become legendary as “Harlem’s Hellfighters (“We Are” 2). I suggest that this elision of historical distinctions between the colored
divisions, Americans and Germans, in which each side was depicted in their most basic representational state, was perhaps necessary for the totalizing view of war needed to compel American nationalism.

Toussaint’s stylistic choices are a point of cognitive friction, or dissonance, within an ostensibly nationalistic work. The uniforms she painted evoke a sense of the Black internationalism that developed on the war front and that her sartorial choices reveal ambivalence about Black belonging on the battlefield. More specifically, the uniform of the main soldier in the foreground:

is so rudimentary that it is not clear whether he is meant to be wearing the crested “Adrian” helmet of the French army…or the flat-topped helmet more typically worn by British and most American soldiers. During the First World War, the institutional racism faced by African American soldiers was so great that the re-designated 15th and three other segregated United States regiments…served with French rather than American forces and used their adopted army’s standard military equipment. Even their shoulder patches emblematically featured a blue Adrian helmet against a black background. (“We Are” 2)

One might read this sartorial choice as accidental, but it is likely that Toussaint would have been exposed to reports from black WWI veterans published in African American newspapers, and thus familiar with not only the institutional racism experienced by black soldiers on the field, but the ways in which they sought to resist racist treatment and policy.
Brent Edward Hayes invites us to remain attuned to the encounters between African American soldiers and other soldiers of color serving France during the war and the way these encounters provided the fertile soil for Black internationalism, the New Negro Movement and the Harlem Renaissance. Indeed,

during the war, the French conscripted nearly 620,000 soldiers from the colonies, including approximately 250,000 from Senegal and the Sudan and 30,000 from the French Caribbean. France simultaneously imported a labor force of nearly 300,000, both from elsewhere in Europe and from the colonies. (Hayes 3)

In light of this fact, I argue that Toussaint’s work undermines the project of American Imperialism through its covert depiction of black solidarity. Toussaint’s alignment of African American soldiers with French African soldiers who fought in Germany is even more explosive because of the threat that German’s felt French Africans posed to their own national identity and racial purity. Toussaint’s uniform also suggests internationalization of the black working class within the context of war. Toussaint’s poster is not simply a call to arms for African Americans but an acknowledgement of international racial solidarity.

In pandering to the needs of the state and the demands of the public, Toussaint also carved a space for political subversion. Her work signified. She was a hustler in the Harlem sense of the word, the possessor of a style of toughness and pragmatism that must have be necessary to sustain the multiple projects Toussaint and her husband undertook. Scholars including Ula Yvette Taylor and Nikki Brown have written about Black women’s political activism during the Great War and the ways their contributions, although significant, failed to shift traditional gender roles or promote gender equality. Artist Jennie Toussaint is included among the Black clubwomen and activists who
“pursued political goals without challenging the authority of black men in the political realm,” and whose “war, work and community service, war work and community services were generously applauded” (Brown 8). But Toussaint is by no means a genteel figure in the realm of Black propaganda. In its potential to circulate widely, gaining mainstream white praise and recognition while containing the seeds of subversion, Toussaint’s art stands as a prime example of the potential for black propaganda to trouble dominant narratives of nation building and Black patriotism all the while appearing to march in step.

Black Diamonds in the Rough: Black Masculinity and Military Self-Representation

From the WWI era postcards of African American soldiers contained in the Military Photograph collection at NYPL Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, one gains a compressed view of what it might have meant for black soldiers to have seen themselves in uniform, fighting against the Germans, and to put those images into international circulation. These postcards display African American men who may not have served in armed combat modeling military uniforms and performing a sort of reserved masculinity that ran counter to dominant American narratives. Like Toussaint’s *Charge of the Colored Division: Somewhere in France*, these self-commissioned postcards of African American soldiers created a counternarrative of black masculinity that challenged configurations of blackness in popular culture and official military channels while conforming to militarized discipline and suggesting obeisance. The majority of the postcards in the Schomburg archive appear to have been made in France, a nation framed in ideological opposition to Germany during the war. Several of the portraits were taken at Auguste Charrouin’s studio in Thiers, Tours. Founded in 1906, the studio was run by Charrouin
and his brother Pierre. The Charrouins had several clients from nearby military barracks. African American soldiers in Thiers also had their photos taken at the nearby studios of Auguste Boidron, a former partner of the Charrouin brothers. During the war, the city of Tours was home to several thousand American military men who set up a base in the city, including a military post office.

One of the most frequently photographed soldiers in the collection is Pvt. Ephraim Fields from Columbus, South Carolina. In one of his most striking portraits [Figure 22], Fields stands facing the viewer, his right arm at his side, his left holding up an open book. The portrait is striking not only because of the conventional attractiveness of the subject, but because in his uniform and with the open book as a prop, Fields presents himself as a dignified and learned subject. He looks like a gentleman and a scholar. The open book in black soldiers’ hands is a recurring motif in the Schomburg’s collection. In another photo, Fields and his colleagues stand on a muddy road with a bicycle, caught in a moment of pensive leisure [Figure 23]. In yet another postcard, Fields poses with a man identified as Edd Hartley. Hartley’s rank is unknown, but on the back of the postcard we learn that he is an employee of Platts Dry Store. Like Fields, Hartley is in uniform. Both Hartley and Fields served in the 307th Labor Battalion and probably saw little of the type of combat expected of most military heroes. But their respective portraits, always taken in military uniform, crystalized their own deep sense of self-worth and beauty in a way that was absent in mainstream American coverage of the war. WWI era photos in the Military Photograph collection exemplify the way WWI era self-portraits commissioned by African American soldiers contradicted popular American depictions of black masculinity.

---

Wartime photo postcards were also used to counter narratives about black women and black sexuality. Several of the images produced in Tours were actually spliced photographs of soldiers and their “sweethearts” [Figures 24 and 25]. Clearly, these postcards upheld hegemonic, heteropatriarchal values. And yet, by promoting a vision of African Americans as participants in this hegemonic value system, they became a part of the visual rhetoric of racial uplift. In *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, Charles H. Williams describes the preponderance of female sex workers around domestic U.S. military bases: “On the city streets, in the dance halls, in the soft drink parlors, wherever soldiers craved companionship, there the problem of the girl was to be found” (Williams 82). Drawn by “the lure of the uniform,” these women complicated the narrative of morality and steadfastness that black military men hoped to cultivate. They also made it difficult to distinguish between middle class African American women visiting their loved ones. While the problem of sex and the soldier was not limited to African American recruits, African American community leaders took this activity seriously because it detracted from the legacy of state loyalty that they hoped to capitalize on. Sweetheart photo postcards told a different tale, one in which romantic love between African American men and women was not pathologized. Unlike propaganda posters meant for wider circulation (like *The Colored Man is No Slacker*) such images were not as easily coopted or enfolded back into mainstream narratives about black sexuality and sexual degeneracy because they circulated outside of traditional publishing channels and were kept in personal collections.

To be sure, some wartime photo postcards were also linked to commercial forms of propaganda. African American periodicals contained numerous advertisements for postcards of African American soldiers and photographs of battle scenes. And yet, whether commercial or personal, postcards directed towards African American consumers used the occasion of war with
the Germans to stage a new forms of urbane, sophisticated and worldly African American identity. On the surface, these visual texts promoted the American war effort and suggested an acceptance of American militarism, including racist military policies. On another level, they offered African American viewers a new way of understanding the role of African American men in a global context. These important visual texts were created abroad, beyond the reach of American censorship, but in seeming opposition to America’s German enemies. They were also a rare form of interracial and intercultural collaboration. The photographs taken by Charrouin and Boidron run counter to official military photographs, which often undermined the accomplishments and participation of African American servicemen. Such seemingly innocent forms of collaboration were recognized early on as a threat to the American status quo. Indeed, *The Crisis*, reporting on efforts by white American military officers to prevent black soldiers from accessing local goods and services in France, explained that “Americans are afraid that contact with the French will inspire in black Americans aspirations which to them [the whites] appear intolerable. It is of the utmost importance that every effort be made to avoid profoundly estranging American opinion” (Brown 96).

As we conclude, we must note that the aspirations depicted in the photo postcards of Pvt. Ephraim and his colleagues had their antecedents on popular stage. There are compelling connections between the visual rhetoric of race in WWI propaganda and the ways African Americans entertainers promoted themselves to audiences in Europe and the United States. I suggest that we can look towards African American *Variété* acts like the Four Black Diamonds to understand more fully the contradictions surrounding depictions of black male militarism in relationship to Germany during the WWI era. I first encountered the Four Black Diamonds in Berlin at the Staatsmuseum Bibliothek archives. Their presence was striking because of their
military uniforms and the period in which their military act was most heavily advertised, and thus, presumably the most popular. One of the benefits of being able to sit with the periodicals for a prolonged period of time has been the ability to detect such ruptures in standard visual practices by viewing them within a larger context. The Four Black Diamond’s military act seemed to be a powerful example of the ways in which German print culture, if not the popular stage, provided African American performers with a space to stage forms of African American citizenship that did not exist in the United States. Of course, the truth is more complex than that.

As African American men, the Diamond's actual participation in the U.S. military was contentious to say the least. Black soldiers in uniform stirred murderous passions on U.S. soil; “of seventy-six reported lynchings of blacks nationwide in 1919, many were of returning soldiers” (Dray 247). In public space, appearing in a U.S. military uniform could spell death for African American men. For example, in 1919 Wilbur Little, a black WWI veteran was lynched in Blakely, Georgia simply for wearing his military uniform at the local train depot and in town (Dray 248).

But the popular stage provided a safer site for the performance of black military participation. In the years leading up to the Great War, the Four Black Diamond's military act was immensely popular with white audiences, allowing them build robust audiences in Europe and in German American communities in the United States. We should pause to ask why.

Signifying on a slang term for coal, an important form of makeup in blackface minstrel shows, Walter Dixon, Norris Smith, Eugene Abbott and H.M. Johnson performed on the vaudeville and European variety circuits as the Four Black Diamonds. Biographical details about their individual lives are scant. Born in Washington, D.C., H.M. Johnson (1863-1932) was the oldest member and the group’s manager. According to their promotional material, the Four Black Diamonds were officially established on October 14th, 1905, but this date has been disputed.
Stefan Goodwin suggests that the Four Black Diamonds performed at the Folies-Bergère in Paris in 1904 along with the Four Black Spades and Bonnie Goodwin’s Picaninies (175). Archival evidence of the individual performance work of members of the group in the United States dates back to the early 1900s. In 1901, the *Indianapolis Freeman* noted that “Norris Smith, the talented Baritone” was scheduled to open at the Chicago opera house. According to a description of his work at a benefit performance at Chicago’s Alhambra Theater on the 16th of June, 1901, Norris, “with his rich baritone voice, sang himself into the good graces of the audience.” Indeed, “as master of ceremonies, [Norris] was quite self-possessed, and, but for his feeble attempts to be funny, gave general satisfaction”. And yet, although his work was well received, the racist conventions of the American popular stage that would propel Smith and his colleagues abroad were also on display. The Freeman’s theater critic claims that “the vaudeville bill introduced between acts” at the Alhambra benefit “was away below par and caused me to wonder if managers compel white performers to do trial turns as is required of the colored professionals unless well known to them.” During this period, Smith also performed in an act known as “The Hottest Coon in Dixie.”

With such experiences with American representation politics and the popular stage in hand, the Four Black Diamonds found their way to one another, left the United States and became one of the most successful black performing groups in Europe. The Four Black Diamonds’s longstanding popularity with German audiences is apparent in the pages of *Das Programm*, where

---

86 “Chicago; Frosty Moore; Rusco & Holland; Al Turner; Niles; Great Mckanlass; Kid Alston; Norris Smith; Chicago Opera House.” *The Indianapolis Freeman*, 22 June 1901, page 5.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 “J. Ed. Green; Chicago; Elmore Dodd; J. Turner.” *The Indianapolis Freeman* 9 March 1901, page 5.
they are a constant presence on the magazine’s standing address list starting in 1906. By 1907 they were featured in, and thus able to afford, full page colored advertisements for engagements in Germany and Austria. In some advertisements they are billed as “the original Black Tyrolean burlesque”. Their insistence upon originality leads us to consider the possibility of impostors competing for audiences on the same circuit, as with the “Black Patti.” Described as transformation vocalists, comedians and dancers offering original songs in French, German and English, the Four Black Diamonds made a name for themselves on both sides of Atlantic. The list of venues they performed at includes the Passage Theater, Apollotheater, and the Metropol-Palast-Cabaret. In 1911 the San Francisco Examiner explained that “the Diamonds do something new in the line of negro minstrelsy, when they sing in French and German, as well as their native southern dialect” and reported that their “illustration of fast negro dancing and the ever popular plantation songs were a great hit” in Europe. Indeed, the “request for a popular German song is as welcome to them as a demand for the oldest of plantation melodies.” However, I would argue that their gimmick was deeper than simple performances of fluency in European languages. In acts which displayed worldliness and militarism, the Four Black Diamond’s satirized white American fears surrounding African American masculinity. This becomes most apparent leading up and during the WWI era.

It was during a brief trip back to the United States in 1911 that the Four Black Diamonds appear to have developed their military act. The *Announcer* reported that at San Francisco’s Portola-Louvre Restaurant, the group ended their act “with a burlesque German recruit drill, which is proving the most laugh convulsing and original stunt they have yet uncovered and their efforts are packing the house nightly.” The San Francisco *Examiner* also reported that “they put on a German recruit drill, dressed in German uniforms and drilled by German commands.” Describing

---

90 *Das Programm*, No. 500, 5 November 1911.
the group’s talent for singing in German, the *Examiner’s* reviewer wrote that “anything funnier than the blackest kind of an American negro singing in German ragtime could not be imagined.” But even “funnier” treats were in store for German audiences. In May 1914 at the Kleims Sommertheater in Berlin, moments before the outbreak of WWI, the Diamonds performed a new act for German audiences, *Original-Parodie auf einen Instruktionsstunde in Kamerun*, or their parody of an instructional hour for black military cadets in Cameroon. The copy for one of their advertisements [Figure 26] explains that the Cameroon instructional hour has been well received in the past and was highly recommended. In the central photograph of that advertisement we see the Diamonds dressed in military uniform. They are standing straight and holding rifles, perhaps conducting a rifle drill, demonstrating a temporary moment of mastery before an inevitable fall for laughs.

Like Jennie Louise Toussaint, The Four Black Diamond’s choice of costume evokes a sense of Pan-African militarism which provided the Four Black Diamonds with an unthreatening means by which to construct staged representations of black soldiers in which black subjects appear dignified. Their clean white military uniforms seem as impressive as the top hat and tails, and overcoats and canes, they sport in their other advertisements. We must also note that these promotional materials would also have circulated as postcards. In spite of these gestures towards black respectability, the pleasure that white European audiences derived from the Black Diamond’s performance in Germany is closely aligned with the public mockery of James Reese Europe’s 369th Infantry marching band in Harlem. White popular perceptions of black soldiers, which were vividly outlined in popular culture, were not openly subverted by the Four Black

---

91 *Das Programm*, No. 631, 10 May 1914.
92 Ibid.
Diamonds’ act. But in a very literal sense, their performance of these tropes allowed them to experience forms of freedom, like artistic self-management and transnational mobility, that were rare for the majority of African Americans (and working class white Americans) at that time. Performances of black masculinity, militarism and Germanism converged in a vexing locus during World War I. European performances of black masculinity, militancy and citizenship created by black men would continue to intrigue and enrage white viewers for decades to come.

**Conclusion**

Self-commissioned images of black soldiers and black-authored performances of armed militancy were striking features of the visual culture and the vaudeville stage during the lead up to the First World War, during it, and immediately afterwards. These artistic fields are connected by many of the same threads. In the personal postcards of black soldiers during the WWI era and the military act of the Black Diamonds during this period, we see a heightened awareness of the nuances of black militarism and its relationship to black internationalism. We can also detect a sense of self-awareness about the underlying power of images of black men in uniform. Through various routes, these images and acts worked alongside and under dominant depictions of black men in uniform. At times, they could represent a potent sense of self-definition and agency in realms which were typically devoid of any nuance when it came to black subjects. These images and performances are also a powerful examples of the usefulness of ideas of Germany for African Americans seeking to define themselves in the public sphere.
EPILOGUE

This is a moment to consider the temporality of this study. I have chosen to study the intersections between African American culture and Germany from 1890 to 1920 because that period represents a broadening of global horizons for African Americans and coincides with the birth of European modernism. While recent creative offerings like Esi Edugyan’s novel *Half-Blood Blues* (2012) and Alexander Thomas’s play *Schwarz Gemacht* (2014) have dramatized the role of African Americans and Afro-Germans during the Jazz Age, the experiences of black diasporic subjects in Germany and their impact on Germany during these years remains relatively unexplored in the creative arts and scholarship. And yet, their presence was keenly felt and culturally significant. In this instance, temporal distinctions might prevent us from comprehending the richness of black culture during this period and the longue durée of interconnectedness of black performance in the United States and Germany. Such distinctions prevent us from analyzing the work of performers like Arabella Fields, a black expat whose extensive career in Germany spanned several decades and included stints with Sam Wooding’s Chocolate Kiddies and a handful of film appearances, including a turn Rex Ingram’s *Baroud* (1932).

Almost forgotten in the United States and in Europe, Arabella Fields, the “Black Nightingale,” was the first African American artist to produce a sound recording in Europe. Occasionally hailed as a “black Viennese” during her Austrian appearances, she was also described as a “Tyrolienne” “an African, an Indian, a Red Indian, an American, a South-American, an Australian,” and “a German-African,” depending on the European venue (Lotz 6). This flexibility in racial description was by no means limited to Fields. But Belle Fields’s use of flexible racial identifiers reveals her intimate knowledge of European audiences and the necessity of racial ambiguity. Reviews of Fields’ recordings and performances also point to the mutability of her
gender identity on the parts of European listeners. Her longstanding popularity with the German public was likely due to her fluency in the language, her performances of German lieder and her yodeling abilities. By 1922 the Philadelphia native had married her German manager and was declared a German citizen.93 Belle Fields’ decision to remain in Europe and build an exclusively European career alienated her from the African American press.

Contemporary scholars have had difficulty locating Belle Fields and her work. Most of the information available about Fields can be found in Rainer Lotz’s Black People and Black Europe. Very little scholarly work attempts to grapple with her legacy. Part of the problem lies in the way Fields herself defied expectations about black feminine propriety and respectability. In contrast to Sissieretta Jones, Fields explicitly manipulated her physical appearance and sound to attract audiences, amping up her sexuality in a way that would have prevented her from being embraced by African American critics as an icon, had they taken notice of her. I am also attentive to the similarities between depictions of Field’s silhouette [Figure 27] and the Hottentot Venus’s.

While many American performers were forced to return to the United States during World War I, Fields remained in Europe and continued to perform throughout the war. Marrying her German manager, after the war she was billed as an “American German” and “colored” singer, monikers that reveal a more complex view of Fields as a black performer and perhaps represent her embrace by German viewers. Belle Fields’ use of flexible racial identifiers reveals her intimate knowledge of European audiences and the necessity of racial ambiguity for Black performers in Europe. This ambiguity is more than simply a survival strategy or a way of increasing box office revenue. In it, we see the workings of a new form of transnational black identity that was at once

93 The question of her German citizenship is a point of disagreement for Michael Huffmaster and Konrad Nowakowski. Both scholars agree that she had an impact on the German speaking stage in Austria, but Huffmaster contents that she never became a German citizen.
a product of the type of racial uplift rhetoric that insisted on travel abroad and white European performance spaces as measures of racial progress, and a critique of those politics and the limits they imposed on black womanhood.

I conclude my dissertation with a gloss of Arabella Fields’s passport to underscore the significance of transnational travel for African American performers contending with modernity at the turn of the century. Arabella Fields’s passport, copies of which can be found through Ancestry.com, are an important supplement to the claims that I have made about the way Germany, and Berlin provided African Americans with the opportunity to reframe themselves as American citizens. The passport is a provocative piece of ephemera from a performer who left few traces of her existence in her native land, the United States. In his gloss on Field’s biography, Rainer Lotz explains that the singer hailed from Philadelphia. This information is corroborated by reports from jazz band leader Sam Wooding as well as Field’s passport application. Hoping to find more definitive proof of her birthplace, I also consulted her passport applications. What I found did not lead me to another treasure trove of hitherto unknown archival material, which was in fact my larger aim. Instead, the scant documents of Fields’s existence reinforce the larger themes of this project, and thus link her to famed African performers like Sissieretta Jones as well as lesser known performers.

Fields left America on the Fourth of July, in 1908 according to an emergency passport that was issued to her at the American embassy in Vienna in 1912 so that she could enter Romania [Figure 28]. In previous emergency passport applications, Fields claimed that she had departed the United States in April, on a date unknown. But on that late November day, one day before American Thanksgiving, July 4th was the day she claimed to have left America. It is impossible for me to consider this moment without thinking of the weight of that day for African Americans
routinely denied the liberty commemorated on Independence Day. Frederick Douglass famously asked, what to the slave is the fourth of July? We might ask, what is the meaning of American freedom for the black modern subject? For Arabella Fields, filling out mundane documents in the American Embassy in Vienna in 1912, it sounded like a good day to claim freedom and strike out for Europe.

Fields’s passport reminds us that it is not only Middle Passage epistemology which defines black identity in European modernity or vis-à-vis America (Wright 140). Before the twentieth century took root, black performers and travelers took advantage of the nominal freedom offered to them on the European continent. In doing so, they created new spaces and new meanings from the material bequeathed to them by the United States.
Appendix: List of Figures

Figure 1. Playbill from the Learned Collection on German-Language Theater at the University of Pennsylvania
Figure 2. Das Programm Ida Forsyne advertisement, Stadtmuseum Bibliothek, Berlin.
Figure 3. Postcard from Onkel Toms Hütte.

Figure 4. Postcard from Onkel Toms Hütte.
Figure 5. Postcard from Onkel Toms Hütte.
Figure 6. Tom Jack der Eis-König. Undated photocard.
Figure 7. Detail from the 500th edition of Das Programm.
Figure 8. Charles E. Johnson and Dora Dean promotional material.
Figure 9. Advertisement from Das Programm.
Figure 10. Two Diamonds advertisement from *Das Programm*. 
Figure 11. Undated Dora Dean photocard.
Figure 12. “Portraits by Ernst Heilemann” from *Berliner Leben 5*, 1902.
Figure 13. Washington Trio advertisement from Das Programm.
Figure 14. Sissieretta Jones, undated photocard.
Figure 15. Wintergarten advertisement from *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, 24 February 1895.
Figure 16. *Destroy This Mad Brute*, by H.R. Hopps, 1918.
Figure 17. *Vogue Magazine* cover, by Annie Leibovitz, April 2008.
Figure 18. *The Colored Man is No Slacker*, by E.G. Renesch, 1918
Figure 19. *True Blue*, by E.G. Renesch, 1918.
Figure 20. *Emancipation Proclamation*, by E.G. Renesch, 1918.
Figure 21. “Nigger War Bride Blues” sheet music cover, by Thomas Goggan & Bro., 1917
Figure 22. From the Black Military Photograph Collection, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
Figure 23. from the Black Military Photograph Collection, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
Figure 24. from the Black Military Photograph Collection, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
Figure 25. from the Black Military Photograph Collection, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
THE 4 BLACK DIAMONDS

die ersten und einzigen farbigen Leute, die in diesem Genre als
Verwandlungs-Sänger, -Tänzer und -Komiker arbeiten
u.a. Original-Parodie auf eine Instruktionssstunde in Kamerun.

Um den Herren Direktoren und Agenten, die die Ausstellung besuchen und Interesse
für unsere Nummer haben, Gelegenheit zu geben, uns zu sehen, treten wir vom

16.-31. Mai in Kliems Sommertheater

Berlin, Hasenheide, allabendlich zwischen 10 und 11 Uhr auf.

Arbeitsdauer 10 bis 20 Minuten. — 3 bis 4 Verwandlungen. — Text: englisch,
deutsch, auf Wunsch französisch und russisch. — Auch steht die alte Nummer
„Tirolese Burlesque“ zur Verfügung.
Bitte auf das Tableau in der „EVA“-Ausstellung, Buchstabe D, zu achten.

Referenzen:
Wir bestätigen hiermit die 4 Black Diamonds, daß dieselben zunächst ab 1.—15. Februar in unserem Theater
erschienen und vom 16.—25. Februar weiter prologiert werden. Ihre gesungenen Vorträge wurden stets mit
größtem Beifall aufgenommen, namentlich die Parodie „Eine Instruktionssstunde in Kamerun“, welche
durch ihren humoristischen Charakter beim Publikum großen Erfolg erzielte. Wir können daher die
Nummer unseren Kollegen nur bestens empfehlen.

Düsseldorf, 28. Februar 1914.

Gross-Düsseldorf
gez. S. Hacke.

Hierdurch bestätige Ihnen, daß mit den Leistungen Ihres Quartets sehr zufrieden bin, und nehme gerne Anlass,
Sie meinen Kollegen bestens zu empfehlen.


Direktion des Reichshallen-Theaters
gez. Max Bruck.

Frei ab 16. Juni 1914

Offerten an

H. M. Johnson, Adresse „Das Programm“

Figure 26. Advertisement from Das Programm, Stadtmuseum Berlin Bibliothek archives
Figure 27. Arabella Fields advertisement from Das Programm.
Figure 28. Arabella Fields Emergency Passport Application, 1912.
WORKS CITED

NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES AND ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Borsen-Courier (Berlin)

The Cleveland Gazette

Das Programm: Artistisches Fachblatt

Der Artist: Fachblatt für Unterhaltungsmusik und Artistik

The Indianapolis Freeman

The New York Times

The Sissieretta Jones Scrapbook of Press Clippings, Dr. Carl R Gross Collection, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Manuscript Division, Howard University.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES


[Chicago; Frosty Moore; Rusco & Holland; Al Turner; Niles; Great Mckanlass; Kid Alston; Norris Smith; Chicago Opera House]. *The Freeman*. Indianapolis. 22 June 1901. Page 5. Accessed 13 February 2016.


*Das Organ der Variétéwelt*. Internationale Varieté-, Theater- und Circus-Direktoren- Verband in
der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Düsseldorf.


Dixon-Gottschild, Brenda.


Fish, Cheryl. Black and White Women’s Travel Narratives: Antebellum Explorations. Gainsville,


Hopkins, Leroy. “Black Prussians: Germany and African American Education from James W.C.


“The Hun In America”. The Messenger. 2 (July 1919): 5.


Jones, Matilda Sissieretta. Scrapbook. Dr. Carl R. Gross Collection, Collection 41-1 to 42-1, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Manuscript Division, Howard University, Washington, DC.


Lotz, Rainer E. et al. *Black Europe*. Holste-Oldendorf, Germany: Bear Family Productions,
2013. Print.


Martin, Carol.” Performing the City. *TDR: The Drama Review* 58:3 (T223), pp. 10-17.


Nonne, Ernest. Barbier und Neger, Oder Onkel Tom in Deutschland. 1852.


"Surplus of Women in Germany". The Daily Inter Ocean. page 4, vol. XXIV, iss. 211


Wickstrom, Maurya. Performing Consumers: Global Capital and Its Theatrical Seductions. New


Wright, W.C. "Indignities Imposed". *The Cleveland Gazette*. 15 June 1895. Page 1

“The Young Colored Violinist”. *The Cleveland Gazette*. 07 December 1889. Page 1
