

**BLACKNESS IN GERMANY**  
*LOCATING “RACE” IN JOHANNES SCHAAF’S 1986 FILM*  
*ADAPTATION OF MICHAEL ENDE’S FANTASY NOVEL MOMO*

**BENJAMIN NICKL**  
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

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**WHITE BODIES UNDER BLACK MASKS**

**M**ichael Ende’s 1973 fantasy novel, *Momo* first became popular in West Germany. Decades later, the book remained successful in the unified Republic. Intended as a piece of alternative literature for children, the story advocates resistance to consumerism, capitalism, and the time bind, in which free market economies situate members of the working population. The novel’s protagonist is the titular character, a small girl named “Momo.” She fights her adversaries, the “Gray Agents,” who are sent by the “Timesaving Bank” to steal mankind’s unused time and use it to sustain their lives. What allows for Momo’s resistance to the time-thieves is her state of innocence, a natural purity which prevents the young heroine from falling prey to Western civilization’s dogma of capitalism.

Ende’s original text, which is now in its 47<sup>th</sup> edition, never explicitly connects Momo as a symbol of pristine nature to non-white notions of race. However, the cinematic adaptation does exactly that. Cast in the role of Momo, then eleven-year-old Afro-German<sup>1</sup> actress Radost Bokel<sup>2</sup> was the visibly “exoticized” female lead. Her race set Bokel apart from her white cast members in the German-Italian production. Director Johannes Schaaf chose to define Momo in the context of a racial discourse to construct knowledge about otherness as ethnic difference<sup>3</sup>. I read this as an exclusion of ethnic minorities in Germany, underscored by German film’s long tradition of nationalism based on ethnic affiliation.

Schaaf’s adaptation perpetuates a racial bias, which occupies a large part of the country’s ethnic history. The film exemplifies the projection of identities on the black body and performative manifestations of (black) identity, which were authored by a white majority despite the actual

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presence of individuals who identify as black. In the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, “becoming black” was a widespread phenomenon in West Germany. In the wake of the nation’s politicized student movement in 1968 (“68’er Studentenbewegung”), a great part of the white population imagined “blackness” as a way to express (national-political) innocence and justified anger over being the victim of capitalist rule. White people appropriated racial features of the black body, which they believed was unrightfully oppressed by the establishment; hence they made claims to socio-cultural aspects of both Afro-German and Afro-American identity<sup>4</sup>. Especially the German youth expressed their white afrophilia in terms of fierce socio-politic engagement and wide circulation of cultural products branded as “Afroblack”.

However, the discriminatory mechanism underneath this afrophile turn in German society remained the same as before. White claims to blackness were made despite the increasingly vocal presence of black German citizens in the Republic, for example through Afro-German and Afro-European projects<sup>5</sup>. These projects were initiated by the Afro-Diaspora in the form of social grass-root movements. They sought to redefine the meaning of blackness as an integral part of black identity, which was congruent with notions of (multi-ethnic) national citizenship<sup>6</sup>. I argue that films like *Momo* were counterproductive to these movements.

I reconsider Schaaf’s racialized casting choice from a historical perspective of German film to situate his adaptation in a contemporary context. For that, I trace the trajectory of the character of Momo in terms of race and evaluate its discriminatory peak in 1986 when the picture was released, which will shed new light on a German film classic. In my conclusion, I point out two findings: first, how the conceptual framework of race intersects with gender, generation, and class in the German case to project a myth of natural simplicity on the black body, and second, how this projection came under the guise of white afrophilia and was fantasized in particular by the German Left as a cure for post-modern fatigue and capitalist burn-out and as an attempt to discard the nation’s historical guilt of the holocaust by assuming the perspective of a victimized minority.

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**GHOSTS OF FILMS PAST**

Film scholar Tobias Nagl suggests in his description of representations of blackness in German film that the medium of film helped a white majority become the ventriloquist of the black voice<sup>7</sup>. I agree with Nagl, since a number of (West) German films released both before and after the end of WWII in 1945 illustrate this ventriloquism. They defined blackness and positioned it in a coordinate system along the axes of race and geopolitical “belonging” (Zugehörigkeit) both in Germany’s intra- and extra-national territories<sup>8</sup>. Focusing either on the (West) German nation state or its brief colonial interlude (e.g. *Die schwarze Schmach*, 1921), they combined white skin with German nationality to code it as a mark of superiority, which led towards a civilized progressivism. In these films, German whiteness trumped not only black bodies, but also signaled dominance over other forms of European whiteness, for example white citizens of the neighboring countries of Great Britain and France. Thus, German film is a good indicator of how Germany imagined itself as the “good” colonizer and most apt herald of Europe’s white mode of civilization.

Most narrative foci in German films with the subject of race catered to identity politics as imagined by German national cinema, which served as a cultural apparatus and was governed by the state. Afro-German actors were cast in the parts of the black other. The characters they played show either the need for white Germans to guide the black indigenous populations in the colonial realm, or they expressed a self-exclusionary desire for interracial black Germans within the nation state. Films starring popular black German actor Louis Brody (*Die Reiter von Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 1934; *Germanin - die Geschichte einer kolonialen Tat*, 1943) or black German child actress Elfriede “Toxi” Fiegert (*Toxi*, 1952) illustrate this double bind well (Nagl, 128-131, Fehrenbach, 140-147)<sup>9</sup>. In turn, German whiteness did not represent a fixed geo-political or exclusive socio-cultural identity in these films for the white bodies of Germans. Their characters gave evidence of how white Germans could move freely across national borders. As a result, their “Germanness” and all positive connotations attached to it served the imperialist rationale of the country to colonize Africa’s indigenous populations. Further, German film questioned black German citizenship with images of racial affiliation, which placed the emotional ties to one’s race over the validity

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of legal documents such as German passports, marriage laws, proof of family relations and blood lines. Both Afro-Germans like *Toxi* with at least one white German parent and colonized German-African subjects were virtually banned to the *Dark Star* in the public imaginary<sup>10</sup>. This denied Germans of color the possibility to develop a DuBoisian double consciousness of (black) race and (German) nationality.

Despite the opposite being true in actual reality like in Fiegert's case, black children never grew up in German films to become German citizens, which meant they never achieved full membership in society. The resulting dynamic places the symbolic message of black and white bodies within a racial gaze of white normativity, which makes the viewers complicit in a national paradigm of authentic white versus false Black Germanness. German studies scholar Angelica Fenner relates in her discussion of Robert Stemmler's *Toxi* the West German discourses around race and integration of Black Germans to critical discussions of emerging economic and political anxieties, as well as a re-articulation of gender roles and racial identities within the German nation state. Fenner highlights the fact that in the socio-political climate of 1952, the Afro-German hybrid *Toxi* is the product of a "fictional union of an African-American man and German woman [which] on screen can only be staged by cultural proxy" (225). On the big screen, the orphan *Toxi* thus stands in as evidence for native Germany's increasing diversity. In turn, the actress Fiegert was cast specifically for her skin color, but additionally, to make a statement about the willingness of Germans to come to terms with their concrete social history (Fenner, 225). The actual black German artist's body vanished behind the racial mask of her character. This is symptomatic for the filmic practice of visual exclusion in Germany at the time. Black characters could not reproduce and continue their presence in Germany (nor should white Germans mix with blacks in the colonies or at home). Instead, blackness needed to leave and find "home" elsewhere to continue its racial lineage outside the German national territory (or the white German family in German East-Africa)<sup>11</sup>. The expulsion of blackness despite the legal sanctioning of Afro-Germans and their citizenship status might have contributed to the casting choice in Johannes Schaaf's 1986 movie adaptation of Michael Ende's novel.

### **BECOMING BLACK TO BECOME INNOCENT?**

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First published in 1973, a large readership had soon fallen in love with *Momo*. As the story of the book's protagonist makes clear, Momo does not share the same sense of time and space found in the world around her. She also has no need for money and displays no desire for material goods. Her most salient feature is her natural ability to listen without prejudice to adults complaining about capitalism and the pitfalls of consumer culture. The members of modern society, of which Momo is not a part, as indicated by her dwelling place underneath an old oak tree in the ruins of an ancient amphitheater, have fallen victim to time-management, materialist greed, and conspicuous consumption. These are all symptoms of burn-out embodied by the Gray Agents. Momo's childish innocence, her untainted fantasy, and uncorrupted demeanor allow her to fight and eventually defeat the Gray Agents, as well as the stresses of modern civilization they represent. Leeching off of human existence, the employees of the ominous Timesaving Bank invade the daily lives of people to steal their unused time, which means time not spent on work to gain fame or riches. All white, bald and clad in light gray bankers' apparel, the pale-face men feed on stolen seconds, minutes, days, and even years to survive. With the help of a fortune-telling turtle and Death, himself, as the ultimate creator and dispenser of human time, Momo is victorious. In the end, the girl is able to retrieve mankind's stolen "life time" from the Gray Agents' high security vault. She frees her friends and their families from the parasitic rule of capitalism and the tyranny of a materialist consumer culture.

The fantasy novel, a book intended by Ende for a young audience, received great approval especially from a liberal left, mostly anti-authoritarian audience. However, Ende's novel does not depict Momo as a black character. Reference is only made to the young girl's untidy hair and dirty feet, as well as her worn, second-hand clothes. In these features, I see her resistance to commodification and consumerism. Why, then, did Schaaf imagine Momo as a black person? And how, in turn, does this choice place the movie in the racial trajectory of "becoming black"?

There is a scene in the movie that conflates the two paradigms of race and anti-capitalist agenda. It depicts Momo's first encounter with a Gray Agent, whose name is reduced to a sequence of numbers and a face masked by a thick layer of white make-up. We see his attempt to contaminate the innocent girl with mass-produced toy dolls intended for pre-teen consumers. She refuses to accept his gifts and the agent keeps

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bombarding Momo with a host of lifeless plastic bodies, both male and female, to replace her real friends. However, dressed in worn rags and barefooted, Momo turns out to be immune to the desire for materialist goods. Instead of turning into a victim of consumer culture, Momo and her black body enter into a dialogue with the grayish Agent to confront white capitalism. Filmed in a close-up sequence of shot and reverse shot, the ensuing battle between good and bad is typical for the fantasy film genre of the time. Momo reaches for the Gray Agent's face to touch him, asking whether there was "nobody" to love specifically "him" ("Hat *DICH* denn gar niemand lieb?"). Captured in detail by the camera's close-up lingering on the Agent's face, the gesture causes him to panic as he starts to reflect on his own identity. Apparently he is shocked by the consequences of such thinking. The Agent moves away from Momo's hand, though he seems curiously attracted to it at the same time. The girl's hand with its dark skin as an extension of nature, another camera angle shows us, connects Momo and the Agent across the army of lifeless dolls, which seem to encircle the child. Momo's gift of "listening" and her attention to the Gray Agent as a person, however, does not bode well with him. He leaves the girl and mutters his disbelief over the failure he has just witnessed while speeding off in his Mercedes.

The racial layer in this scene is pervasive. Director Schaaf shows Momo sitting in the sea of dolls, which the Agent throws at her. They form an army of straight-haired blond, pale white and blue-eyed plastic dolls. Momo stands out very visibly against them with her dark skin, Afro hairdo, and black eyes (again, see young "Toxi" Fiegert in *Toxi* playing in whiteface with the blond German children, who appear in blackface in the final scene of that film). Momo's black body is virtually a beacon of racial otherness as the host of tiny white dolls seems to press in on the only real child in the wide-angle shot. Before this backdrop of white and artificial plastic "boys and girls," who speak and move in perfect unison to every command given by the Agent, the orchestration of the doll bodies gives the impression of a military parade. The Gray Agent parallels this image. His skin is a grayish pale color and his uniform-like grey clothing and bald head are reminiscent of a soldier's uniform during WWII. The shaved head and beardless face, in particular, also bear a striking resemblance to the appearance of members of the neo-Nazi movement in contemporary Germany.

In another scene earlier in the film, Schaaf connects Ende's critique of

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mass culture to the racial features of Momo in similar ways. Again, Schaaf uses Momo's black body to refer to the actual bodies of West-Germany's black population. Conflating blackness with the girl's body, the movie scene shows how Momo's friends, and other children, imagine her as an exotic islander. We suddenly find Momo dressed in a hula skirt, her body richly decorated with exotic flowers tied as a lei (Hawaiian flower necklace) around her neck. In this game of imagination, the setting too changes to that of a tropical island. In this scenery, the white male child, who participates in the game of "exploring uncharted lands" (Entdecker) takes the role of the lead explorer on a ship. We find him dressed accordingly in a white safari outfit and wearing a German "Tropenhelm," equipped with binoculars to observe the exotic spectacle from a distance like a good colonial explorer.

Cultural historian Moritz Ege explores exoticized images like this and their function in his research monograph, *Becoming Black* ("Schwarz werden"). In the late 1960s and over the next two decades to follow, Ege explains, how whiteness in Germany took a prominent role in debates about guilt and complicity in national-socialist Germany, WWII, and ultimately anti-Semitism (Ege, 140-149). He describes the tendency of late capitalism in the 1960s and 70s, and also in the anti-imperialist 1980s—the Thatcher-Reagan era of less government and greater market liberalization—as a trend to incorporate counter-culture movements and suppressed memories of racist sentiments in mainstream culture through mass-culture industries. In modern capitalism, the suppressed is turned outside, made visible and thus ready to "consume". Ege argues this point in his discussion of a society that used black bodies like that of Momo as yardsticks for measuring the quality of anti-racist evolution and a desire to return to innocence by imagining their becoming of a racially oppressed minority. Particularly for a liberal Left in Germany, this meant a more uncritical self-identification with both black non-Germans like African-American GIs and Afro-Germans as tokens of otherness.

The more the younger Germans expressed their sympathy for a discriminated race, Ege writes with regard to the underlying racial rationale, the greater was the proof for the rest of the post-war world that Germany was moving towards a Western form of modernity and no longer posed a threat. Through blackness as a highly visible marker, Germans could indirectly express awareness for the error of their Anti-Semitic ways in the country's past (Ege, 34-36, 147-151). For example,

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West German magazines featured “black (skin) is beautiful” campaigns. Other popular culture outlets, i.e. vocal radio or television, praised *Afri-Cola*’s or *Bluna*’s afro-americanophile product lines of soda-pop and the availing of commercialized Afro-hairdos as “in-style” trends, which were purchased by a predominantly white community. Student groups of the Liberal Left publicly aligned themselves with black protest movements in the United States (e.g. Afro-American political activist Angela Davis). They declared their desire for afro-philic identity politics, which Ege traces back to an inertia provided by other international projects, that propelled pro-black sentiments in the German student movements of 1968. White Germans associated themselves with blackness and cultural products, which they coded as black (African-American). It was the declared goal of West Germany’s white rebellious youth, arguably a trend in adolescent counter-culture, to protest the establishment<sup>12</sup>. In their desire to become black and thus atone for the crimes of their parents’ generation against Europe’s Jews, Ege traces the racial zeitgeist of an era that lasted for several decades up to the end of the 1980s when the two Germanies were reunified.

This period of intersecting cultural fields defines both the literary and filmic version of *Momo*. Race-based commercials, popular music, and sexuality came together in visual and print media. Also, a civil body politic, made up primarily by members of the “APO” (outside-parliament-opposition) movement), imagined the sub-cultural aesthetics of political groups in a solidarity movement with leftist activists. According to Ege, young white Germans and the German Left saw black identity as a racial exoticism with positive goals. It was an afro-philic mechanism that allowed a younger, white post-war German generation to identify with what they considered “real” knowledge of an oppressed people: a countermovement to remnants of racist extremism inherited from the Nazi period’s fascist rule, in which becoming a minority member meant becoming innocent. It was a functional escape route via race, which moved white participants away from historical debates about national guilt and complicity in Nazi Germany’s crimes and the sins of their parents.

Schaaf’s conflation of racial and economic issues places his adaptation of Ende’s text in this context. His casting choice positions the movie in the race discourse of white appropriation and communal identity formation, which depicts white selfhood in the body of a black girl and

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cross-references Momo with the actual Afro-German individual Radost Bokel in the contemporary society of Germany. This means that freedom from capitalist domination is possible in a return to naturalness indicated by the black skin of an innocent child and member of an oppressed minority. Schaaf, in turning untidy hair into an Afro hairdo and skin darkened by dirt into racial blackness, projects the white West German desire for a liberated, an arguably male, subjectivity on the untainted black body of a female in a doubling of otherness. Ende locates the protagonist's body on the narrative level of the original fantasy novel outside the time-space imaginary of historical Germanness; in contrast, on the narrative level of the film, his implementation of an Afro-German minority actress demonstrates to the viewer just how caught up Schaaf's *Momo* is in the realities of the time. And yet, Schaaf is using the main character to represent a racial innocence well beyond the reach of historically compromised (German) whiteness, colonial greed, and the pitfalls of capitalism coded as racially white.

#### FADING TO WHITE

Despite this opposition of race and ethnic identity, the film does not resolve the tension between universal liberalization of both black and white racial markers. Rather, it reinforces it. In the end, black Momo is harmless to white society, presenting a lost link as the only dark skinned child. Her immature black body is a singular phenomenon, as her sexuality is latent. The female protagonist cannot threaten male white systems of order by producing her own genealogical lineage. She only is a means to an end. In the film's final scene, Momo serves the camera as a viewpoint to align the spectator with the discourse of white authorship. It echoes a desire for black resistance to white capitalist oppression and its successful battling as an individual linked to nature. Yet, the narrative culminates in a return to innocence that conflates Momo's Afro-German body of actress Radost Bokel with the immature female who, unlike all her white friends in the film, still has no biological family or family home to which she can return. What remains is the underground cave Momo has dwelled in since the beginning of the movie. It is the prison-like place where white people frequent her, following the zoological principle of the *Afrikaschau*'s look at the imaginary black "other" as a form of mass entertainment in pre-war Germany. This discriminatory

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mechanism peaked with Momo's first filmic adaptation and is supported by the fact that later, an Italian version (2001, directed by Enzo D'Alò) and the international mainstream franchise stayed closer to Ende's original text, which had pictured the child as Caucasian. Fading to middle-class whiteness, Momo's hair became straight. Her skin was turned into a spotless pale white, and her eyes were once more of a light blue color. Her clothes returned to mint condition<sup>13</sup>. Again, commodification had adjusted the racial features of the character to the needs of its time, which no longer saw the need in *Momo*'s racial othering, but rather a profit in its international marketing.

### FROM BLACK INNOCENCE TO AFRO-GERMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

My aim in this article was to investigate the socio-racial forces in German film during a period of rapid change and heightened political awareness along an Afro-German trajectory of identity politics and cinematic ventriloquism. I have primarily concentrated on the analysis of the black body of a child named Momo, who would never grow up in a fight against tainted white culture and Western capitalism. Another black German youngster, which I have included in my analytical practice, was Elfriede *Toxi* Fiegert. Despite the fact that two decades had passed since the appearance of *Toxi*, her links to *Momo* are undeniable. To recapitulate, both of these main characters stand in for racial otherness as a message to the audience about modes of intra-national differentiation, and both wittingly or unwittingly embody a viewpoint in the contested relationship between several elements. First, the real-world situations they depict bear the marks of deliberate construction. Second, as cultural artifacts, films are embedded in a complex network of political as well as historical representations through their sounds and images. Third, films as documents or texts join a larger ethnographic project, which negotiates and puts on public display the ideologies and interests of their makers as well as their audiences. *Toxi* as well as *Momo* thus exemplify in more or less overt forms a specific racial subtext of "not-belonging" and ethnic dislocation, which served as a vehicle to educate white viewers about white issues rather than the lived realities of black Germans.

Of course, productions like *Momo* are only singular texts, which illustrate the fluctuating tensions between depictions of blackness and actual Afro-German bodies from a distinct perspective in time. It is not

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possible to evaluate the problem of racial bias in a country from one single standpoint or through one single history or narrative. The (German) nation-state as a whole has to be situated in the context of a multifaceted nexus of subjectivity, identity formation, and the complex dynamics of discourses of knowledge about sameness and otherness. Racial othering as a discursive situated practice needs to be understood from perspectives that seem contradictory at first. We need to acknowledge the complex duality of tradition and innovation, a binary of collective and individual, and a contrast between intra- and extra-national mechanisms of identity formation(s) (see Herman, xvi). Thus, “white blackness” as in the case of *Momo* could be seen as a conceptual alternative for future research in discursive fields of white-black mimesis and mimicry, and nation-specific (German) mechanisms of “becoming” black. Here, the fault lines between fantasy and locatability of (racial) identity seem especially promising for innovative studies on identity research in a wide network of literary and audio-visual texts.

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#### END NOTES

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1. I use the term “Afro-German” as a translation of the German “Afrodeutsch”, which applies to German citizens of African or Afro-American descent. African-Germans or Black Germans are defined as the Black African community and Diaspora in Germany. It is the largest Black African Diaspora in Central Europe (approx. 300,000 to 500,000). The black communities in the United Kingdom and France are on average ten times larger. Historic backgrounds vary as well as population density. The cities of Hamburg and Berlin have large Black German communities, with a high percentage of ethnically mixed families (Wright, 185-187). In 2006, “Afrodeutsch” was introduced as a standalone lexical item into the *Duden* dictionary. The term is unlike its English translation not hyphenated in German.
  2. A native of East Germany, Radost Bokel was born in the city of Bad Langensalza, Thuringia in 1975. At the age of five, Bokel left the GDR and moved to Frankfurt with her mother and her brother. Only little is known about her father, whom Bokel has never mentioned in interviews or public appearances. After she had starred in *Momo*, for which she received the prestigious BAMBI film award in 1986, Bokel appeared in several other German films and television productions. While leftist critics praised the film for its capitalist critique and message of social unity, no reviewer has ever picked up on the racial undertones of the production and the casting of Afro-German Bokel as Momo. Among minor roles and guest appearances when she was still a child, Bokel was cast repeatedly in the role of racially ambiguous characters. With naturally bronzed skin and curly brown hair, Bokel’s roles after *Momo* included the southern European girl Paty in Duccio Pessari’s *Bitte lasst die Blumen leben!* (“Please, Let the Flowers Live!”, 1986) and
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Parizade, the daughter of a Jewish father and Muslim Arab mother, in the internationally produced adventure series *The Secret of the Sahara* (1988). Both Paty and Parizade are neither 'black' nor 'white' - they are simply not quite white. However, in her later teenage years and as an adult, German directors and producers cast Bokel as native German. In 1989, Bokel made an appearance as stable girl Margit Franke in the television drama *Rivalen der Rennbahn* ("Rivals of the Horse Race Track"). In *Der Staatsanwalt* ("The District Attorney") a crime series, which aired in 2011, Bokel played the part of German detective Susanne Selbach in several episodes.

3. German film director Johannes Schaaf (born April 7, 1933) and his work were first recognized during the 1960s. His film *Tattoo* (1967) was among the first films in Germany to depict the generational conflict in Germany and the resulting student revolts. In 1969, Schaaf was appointed head juror of the *Berlinale* film festival.
4. Please note that this discussion focuses on West Germany.
5. Numerous scholars have done extensive work in the revisiting of black Germanness as a diverse and complex (historical) issue in the Republic's socio-cultural and historical-political narrative. Tracing knowledge construction in the context of othering can be linked to a main strand in the overall narrative. Sander Gilman's contested thesis of the authoring of black identity in its absence and Tina Campt's book based on oral history indicate the broad spectrum of research still ongoing. For example, the *Afrikaschau* according to historians Eric Ames and Marcia Klotz shows how black Germans had resided in Germany for a very long time but only became publicly "real" and visible when their identity was not theirs to enact but performed for white audiences as orchestrations of white (German) supervisors.
6. E.g. the critically acclaimed book "Farbe bekennen" (1986) by May Ayim and other German women of color, or the black student movement ("Schwarze Studentenbewegung") and similar projects like the Initiative of Black Germans ("Initiative Schwarze Deutsche", or "ISD" in short, founded in the 1980s) built on the frustration from the lack of acknowledgment of Afro-German citizens and their de-voiced, imaginary otherness despite their factual status as German citizens. It is the continuation of racial tensions spelled out in oral history projects like the one illustrated by Tina Campt's monograph *Other Germans*.
7. See Nagl's groundbreaking dissertation project (2009) and his research on Afro-German actor Louis Brody (2005).
8. By "belonging" I refer to notions of locatability ("Verortung") in a specifically German context. This concept is tied to a spatial metaphor of belonging that pertains to the highly complex concept of German "Heimat." Attached to this home as a placing of identity markers are ideas of racialized belonging in a natural correspondence to geopolitical assumptions about a people's culture. Most visibly, this aspect becomes apparent in the writings of Kant and other white Western philosophers of the eighteenth century, as Sara Eigen and Mark Larrimore point out in their monograph, *The German Invention of Race*. Eigen's and Larrimore's research shows how anthropological writings were based on a white Western Christian epistemology of knowledge in the European tradition of racial otherness, despite the fact that black subjects had actually been living as citizens in the nation state for quite some time.

9. See also Althusser on the “ideology of struggle.”
  10. Unlike Radost Bokel, Elfriede Fiegert could never shake off the racial ties to her signature character. The media discourse of the day conflated Fiegert’s public persona as a black German artist with the cinematic depiction of a mixed-race orphan without genealogical ties to a German cultural identity. In contrast, Bokel benefitted from the social justice movement of the late 60s in Germany, in which mainly white university students used blackness as a symbolic arena for a left-wing backlash against the post-Nazi era of the country. The radical impetus of the movement’s identity politics rested on the identification with other supposedly suppressed individuals, e.g. members of the African diaspora. In the wake of a concerted effort to support Black culture in a pro-American, Western environment, black Germans like Bokel had access to wider networks of institutional support and racially diverse roles than, for instance, Toxi Fiegert. This answers the question Angelica Fenner raises about the evolution of German society in terms of racial inclusion two decades after the release of *Toxi* in the politically loaded post-war climate of the 50s. Toxi Fiegert became the living archive of a reductive casting process, which prevented her from wider access to non-black roles in a white-defined society. What resulted were stock characters that trapped Fiegert in reductive roles defined by exotic tropes and oversexed female sexuality, for instance as the seductress Moni in *Der dunkle Stern* (“The Dark Star”, 1955) or as the exotic servant girl Lailani in *Unsere tollen Tanten in der Südsee* (“Our Amazing Aunts in the Caribbean”, 1964). With *Toxi* as a cinematic antecedent, it is no big stretch to draw a connection to the racial casting choice in Schaaf’s production of *Momo* as a continuity of on-going ethno-centric bias in German film.
  11. The focus of this paper and a limit of space do not permit me to go into greater detail about the colonial discourse here. Recent film projects like the 2001 film adaptation of Stefanie Zweig’s book *Nirgendwo in Afrika* (1998) however indicate the richness of this field in visual culture studies.
  12. For more on this, see Ege’s discussion on jazz and soul music.
  13. The limited context of this paper cannot accommodate a more detailed discussion of this “fading to white”. Suffice it to say that the specifically German context and the tradition of racial performance, e.g. the Afrikaschau, had placed Schaaf’s production in a somewhat too limited market segment for international avail to a younger (and already more cosmopolitan?) audience. The look behind the curtain of the racialized gaze of the Afrikaschau however can be traced back to Ludwig Knaus’ painting *Hinter dem Vorhang* (1880) and Joachim Ringelnatz’ poem *Eines Negers Klage* (undated). Both hint at early, critical engagements with the actual presence of black German citizens and their imaginary otherness.
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