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RÉSUMÉ – L'introduction porte sur des imaginations littéraires noires de l'Europe qui inversent ou compliquent le regard européen (néo )colonialiste sur "l'Autre africain". Elle examine l'état de la recherche et donne un aperçu des objectifs et des sources de ce numéro spécial, dont les contributions tiennent compte des spécificités nationales et des contextes transnationaux. Sandra Folie et Gianna Zocco soulignent le rôle important de la littérature comparée pour les études afro-européennes (et vice-versa).

MOTS-CLÉS – études afro-européennes, littérature comparée, imagologie, *world literature*, transnationalisme

FOLIE (Sandra), ZOCCO (Gianna), « Introduction. Esquisses de l'Europe noire : imaginer l'Europe et les Européens dans les récits d'Afrique et des diasporas africaines »

ABSTRACT – The introduction informs about Black literary imaginations of Europe that reverse or complicate the (neo-)colonialist European gaze at the "African Other". It reviews the state of research and provides an overview of the aims and sources of the special issue, whose individual contributions take into account both national specificities and transnational contexts. Sandra Folie and Gianna Zocco emphasise the important role of comparative literature for the field of African European studies (and *vice-versa*).

KEYWORDS – African European studies, comparative literature, imagology, world literature, transnationalism

## INTRODUCTION

### Sketches of Black Europe: Imagining Europe/ans in African and African Diasporic Narratives<sup>1</sup>

Anyone who analyzes black literature  
must do so as a comparativist [...].  
Henry Louis GATES, *The Signifying  
Monkey*, 1988, p. xxiv.

What is Europe in the Black<sup>2</sup> imagination? An enlightened, technically advanced civil society that warmly welcomes its colonial subjects into the bosom of the “motherland”. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel, gain a Western education, or even find a “*zweite Heimat*” (“second home”),<sup>3</sup> albeit paid for with social isolation, racism, and sometimes exposure to “the poking eyes of the man-made monster” in “human zoos” and elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> A colour-blind, haven-like continent that allows African Americans to be “born again in

- 1 Gianna Zocco’s contribution to this publication is part of a project that has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 786281.
- 2 In this issue, we capitalise “Black” and lowercase “white” in certain usages. “Black” is a self-identification of Black Indigenous People of Colour (BIPOC) that goes beyond skin colour and is based on an understanding of race as a social category. Capitalising it highlights the socio-political act of resistance against white supremacy. The use of a lowercase “w” when spelling “white” indicates that it is not a self-designation but “a category of analysis created by Black scholars to make the white European norm visible”. See Natasha A. Kelly and Olive Vassell. “Black Europe. Contesting, Conceptualizing, and Organizing”. In: *Mapping Black Europe. Monuments, Markers, Memories*, edited by Kelly and Vassell, Bielefeld: transcript, 2023, pp. 7-24 (18). <https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839454138> [accessed 4th October 2023].
- 3 Dualla Misipo. *Der Junge aus Duala. Ein Regierungsschüler erzählt...*, edited by Jürg Schneider, Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2022 [1973], p. 56.
- 4 Diana Ferrus. “Tribute to Sarah Baartman (Written in Holland, June 1998)”. *Feminist Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2003, pp. 592-593 (593).

a new condition”<sup>5</sup> and to “feel like a person”.<sup>6</sup> A refuge “from the prejudiced restrictions of the New World”, which one is free to enjoy as long as one does not mind being exoticised as a “veritable savage”, “pet dog”,<sup>7</sup> or “*pantin*” (“puppet”).<sup>8</sup> A supposedly free and peaceful part of the world, which for some of its Black citizens felt as if they lived in “the belly of the beast”<sup>9</sup> or side by side with the threatening “specter of a Europe united against Africa, Asia, and Latin America”.<sup>10</sup> A heavily guarded fortress where life is said to correspond to a miraculous “European dream”, though the very notion of a “Dream of Europe” was already disputed at a 1988 conference of the same title, where Audre Lorde bluntly remarked that although “[s]ome here say that Europe civilized the world”, to her and for “two thirds of the world’s population, People of Color, it is more like Europe enslaved the world”.<sup>11</sup>

Given these differences not only of “roots” (African, African American, African Caribbean, African European, etc.), “routes” (via aeroplane or as a boat migrant across the Mediterranean), and European destinations (west or east, north or south, centre or periphery), but also those of gender, class, sexual orientation, or type of relation to Europe (renowned professor on a fellowship or refugee without documents, native of a European country or tourist, Afropolitan or immigrant from a rural area), the images, representations, appropriations, and narrative uses of Europe/ans in writings by people of African and African diasporic descent vary to a great extent. Taking into consideration that such

5 Paul Gilroy. *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso, 1993, p. 18.

6 Zadie Smith. *Swing Time*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2016, p. 428.

7 Nella Larsen. *Quicksand* [1928]. In: *Quicksand & Passing. Two Novels*. London: Serpent’s Tail, 2014, p. 96; p. 69; p. 70.

8 Jane Nardal. “Pantins exotiques”. *La Dépêche Africaine*, 8 Oct. 1928, p. 2; reprinted and translated as “Exotic Puppets” in T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting. *Negritude Women*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, pp. 108-113.

9 Stuart Hall. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”. In: *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 222-237 (223).

10 Katharina Oguntoye, May Ayim [as Opitz], and Dagmar Schultz. “Preface to the English Language Edition”. In: *Shouting Our Colors. Afro-German Women Speak Out*, edited by Oguntoye, Ayim [as Opitz], and Schultz, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992, pp. xv-xx (xix).

11 Audre Lorde. “International Conference of Writers: Dream of Europe”. In: *Dream of Europe. Selected Seminars and Interviews 1984–1992*, edited by Mayra A. Rodríguez Castro, Chicago: Kenning Editions, 2020, pp. 268-269 (268).

European connections are not necessarily based on a (factual or fictional) physical presence in Europe, the situation gets even more complicated – as they can also be inspired by the presence of Europe/ans in African countries (colonisers, entrepreneurs, travellers, tourists, etc.), or by “the European” as a narrated imagined entity. Though a first reaction to this heterogeneity might be the dismissal of the categories “African”, “African diasporic”, and “European” as too vast and unspecific lenses of study, we think that taking the narrative reversal of the colonial gaze directed at the Other as a heuristic starting point may open up a way of looking at both Europe and Black literatures that promises to be fruitful and relevant – especially when doing comparative literature in an increasingly diverse Europe. We expect it to be fruitful in this context because the question of the reversal of the gaze directed at the Other (which may also turn out to be not a reversal but rather a figure of reciprocal entanglement of different homo- and hetero-images<sup>12</sup>) is one that is by necessity comparative, transnational, multilingual (and in addition often intertextual, intermedial, thematological, and of world literary relevance). Thus, it is at the core of what we do in our discipline. Moreover, we consider this endeavour of particular relevance given that the current political climate is transnationally characterised by resurgent nationalism, persistent racism, and often polarised debates about so-called identity-politics.

A turning point in the current debate has been the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, whose outcry, as Natasha A. Kelly and Olive Vassell write in the introduction to *Mapping Black Europe*, “did not pass over Europe without significant impact”.<sup>13</sup> George Floyd’s public execution in 2020 “had retraumatized Black Europeans, igniting their experiences with racism and recalling violent memories of the many other victims

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12 This is the experience narrated by the German ethnographer Heike Behrend when she learned that the inhabitants of Kenya’s Tugen Hills, with whom she lived for a period of several years, called her a “monkey”: “Denn meine Bezeichnung als Affe war eben nicht nur als Bild des primitiven Anderen der Anderen zu verstehen, sondern beinhaltete auch eine Reflexion ihrer kolonialen Erfahrung.” (“For my designation as ape was not simply to be understood as an image of the primitive Other of the Others, but included also a reflection about their colonial experience.”) Heike Behrend. *Menschwerdung eines Affen. Eine Autobiografie der ethnografischen Forschung*. Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2020, p. 80. Our translation.

13 Kelly and Vassell, “Black Europe”, *op. cit.*, p. 7. See also the Spring 2022 issue on “The Global Reach of Black Lives Matter” (vol. 55, no. 1) of the journal *Novel. A Forum on Fiction*, edited by Justin Mitchell and John Marx.

of racism and police brutality”.<sup>14</sup> The BLM movement highlights the importance of addressing the challenges faced by Black populations and the necessity of acknowledging their significant contributions to the social, economic, and cultural aspects of past and present life in Europe. It has also helped to break the silence on systemic racism by bringing a Black European perspective on the historical legacies of colonialism and enslavement into mainstream society.<sup>15</sup> Katherine McKittrick writes that “Black imaginations and mappings are evidence of the struggle over social space”.<sup>16</sup> Such struggles have become very visible in different areas: be it statues that are toppled (or not), looted objects in museums that are restituted (or not),<sup>17</sup> or curricula in schools and universities that are decolonised (or not).<sup>18</sup>

Compared to these much-debated struggles, the contributions in this *CompLit* special issue focus on somewhat less visible Black interventions, which may be seen as forerunners or allies in these attempts at (re)-appropriating social and cultural space: i.e., Black literary imaginations (and sometimes also mappings) of Europe. Thereby, the *Sketches of Black Europe* gathered here pay close attention to a subject that is often neglected in heated political debates and established scholarship, both from the fields of African European and diaspora studies (in which historical or sociological perspectives often dominate),<sup>19</sup> and from comparative and world literature studies (in which the writings of canonised, white authors still receive more academic attention): the aesthetic and narrative

14 Kelly and Vassell, “Black Europe”, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

16 Katherine McKittrick. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006, p. 9.

17 See also *Reparation, Restitution, and the Politics of Memory / Réparation, restitution et les politiques de la mémoire. Perspectives from Literary, Historical, and Cultural Studies / Perspectives littéraires, historiques et culturelles*, edited by Mario Laarmann, Clément Ndé Fongang, Carla Seemann, and Laura Vordermayer, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110799514> [accessed 4th October 2023].

18 See, for example, the *London Review of Education's* special feature on “Decolonising the School Curriculum”, edited by Denise Miller, Emma Towers, and Shone Surendran, 2022; and *Possibilities and Complexities of Decolonising Higher Education Critical Perspectives on Praxis*, edited by Aneta Hayes, Kathy Luckett, and Greg William Misiaszek, New York: Routledge, 2023.

19 This special issue thus also responds to Stephen Small's demand that “[l]iterature must figure prominently, too” in his introduction to the groundbreaking volume *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*, edited by Darlene Clark Hine, Trica Danielle Keaton, and Stephen Small, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009, pp. xxiii-xxxviii (xxix).

characteristics of the writings by people of African and African diasporic descent, and their complexity, originality, and innovativeness in matters of language and literary expression.

This issue brings together researchers from different disciplines such as African studies, African diaspora studies, African or Black European studies, critical whiteness studies, comparative literature, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and world literature. It also collects the perspectives of scholars who are – in both their professional and private lives – at home in different languages, countries, and national philologies, with a particular emphasis on the German-speaking parts of Europe and neighbouring European countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, and Slovakia. All the scholars gathered here share an interest in exploring narrative imaginations of Europe and its inhabitants in fictional and fact-based literary texts (and in some cases also audiovisual narratives) by African, African diasporic, and African European writers. We came to know most of them at the Blankensee-Colloquium on *Sketches of Black Europe*, which we hosted at the Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung (ZfL) in Berlin in March 2022. This international colloquium, which grew out of a panel which we organised for the ninth congress of the *European Society of Comparative Literature/Société Européenne de Littérature Comparée* (Rome, September 2022) on “Imagining inclusive communities in European culture”,<sup>20</sup> provided us with the opportunity to study African and African diasporic narratives and their complex connections to Europe/ans in a way that pays close attention to their heterogeneity while approaching them from a transnational and inclusive perspective.

The fruitful and intense exchanges experienced at the two events confirmed to us that, in the case of Black literatures about Europe, such an explicitly inclusive approach, which bears in mind “the power of fiction as a tool to question or broaden community boundaries”,<sup>21</sup>

20 It may sound confusing that the colloquium (see <https://www.zfl-berlin.org/event/sketches-of-black-europe-imagining-europe-ans-in-african-and-african-diasporic-narratives.html> [accessed 12th June 2023]) grew out of a panel that took place half a year later. However, this is one of the achronological developments due to the COVID-19 pandemic: the ESCL/SELG congress was initially planned for 2021 and then postponed to 2022.

21 “Imagining inclusive communities in European culture / Imaginer des communautés inclusives dans la culture européenne / Immaginare comunità inclusive nella cultura europea. (Call for papers)” <https://www.avdigital.de/en/networking/details/callforpapers/>

can be productive for at least two reasons: firstly, the specific topic we were interested in – i.e. the narrative reversal of the gaze directed at the Other in the Black imagination – is one that is “by nature” transnational and/or transcultural, and also intertextual and sometimes intermedial. African and African diasporic texts of different languages and times (as well as other Black cultural productions such as colon statues or “video griotism”<sup>22</sup>) share their being embedded in a complex and typically asymmetrical regime of gazes on both the level of their formal and thematic elements, and the level of their reception. This means that they are voluntarily structured and/or involuntarily read as reversals of the (former) coloniser’s gaze at the (formerly) colonised subject. Thus, they express a relation between looking and agency which bell hooks – remembering the repeated punishments through which she learned as a child that staring at others can be dangerous – sums up in the experience that one gradually becomes “[a]fraid to look, but fascinated by the gaze. There is power in looking”.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, issues of transnationality and inclusivity have a long, but in parts not very well-known tradition within the broader field of “Africana” studies. Here, the usefulness of employing inclusive terms and building Black transnational communities has been explained by their ability to express shared experiences of racism, by their contribution to the political consciousness of marginalised diasporic groups and to the creation of an intergenerational memory space and, finally, by their applicability to the transcultural and intertextual character of African (diasporic) cultural productions. Therefore, employing a transnational, inclusive, and comparative perspective for the study of Black literatures about Europe may also open up new ways to draw productively on that tradition.

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imagining-inclusive-communities-in-european-culture-imaginer-des-communautes-inclusives-dans-la-cu/ [accessed 21st June 2023].

- 22 The African American artist Ulysses Jenkins has often been called a “video griot”, someone who combines the oral West African tradition of storytelling (*griotism*) with video and digital tools. In his works he repeatedly challenges the representation of marginalised communities in mass media – often by ‘appropriating’ stereotypical images of Black people and racist practices such as blackfacing. The Julia Stoschek Foundation brought his first major retrospective and first institutional solo exhibition “Ulysses Jenkins: Without Your Interpretation (11 February 2023–30 July 2023)” to Berlin and thus introduced his art to a wider German and European audience. See <https://jsfoundation.art/exhibitions/ulysses-jenkins-without-your-interpretation/> [accessed 22nd June 2023].
- 23 bell hooks. “The Oppositional Gaze”. In: *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992, pp. 115-131 (115).

## STATE OF THE ART

Early efforts to create a shared field for Black aspirations, such as “Pan-Africanism”, “Black Internationalism”, and “Négritude”, date back to the turn of the twentieth century. However, the African American literary scholar Melvin Dixon, whom Christel Temple labelled “a father of modern comparative Black literature”,<sup>24</sup> did not introduce the literature-specific term of a “world black literature” until 1977. In a seminal essay, he studied African diasporic novels of the interwar years that “explore the idea of racial community for theme, imagery, and heroic characterization”.<sup>25</sup> Focusing on René Maran’s *Batouala* (1921), Claude McKay’s *Banjo* (1929), and Jacques Roumain’s *Masters of the Dew* (1945), which he considered broadly to be representatives of the Black literary movements in France, the U.S., and the Caribbean respectively, Dixon found that “in the span of twenty-five years, 1920-1945, a world black literature was fashioned that cemented the identity of the New Negro and an international community as his audience”.<sup>26</sup> In 2007, Dixon’s ideas were championed by Christel Temple in her *Literary Spaces: Introduction to Comparative Black Literature*, where she makes an “attempt to offer a unique framework for a broad comparative study of Black literatures”.<sup>27</sup> In Temple’s conception, this comparative study is based on “*Pan-Africanism*, the broad idea of unity, commonality, and cooperation among people who are physically, culturally, consciously, geographically, psychologically, or politically of African descent”.<sup>28</sup> While Black European literatures are, however, only marginally present in Temple’s book, Sabrina Brancato has been one of very few European-based scholars opting for “Afro-European Literature(s)” as a new discursive category. In a much-cited 2008 article on Afro-European literature(s), she makes the argument that “[t]he texts themselves are transnational and transcultural and foreground a

24 Christel N. Temple. *Literary Spaces: Introduction to Comparative Black Literature*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2007, p. 22.

25 Melvin Dixon. “Toward a World Black Literature & Community”. *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1977, pp. 750-769 (750).

26 *Ibid.*

27 Temple, *Literary Spaces*, *op. cit.*, p. xv.

28 *Ibid.*

comparatist perspective where Africa and Europe – and Africa *in* Europe – are continuously set against each other”.<sup>29</sup> More recently, a similar idea was expressed by Elisa Diallo, a jury member of the Black German literature festival *Resonanzen* (19–21 May 2022). She described noticing, “*wie diese afrikanische Diaspora in Europa ein Netz bildet an vergleichbaren Geschichten, vergleichbaren Schicksalen*” (“how this African diaspora in Europe forms a web of comparable stories, comparable fates”).<sup>30</sup>

Transnationality and inclusivity, which go hand in hand with considerations of a “world black literature” or “Afro-European literature(s)”, have also been motivating factors for the well-established frameworks of the “African diaspora” and the “Black Atlantic”. The latter term was coined in Paul Gilroy’s book of the same title, in which he studied the transatlantic experiences of African American intellectuals such as Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Richard Wright, describing them as “figures who begin as African Americans or Caribbean people and are then changed into something else which evades those specific labels and with them all fixed notions of nationality and national identity”.<sup>31</sup> It was especially Gilroy’s proposition that scholars should expand and decentre African American studies by taking the newly introduced “Black Atlantic” as “one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective”<sup>32</sup> that inspired numerous subsequent studies. However, the “rhetoric of inclusiveness” of Gilroy’s seminal contribution was criticised for “not match[ing] his selection of material”.<sup>33</sup> Another point of disagreement is Gilroy’s terminology itself, with some scholars proposing important complementary terms and units of analysis such as the “Black Mediterranean”<sup>34</sup> (at sea level)

29 Sabrina Brancato. “Afro-European Literature(s): A New Discursive Category?” *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2008, pp. 1-13 (11). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20109619> [accessed 4th October 2023].

30 Elisa Diallo quoted in *Resonanzen. Schwarzes Literaturfestival. Eine Dokumentation*, edited by Sharon Dodua Otoo, Jeannette Oholi, and the Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen, Leipzig: Spector Books, 2022, p. 126. Our translation.

31 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic, op. cit.*, p. 19.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

33 Lucy Evans. “The Black Atlantic. Exploring Gilroy’s Legacy”. *Atlantic Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2009, pp. 255-268 (260).

34 See Alessandra Di Maio. “The Mediterranean, or Where Africa Does (Not) Meet Italy”. In: *The Cinemas of Italian Migration: European and Transatlantic Narratives*, edited by Sabine Schrader and Daniel Winkler, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013,

or “Black Central Europe”<sup>35</sup> (at land level), and others preferring the historically older and geographically broader and decentred concept of African diaspora. As Brent Edwards puts it, the latter concept allows for a way of thinking “beyond such limiting geographic frames, and without reliance on an obsession with origins”, thus enabling “an account of black transnational formations that attends to their constitutive differences”.<sup>36</sup>

In the context of Black European studies, other decidedly inclusive terms are “Afro-Europe”, “Afropea”, “Afropean(s)”, and “African European(s)”. Sabrina Brancato, Léonora Miano, Johny Pitts, and Olivette Otele remark in their eponymous books that these notions are confronted with the similar challenge of building a community while considering internal differences. On the one hand, they have to account for the fact that coherence might only be possible in the form of “scattered fragments”.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, they express a desire to maintain the vision of a “‘contrapuntal’ awareness of simultaneous dimensions”,<sup>38</sup> a “shared Afropean consciousness”,<sup>39</sup> or an “*utopie post-occidentale et post-raciste*”.<sup>40</sup> Thus, according to Otele, “African European thinking celebrates the idea of home, but also states the importance of seeking a home that embraces one’s differences”.<sup>41</sup> As it seems, it is one consequence of this contradiction between the embracing of difference and the desire for unity that African European transnationality often has a utopian quality. In this sense, the different variants of twenty-first century Black European community building are astoundingly reminiscent of Lorde’s much earlier proclamation that “we [Afro-Europeans and other Black Europeans] concentrate difference inside of us in ways that can illuminate the future with a light the world has not yet seen”.<sup>42</sup>

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pp. 41-52; and the more recent edited volume *The Black Mediterranean. Bodies, Borders and Citizenship*, edited by Gabriele Proglia et al., Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

35 See the Black Central European Studies Network (BCESN), founded in 2014, <https://blackcentraleurope.com/> [accessed 22nd June 2023].

36 Brent Hayes Edwards. “The Uses of Diaspora”. *Social Text*, vol. 66, no. 19, 1, 2001, pp. 45-73 (63, 54).

37 Johny Pitts. *Afropean: Notes from Black Europe*. London: Penguin, 2019, p. 280.

38 Brancato borrows Edward Said’s terminology from *Reflections on Exile and Other Critical Essays* (London: Granta, 2001, p. 186); Brancato, “Afro-European Literature(s)”, *op. cit.*, p. 11; see also her book *Afro-Europe: Texts and Contexts*. Berlin: trafo, 2009.

39 Pitts, *Afropean*, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

40 Léonora Miano. *Afropea: Utopie post-occidentale et post-raciste*. Paris: Grasset, 2020.

41 Olivette Otele. *African Europeans. An Untold History*. London: Hurst & Company, 2020, p. 163.

42 Lorde, “International Conference of Writers”, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

Despite the undeniable relation to Europe that characterises these transnational efforts in African, African diaspora, and African European studies, they have only rarely been considered by a discipline that might appear as their natural ally in the field of literary and cultural studies: comparative literature (with the above-mentioned field of African-centred “comparative Black literature” in the United States being the most notable exception). Given that it is one of the specialisms of European-based comparative literature to study “the literary, narrative and rhetorical cross-cultural representations of various nations and groups”,<sup>43</sup> it is rather surprising that the narrative imaginations by writers from marginalised communities as well as the literary myth or image of Europe as a (fragile) unity of its own have only rarely received elevated academic attention. Within imagology – the field that traditionally studies such “intercultural relations in terms of mutual perceptions, images and self-images”<sup>44</sup> – this may be related to the repeated accusation of it as being Eurocentric.<sup>45</sup> Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen’s renowned critical survey *Imagology* (2007), for example, includes an article on the image of Africa, but none on Europe as a unity of its own, which is instead divided into several articles of individual populations, nationalities, and regions.<sup>46</sup> In a later article, Leerssen explained Europe’s becoming “the hole in that book’s donut” as a deliberate omission because it simply “proved too complex, too shape-shifting, to be covered within the book’s scope”.<sup>47</sup> Does this, in other words, mean that Europe as imagined in literature resists being “provincialised” and cast into a set of frequently repeated stereotypes in

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43 Brigitte Le Juez. “Cosmopolitan Theory: Examining the (Dis-)Location of Imagology”. *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2021, pp. 6-27 (8).

44 Joep Leerssen. “On Imagology”, [www.imagologica.eu](http://www.imagologica.eu) [accessed 12th June 2023].

45 See Claudia Perner. “Dislocating Imagology: And How Much of It Can (Or Should) Be Retrieved?” In: *Postcolonial Translocations: Cultural Representation and Critical Spatial Thinking*, edited by Marga Munkelt, Markus Schmitz, Mark Stein, and Silke Stroh, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014, pp. 29-44 (32); and Zrinka Blažević. “Global Challenge: The (Im)Possibilities of Transcultural Imagology”. *Umjetnost riječi*, vol. 58, 2014, pp. 355-367 (356).

46 See *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey*, edited by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen, Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2007.

47 Joep Leerssen. “The Camp and the Home. Europe as Myth and Metaphor”. In: *National Stereotyping, Identity Politics, European Crises*, edited by Jürgen Barkhoff and Leerssen, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2021, pp. 125-141 (126). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv1v7zbzt.11> [accessed 4th October 2023].

a way that other equally large or even larger entities do not? Or would this be a Eurocentric assumption, which underestimates the originality, imaginativeness, and audacity of non-European literatures? Undoubtedly, this question is very much a matter of perspective, depending on the scholars involved, the theories and methods employed, and – perhaps most importantly – the literatures studied.

While hetero-images of Europe – especially those expressed in literatures of the Global South – continue to be one of the most challenging research gaps in imagology, it is worth noting that Leerssen, in more recent articles, has tackled the complex problem of a continental (auto-) image (which he refers to as a European “ethnotype” or “Eurotype”). He finds that

[m]ost Eurotypes were, and remain, Eurocentric in one way or another. Throughout literary history, Europe has always had control over the means of its representation: the terms in which Europe was opposed to its Others were autonomously defined by Europeans. That luxury was not available to subaltern groups. However, in the present-day *crise de la conscience européenne*, Eurocentrism has lost its unargued, aprioristical status; and our understanding of Europe’s current identity crisis may be improved by a closer investigation of that fact. Europe is being (re-)defined by those who dissociate from it.<sup>48</sup>

This description of a European auto-image echoes (and implicitly incorporates) Richard Dyer’s observation that “white people have had so very much more control over the definition of themselves and indeed of others than have those others”.<sup>49</sup> While Leerssen’s and Dyer’s statements both rightfully point to the asymmetrical distribution of discursive power and the way this affects our representations of self and other, the question arises whether the assumptions of a necessary Eurocentricity of Eurotypes and an “all-embracing” white discursive sovereignty are not somewhat short-sighted or presentist, if not Eurocentric themselves. In an article for *Ebony*, the African American lawyer, author, and activist Randall Robinson takes a *longue durée* perspective, and reminds us that the course of world history (including, we would add, world literary history) was far less determined from a pre-modern standpoint. If

48 Joep Leerssen. “Eurotypes after Eurocentrism: Mixed Feelings in an Uncomfortable World”. In: *The Idea of Europe – The Clash of Projections*, edited by Vladimir Biti, Vivian Liska, and Leerssen, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2021, pp. 85-98 (87).

49 Richard Dyer. *White*. London/New York: Routledge, 2008 [1997], p. xiii.

historians had been asked around 1200 “where Africa, Asia, or Europe would place 800 years thence, not one of them would likely have placed Europe first. Similarly, not one of them would have placed Africa last. For Europe, in the year 1200, had long been the most backward of the three major world regions”.<sup>50</sup> More than half a millennium earlier, “Africans in Timbuktu had built Sankore, the world’s first university [...]. This was well before the Moors arrived in Spain from Africa to build Europe’s first university at Salamanca after 711 AD”.<sup>51</sup> Like the “historylessness” and “culturelessness” of sub-Saharan Africa, their “scriptlessness” is also a colonialist white myth. Writing systems and practices have existed for centuries not only in Timbuktu, but also in Chinguetti, the Ghanaian Empire, East African Abyssinia, and elsewhere.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, as early as in the tenth century, people in West Africa used a modified Arabic alphabet – *Ajami* – to write in a range of local languages such as Wolof, Hausa, Fula, Mandinka, Swahili, Amharic, Tigrigna, and Berber, among others.<sup>53</sup> In Joe Otim Dramiga’s recent short story “Adlam”, the protagonist Moussa, who smuggles *Ajami* texts in order to preserve them, asks his uncle why their ancestors in mediaeval Mali did not develop their own script. His uncle answers: “*Ich weiß es nicht. Ich vermute, weil es für ihre Lebensweise nicht notwendig war. Sie hatten die Griots, die das gemeinschaftliche Wissen bewahrten.*” (“I don’t know. I suspect because it was not necessary for their way of life. They had the griots<sup>54</sup> who preserved communal knowledge.”)<sup>55</sup>

50 Randall Robinson. “Two Sides: Do We Need An ‘An Apology For Slavery Is Not Enough’”. *Ebony*, vol. 62, no. 10, 1 August 2007, p. 76.

51 *Ibid.*

52 See Alain Mabanckou and Abdourahman Waberi. “Diagne, Souleymane Bachir”. In: *Der Puls Afrikas. Eine Liebeserklärung von A-Z*. Trans. by Andreas G. Förster and Elsbeth Ranke. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2022, p. 77.

53 Fallou Ngom. *Muslims Beyond the Arab World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 8-9; Molly Callahan. “Unearthing a Long-Ignored African Writing System, One Researcher Finds African History, by Africans”. *The Brink*, 21 December 2022, <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2022/fallou-ngom-discovers-ajami-african-writing-system/> [accessed 22nd June 2023].

54 Both earlier and more recent Afro-diasporic literary texts show that these storytellers were also often *griottes*. In Dualla Misipo’s *Der Junge aus Duala* (“The Boy from Duala”), it is the narrator’s grandmother who recounts the “*Kriegsäpfelmärchen*” (“war apple tale”) and tells him about the “*Korrongo*” (a kind of Cameroonian troubadours). In his novel *Confidences*, Max Lobe learns more about the independence movement in Cameroon and its leader Ruben Um Nyobè from the old Mâ Maliga in Bassa Forest. See Misipo, *Der Junge aus Duala*, *op. cit.*, and Max Lobe. *Confidences*. Carouge-Genève: Éditions Zoé, 2016.

55 Joe Otim Dramiga. “Adlam”. In: *Resonanzen*, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-103 (101). Our translation.

The fact that *Ajami* is still little known in Europe – even jury members of the Black literature festival *Resonanzen*, where “Adlam” was discussed, had to google it<sup>56</sup> – is connected to another problem that sometimes persists in literary scholarship: even when informed by postcolonial theory and cautious of the pitfalls of Eurocentrism, there is a tendency to overlook the perspectives of BIPOC as expressed in their own written or oral statements, and to include their (assumed) views only indirectly. Such a tendency is visible in Leerssen’s description of a European ethnotype which does not consider the images expressed in BIPOC literatures, but includes the auto-image of “a *guilt-ridden Europe*”, in which BIPOC’s postcolonial critique of European supremacism “has been internalised by Europeans”.<sup>57</sup> Related to this tendency is the European (especially French and German) tradition of the “inverse ethnography”, which spans from canonised literary examples such as Montesquieu’s *Lettres Persanes* (1721), via treatises by ethnographers such as Julius Lips, Michel Leiris, Fritz Kramer, and most recently Heike Behrend, to the Austrian mockumentary movie *Das Fest des Hubnes* (1992) (“The Festival of the Chicken”) and the controversial investigative journalism of Günter Wallraff. Typically, such white European “internalist”<sup>58</sup> stories mainly use the Othered (who might be Africans, Arabs, Black Europeans, Europeans of Colour, African Europeans, Afropeans, etc.) “as a background against which the reputed ‘character’ or ‘identity’”<sup>59</sup> of the self is silhouetted. Thus, despite the self-critical impetus that many of these texts take towards Europe and its (neo)colonialism, they may be seen as remnants and residues of the colonialist European gaze at the Other, which tended to ignore the reverse gaze of the Other at “us”. Instead, this “white gaze” performed an asymmetrical way of looking, which Maisha-Maureen Auma attributes to the colonial myth that racially marked Others “are not able to return this observing gaze. In other words, ‘blacks can’t see whites’”.<sup>60</sup> This seems to have changed

56 Aminata Cissé Schleicher quoted in *Resonanzen*, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.

57 Leerssen, “Eurotypes after Eurocentrism”, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

58 Stuart Hall. “Europe’s Other Self”. *Marxism Today*, August 1991, pp. 18-19 (18). See also Leerssen, “The Camp and the Home”, *op. cit.*

59 Leerssen, “Eurotypes after Eurocentrism”, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

60 Maureen Maisha Auma [as Eggers]. “Ein Schwarzes Wissensarchiv”. In: *Mythen, Masken und Subjekte. Kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland*, edited by Eggers, Grada Kilomba, Peggy Piesche, and Susan Arndt, Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2009, pp. 18-21 (18).

only in some, mostly very recent cases, which often have an explicitly decolonial agenda. For example, Behrend reflects the positionality of her white European self very closely and states:

*Ich präsentiere mich dem Leser also weniger als autonomes Subjekt und Beobachterin, sondern vielmehr als sehr genau beobachtetes Objekt in einem Feld von Zufällen, Unsicherheiten, Konflikten und höchst unterschiedlichen Machtverhältnissen. Dennoch bin ich es, die schreibt und beschreibt.*

“Thus, I present myself to the reader less as an autonomous subject and observer, but rather as a very closely observed object in a field characterised by coincidences, insecurities, conflicts, and extremely different relations of power. Nevertheless, I am the one who is writing and describing.”<sup>61</sup>

Mostly, a (neo)colonial, Eurocentric politics of the gaze also persists in world literature studies, currently a particularly thriving field within comparative literature. One of its most eminent critics, Aamir R. Mufti, addresses this eloquently in his book on Orientalisms and world literatures, when he raises the rhetorical question whether he could not also “have written a preface in which the native of an Asian or African society, for instance, was invited to imagine a historical encounter with a European writer as a means of discovering the alienness of European ‘literature’”.<sup>62</sup>

However, some more recent developments suggest that both world literature studies and imagology might be changing in a direction that makes them better equipped to consider the literary perspectives from people of Black and other marginalised communities. For example, one of the research areas of the German Cluster of Excellence 2020 “Temporal Communities: Doing Literature in a Global Perspective”, based at the Freie Universität Berlin, is investigating “how a perceived literary globality is actually an effect of competing communities”.<sup>63</sup> Recent publications in the field of comparative literature also deal with the decentring of world literature by trying to understand it through South-South comparisons that do not necessarily need “the West” or Europe as a basis for their analyses. In *World Literature Decentered*, Ian Almond asks what world literature would look like if we stopped referring to “the West”. Similarly,

61 Behrend, *Menschwerdung eines Affen*, *op. cit.*, p. 15. Our translation.

62 Aamir R. Mufti. *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures*. Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard UP, 2016, p. xi.

63 See <https://www.temporal-communities.de/research/competing-communities/research-agenda/index.html> [accessed 22nd June 2023].

the edited volume *Entanglements* proposes to envision world literature from the Global South.<sup>64</sup> In Bloomsbury's renowned series *Literatures as World Literature*, two volumes were published in the last years which investigate African and African diasporic literary production in connection with world literature. The first volume, *Afropolitan Literature as World Literature*,<sup>65</sup> focuses primarily on the globally dominant form of what Eileen Julien has called "The Extroverted African Novel": "novels that we might broadly consider to be 'worldly' in the common-sense usage of the term"<sup>66</sup> because they refer intertextually to "hegemonic or global discourses",<sup>67</sup> for example. However, the second volume, *African Literatures as World Literatures*, takes a decidedly "Afrocentric approach", making "visible circulatory effects and aesthetic encounters with and projections of the world that have perhaps received less critical visibility".<sup>68</sup>

Within the field of imagology, Joep Leerssen has proposed some adjustments in the light of developments such as "the demise of Eurocentrism and the rise of postnationalism".<sup>69</sup> Among others, he has pointed to the importance of studying the literary production of people from diaspora groups who are seen as outsiders in both their countries of residence and of "origin".<sup>70</sup> In her survey article on the state and future of imagology, Brigitte Le Juez also mentions the study of such an "inner other" as a "worthwhile pursuit for researchers around the globe, in particular through the literature of multicultural states and through diasporic literature".<sup>71</sup> The investigation of the literary writings by such "others

64 Ian Almond. *World Literature Decentered. Beyond the "West" through Turkey, Mexico and Bengal*. New York: Routledge, 2022; and *Entanglements: Envisioning World Literature from the Global South*, edited by Andrea Gremels et al., Stuttgart: ibidem, 2022.

65 *Afropolitan Literature as World Literature*, edited by James Hodapp, New York et al.: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. See also Dobrota Pucherová's review in this issue, pp. 215–218.

66 Alexander Fyfe and Madhu Krishnan. "Introduction: African Literatures and the Problem of 'the World'". In: *African Literatures as World Literature*, edited by Fyfe and Krishnan, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, pp. 1-16 (3).

67 Eileen Julien. "The Extroverted African Novel". In: *The Novel*, vol. I, edited by Franco Moretti, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006, pp. 667-702 (681).

68 Fyfe and Krishnan, "Introduction", *op. cit.*, pp. 14 and 5 respectively.

69 Joep Leerssen. "Imagology: On Using Ethnicity to Make Sense of the World". *Iberic@l / Revue d'études ibériques et ibéro-américaines*, no. 10, 2016, pp. 13-31 (13). <https://iberical.sorbonne-universite.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Pages-from-Iberic@l-no10-automne-2016-Final-2.pdf> [accessed 12th June 2023].

70 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

71 Le Juez, "Cosmopolitan Theory", *op. cit.*, p. 17.

from within”<sup>72</sup> who are sometimes even misread as “others from within from without”, is one promising direction that is further explored in the volume *New Perspectives on Imagology*, which engages in a dialogue between imagology and concepts such as transnationality, (post-)colonialism, and intersectionality.<sup>73</sup>

When considering the narrative imaginations of people from the African diaspora in particular, a further aspect that needs revisioning is the category of “race”. While contemporary imagology perceives nations as “imagined communities” and national characters as “human-made”, it hardly considers the likewise imagined communities of racial belonging or the “peculiar synonymity of the terms European and white”.<sup>74</sup> As Natasha A. Kelly and Olive Vassell remind us,

[s]panning from the first wave of colonialism in the 15th century through the period of the Enlightenment to the second wave of colonialism in the 19th century, a sense of Europeanness was carried out into the world. First and foremost, Europe was associated with whiteness, becoming the center of the world and protected by the invisible membrane of its outer borders.<sup>75</sup>

This already indicates that the positive and progressive-sounding idea of a “European identity” – perhaps similar to the anti-imperialist ideology of “raceless” equality in former socialist Eastern Europe (see Dobrota Pucherová’s article in this issue, pp. 143–166) – is susceptible of hiding the notion of a racially or ethnically defined white Europe, which it has become a taboo to speak about openly after the horrors of colonialism, two World Wars, and the Holocaust. As such a blunt attribution would violate “the powerful narrative of Europe as a colorblind continent, largely untouched by the devastating ideology it exported all over the world”,<sup>76</sup> it is only consequent that Susan Arndt, in a German standard work on

72 Michelle Wright. *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora*. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2004, p. 24.

73 See *New Perspectives on Imagology*, edited by Katharina Edtstadler, Sandra Folie, and Gianna Zocco, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004513150> [accessed 4th October 2023].

74 Paul Gilroy. “Foreword: Migrancy, Culture, and a New Map of Europe”. In: *Blackening Europe: The African American Presence*, edited by Heike Raphael-Hernandez, New York: Routledge, 2004, pp. xi–xxii (xii).

75 Kelly and Vassell, “Black Europe”, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

76 Fatima El-Tayeb. *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, p. xv.

critical whiteness studies, refers to whiteness as “the neglected structural category of Europe”.<sup>77</sup> In a similar vein, Gloria Wekker, in her renowned study on the Dutch self-image, *White Innocence*, expresses her astonishment “that we still lack studies of whiteness, within a European context, that would also enable intra-European comparisons”.<sup>78</sup> One path that such comparisons could take is a closer look at Eastern European countries, which have so far played a mostly marginal role in African European studies. However, in recent years, there have been some efforts “of challenging some of the colorblind tendencies that have already been noted in Slavic studies”,<sup>79</sup> and of studying the Eastern European condition of “threatened whiteness”, as well as the parallels (and differences) “between postsocialist Eastern Europe and the postcolonial global South”.<sup>80</sup>

### AIMS, SOURCES, METHODS

This special issue on *Sketches of Black Europe/ans* explores the question of how Europe and its inhabitants – Black as well as white – are perceived in narrative works by Africans and “the hyphenated people”<sup>81</sup> of the African diaspora. It thereby aims to introduce and strengthen the position of Black perspectives in European-based comparative literature and to challenge the supposed “fundamental impossibility of being

77 Susan Arndt. “Weißsein. Die Verkannte Strukturkategorie Europas und Deutschlands”. In: *Mythen, Masken und Subjekte*, *op. cit.*, pp. 24–28 (24). Our translation.

78 Gloria Wekker. *White Innocence. Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, p. 17. In the meantime, a study on whiteness in German canonical literature has been published. See Magdalena Kießling. *Weiß Normalität. Perspektiven einer postkolonialen Literaturdidaktik*. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2020.

79 Christy Monet. “The Afterlife of Soviet Russia’s ‘Refusal to Be White’: A Du Boisian Lens on Post-Soviet Russian-US Relations”. *Slavic Review*, vol. 80, no. 2, 2021, pp. 316–326 (317).

80 Ivan Kalmar. “Race, Racialization, and the East of the European Union: an Introduction”. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 49, no. 6, 2023, pp. 1465–1480 (1466, 1472). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2022.2154909> [accessed 4th October 2023].

81 Audre Lorde. “Foreword to the English Edition of *Farbe bekennen. Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte*”. Republished in: *I Am Your Sister. Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde*, edited by Rudolph P. Byrd, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Oxford/New York: Oxford UP, 2009, pp. 169–176 (170).

both European, constructed to mean being white and Christian, and being black-Muslim-migrant-refugee”.<sup>82</sup> More specifically, our issue intends to increase comparative literature’s awareness to the manifold aesthetically innovative, but possibly also ambivalent Black literary strategies of imagining Europe/ans, which can take forms such as assimilation, subversion, and resistance, and range from mimicry, hybridity, and particularly Black types of figuration to assemblages or collages, strategic exoticism, and interventions such as rewrites, revisions, or counternarratives.

In theory – as we are well aware – studying the role of Europe/ans in the Black imagination would be an endeavour requiring us to reach out to the early days of colonialism and beyond. It would lead us to early, orally transmitted perceptions that may never have been written down directly, such as that sub-Saharan Africans, when they first saw white Europeans, “took them for dead people, for living cadavers”,<sup>83</sup> for “Bad Spirits”,<sup>84</sup> “ghosts” and “pale monsters”,<sup>85</sup> who looked “like skinless reptiles”.<sup>86</sup> Referring to those Africans who had been forced to the Americas in the Middle Passage, bell hooks points out that, “black folks have, from slavery on, shared with one another in conversations ‘special’ knowledge of whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of white people. [...] its purpose was to help black folks cope and survive in a white supremacist society”.<sup>87</sup> Such precise and typically “two-toned”<sup>88</sup> observations and “*Schwarze Wissensarchive*” (“Black knowledge archives”)<sup>89</sup> also had the function of ensuring the cohesion of Black communities during colonialism and slavery. These archives gradually expanded from vocabulary like “Kizungu”, an expression used by ethnic groups of the Kilimanjaro region to point out “that Europeans think only in an

82 Wekker, *White Innocence*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

83 Dyer, *White*, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

84 Yoko Tawada. “The Shadow Man”. In: *Facing the Bridge*. Trans. by Margaret Mitsutani. New York: New Directions, 2007, pp. 1-48 (3).

85 Sharon Dodua Otoo. *Adas Raum*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2021, p. 86. Our translation.

86 Abdulrazak Gurnah. *Paradise*. London et al.: Bloomsbury, 1994, p. 120.

87 bell hooks. “Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination”. In: *Cultural Studies*, edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler, New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 338-346 (338).

88 Henry Louis Gates. “Criticism in the Jungle”. In: *Black Literature and Literary Theory*. New York: Methuen, 1984, pp. 1-24 (3).

89 Auma [as Eggers], “Ein Schwarzes Wissensarchiv”, *op. cit.*, p. 18. Our translation.

egoistic, individual manner”,<sup>90</sup> via “proverbs, coded sermons, parables, jokes about whites, songs (blues, spirituals), oral legends and tales, and educational advice”,<sup>91</sup> to texts that were written down and sometimes published. Assumingly, the oral and written imaginations of Europe/ans presented here in chronological and, by implication, causal order also overlapped and ran in parallel. There are most certainly artefacts and texts that have not yet been researched in sufficient depth and that are not accessible (to us editors) for linguistic, geographical, and other reasons.<sup>92</sup> In any case, among the early, more or less accessible and/or well documented African European examples are the works of the sixteenth-century poet and Latin professor at the University of Granada, Juan Latino, and the Black German philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo. Unlike other texts by Amo, his dissertation *De Jure Maurorum in Europa* (“On the Rights of Blacks in Europe”, 1729), has unfortunately not survived.<sup>93</sup> Further Black descriptions of Europe can be found in autobiographical writings, such as in the slave narratives of Olaudah Equiano (1789) and Mary Prince (1831), or in the short life testimony of Henriette Alexander (1895).<sup>94</sup> Another early genre are Black travelogues

90 Julius E. Lips. *The Savage Hits Back or the White Man through Native Eyes*. London: Lovat Dickson, 1937, p. 16.

91 Auma [as Eggers], “Ein Schwarzes Wissensarchiv”, *op. cit.*, p. 18. Such a Black knowledge archive includes, for example, sayings like “My witness is in Europe, says the liar” or “One should not be too hopeful of a ship sailing from Europe” (both from the Ewe). See Lips, *The Savage Hits Back*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

92 A pertinent example is *Ajami*, the Arabic-derived script used for writing African languages (see <https://www.bu.edu/africa/research/projects/african-ajami/> [accessed 15th July 2023]). *Ajami* literatures not only hold an enormous historical, political, cultural, and intellectual wealth of knowledge, they also break with “European myths of illiteracy”. See Callahan, “Unearthing a Long-Ignored African Writing System”, *op. cit.*

93 In her opening speech at the Black German Literature Festival *Resonanzen*, Tsitsi Dangarembga spoke about Amo and his dissertation that disappeared from the library and archives of the University of Halle. She supposes that this may not have been an “accident”: “*Eine wissenschaftliche Arbeit verschwinden zu lassen ist keine Handlung, die von Respekt zeugt. Ich stelle daher die Frage: Was ist passiert?*” (“Making a scholarly work disappear is not an act that shows respect. I therefore ask the question: what happened?”). Tsitsi Dangarembga. “Resonanzen zwischen Raum und Zeit”. In: *Resonanzen*, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-27 (24). The translation of the English speech into German was provided by the literature festival and printed in the volume. The translation back into English is ours.

94 Henriette Alexander. “Aus dem Leben der Henriette Alexander (1817–1895) [1895]”. In: *Exotisch - bñfisch - bñrgerlich. Afrikaner in Wñrtemberg vom 15. bis 19. Jahrhundert. Katalog zur Ausstellung des Hauptstaatsarchivs Stuttgart*. Compiled by Monika Firla. Stuttgart: Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, 2001, pp. 101-103.

such as *Three Years in Europe* (1852) by the African American abolitionist William Wells Brown, or *Son a Miango ma mbenge. Ngus'a mambo na bedemo n'enno o ekombo a bakala* (1906) ("How a Black Man Looks at the White Man's Land") by the Cameroonian Reverend Josef Ekolo, who unreservedly praises Europe and the Basel Mission in particular.<sup>95</sup> Black publications that were explicitly critical of Europe and colonialism only followed later in greater numbers.

Given the temporal, geographical, and linguistic ranges of these Black literary archives about Europe, it was clear to us from the early stages of this project that what we could at best attempt to provide were some rough *sketches* of Europe/ans in the Black imagination. The term "sketch" describes "a rough drawing or delineation of something, giving the outlines or prominent features without the detail, esp. one intended to serve as the basis of a more finished picture, or to be used in its composition".<sup>96</sup> When one undertakes to sketch Black images of Europe/ans, one soon learns that there is a certain asymmetry concerning the already existing materials, preliminary sketches, and overviews at one's disposal. For example, Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe states that an "Anglophone Black [North] Atlanticist approach"<sup>97</sup> has so far dominated in African Diaspora studies in Europe. Similarly, Brancato points to the geographic unbalance in Afro-European studies, finding that "significant texts deal almost exclusively with Britain and France".<sup>98</sup> To a certain degree, this has already begun to change in the fifteen years that have passed since Brancato's contribution. Her own work includes investigations of Black Italian and Black Spanish literatures, and other works have located "emerging fields and new directions"<sup>99</sup> in Black Portuguese and Black German literatures. Some have studied

95 Josef Ekolo. *Son a Miango ma mbenge. Ngus'a mambo na bedemo n'enno o ekombo a bakala*. Basel: Verlag der Missionsbuchhandlung, 1906. The booklet was translated from the Duala language into German under the title *Wie ein Schwarzer das Land der Weißen ansieht* (to which our English paraphrase refers) by a K. Stolz in 1908.

96 "sketch, n." *Oxford English Dictionary Online* [accessed 22nd June 2023].

97 Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe. "'Black Folk Here and There': Repositioning Other(ed) African Diaspora(s) in/and 'Europe'". In: *The African Diaspora and the Disciplines*, edited by Tejumola Olaniyan and James H. Sweet, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010, pp. 313-337 (313).

98 Brancato, "Afro-European Literature(s)", *op. cit.*, p. 4.

99 Allison van Deventer and Dominic Thomas. "Afro-European Studies: Emerging Fields and New Directions". In: *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, edited by Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas, Malen, MA: Wiley, 2011, pp. 335-356 (335).

the writings by African and Afrodescendant women from “Romance-speaking European societies”,<sup>100</sup> for example.

Nevertheless, W.E.B. Du Bois’s use of the term “semi-colonialism” to draw attention to the fact that “all European countries profited from the capitalist system, whether they had colonies or not”,<sup>101</sup> has not yet lost its relevance. From today’s perspective, it is an insight that, on the one hand, addresses the importance of studying the “colonialism without colonies”<sup>102</sup> of some European nations less involved (or less successful) in the “Scramble for Africa”. On the other hand, it also points to the need of considering the discursive and literary impact of global neocolonialist practices, as well as the role of “inter-diasporic and extra-colonial migrations”<sup>103</sup> formative to the European Black diaspora. Following this insight, the sketches we attempt to provide in this issue place special emphasis on two aspects: firstly, and following our above-mentioned considerations about the study of “Eurotypes”, on negotiations between the field of the transnational/European and the (re)imaginings of European nations in contemporary Afropean literatures, with the latter – as Jeannot Moukouri Ekobe has observed – sometimes also constituting a counter-discourse in the face of increasing transnationalisation.<sup>104</sup> Secondly, this special issue focuses on some of those European regions which – sometimes related to their own “semi-peripheral” or “semi-colonial” location in Europe – are particularly affected by “colonial amnesia” and “colonial aphasia” (see Margriet van der Waal’s contribution to this volume, pp. 69–89), and/or “were highly involved in and affected by colonialism without having developed a respective self-conceptualization”.<sup>105</sup> Paying attention to such

100 Julia Borst, Stephanie Neu-Wendel, and Juliane Tauchnitz. “Women’s Perspectives on (Post-)Migration. Between Literature, Arts and Activism – Between Africa and Europe. An Introduction”. In: *Women’s Perspectives on (Post)Migration. Between Literature, Arts and Activism – Between Africa and Europe*, edited by Borst, Neu-Wendel, and Tauchnitz, Baden-Baden: Olms, 2023, pp. 9-18 (11).

101 As Kelly and Vassell point out in *Mapping Black Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

102 Patricia Purtschert, Francesca Falk, and Barbara Lüthi. “Switzerland and ‘Colonialism without Colonies’. Reflections on the Status of Colonial Outsiders”. *Interventions*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2016, pp. 286–302.

103 Ifekwunigwe, “Black Folk Here and There”, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

104 See Jeannot Moukouri Ekobe. *Die (Re-)Imagination des Nationalen in Zeiten der Transformation. Eine afropäische ästhetische Intervention*. Münster: edition assemblage, 2021, p. 233. See also our interview with Ekobe (pp. 178–181) and Laura Steindorf’s review of his book (pp. 229–234) in this issue.

105 Purtschert et al., “Switzerland and ‘Colonialism without Colonies’”, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

European regions can be especially useful in the context of our interest in narrative reversals of the (neo)coloniser's gaze at the Other and in the ways such literary gazes relate to changing dynamics of power. While the "traditional" form of postcoloniality has been criticised for its "reactive model that freezes so-called post-colonial literatures into a perennially stagnating relationship to the former colonial centers",<sup>106</sup> especially (but not only) recent Afropean works go beyond such an "'empire-writes-back' paradigm of literary production".<sup>107</sup> They self-confidently "cross boundaries and also engage horizontally with multiple cultural and linguistic configurations, shuffling hierarchies and reversing power relations".<sup>108</sup> Many of these texts are nevertheless written in English and French and use former colonial metropolises as their main literary settings. However, the use of "cities rarely referenced in the decolonial debate"<sup>109</sup> and of peripheries or provinces (and "the provincial") as settings can be particularly effective ways for such shufflings of hierarchies. The same is true for the employment of "smaller" European, indigenous African, or "hybrid" languages (frequently in multilingual constellations), which are less strongly associated with former colonial empires and also take a less dominant position in the framework of world literature. Such settings or choices of language imply different dynamics of power, allow to creatively employ colonial dichotomies such as civilised/uncivilised, modern/backward, or monolingual/multilingual in new ways, and bring along a reversal of the gaze directed at the Other that cannot simply be grasped by the logic of a mere gazing back.

But how can these creative approaches to the politics of the gaze in African and African diasporic literatures be treated methodologically without reproducing the dichotomies and master narratives they have

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106 Frank Schulze-Engler. "When Remembering Back is not Enough: Provincializing Europe in World War II Novels from India and New Zealand". *Memory Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2018, pp. 315-327 (318).

107 Joseph R. Slaughter. "World Literature as Property". *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 34, 2014, pp. 39-73 (51). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24392130> [accessed 4th October 2023].

108 Alessandra di Maio. "Transnational Minor Literature: Cristina Ali Farah's Somali Italian Stories". In: *Women and Migration: Responses in Art and History*, edited by Deborah Willis, Elynn Toscano, and Kalia Brooks Nelson, Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2019, pp. 533-553 (543). <http://books.openedition.org/obp/8176> [accessed 4th October 2023].

109 Kelly and Vassell, *Mapping Black Europe, op. cit.*, p. 10.

set out to complicate (if not destroy)? Audre Lorde famously claimed that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house”.<sup>110</sup> She pointed to the danger that when one employs the tools of the colonisers for subversive aims “only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable”,<sup>111</sup> which might leave the deeper structures of power and inequality intact. In a similar vein, Fatima El-Tayeb noted “that the dominant internalist narrative of Europe cannot be deconstructed with methodologies internal to it alone”.<sup>112</sup> What does this mean for the study of Black literature, which attempts to dismantle and deconstruct many of Europe’s literary and cultural foundations, but does itself not shy away from inventively appropriating, recombining, and reversing some of European literature’s “master’s tools”? Following El-Tayeb, we think it is most promising (and probably also most honest and realistic) to critically adapt the methodologies of Western literary theory. On the one hand, this means that using them, in our opinion, requires a special attentiveness to the danger of “the appropriated overwhelming the appropriator”,<sup>113</sup> and also to the ambivalences and contradictions that may be characteristic to the literary texts and their acts of reversal themselves. On the other hand, we find it important to look for possibilities of combining and enriching the literary-theoretical tools of the “masters” with new or alternative ones, especially when those alternatives – some of which, such as “comparative Black literature”, the “Black Mediterranean”, or “Afropea”, we mentioned above – bring along a special attentiveness to the “signifying black difference”<sup>114</sup> as well as a consideration of the axis of power. Consequently, we encouraged our contributors to use a “scavenger” or “queer methodology” that – quite in line with the idea of assembling “sketches” rather than finalised studies of Black Europe/ans – “attempts to combine methods that are often cast as being at odds with each other” and that “refuses the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence”.<sup>115</sup>

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110 Audre Lorde. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”. In: *Sister Outsider*. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984, pp. 110-113 (112).

111 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

112 El-Tayeb, *European Others*, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.

113 Robert S. Nelson. “Appropriation”. In: *Critical Terms for Art History*, edited by Nelson and Richard Shiff, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 116-129 (121).

114 Gates, “Criticism in the Jungle”, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

115 Judith Halberstam. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke UP, 1998, p. 13.

## THE ISSUE

This special issue brings together five original research articles exploring literary imaginations of Europe/ans in African and African diasporic narratives, as well as a series of interviews with eight international literary scholars on Black European research perspectives, theories, and future challenges and needs, followed by a thematic review section. The research articles deal mainly with texts of the post- or neo-colonial period, from the 1950s to the immediate present. The geographical, cultural, thematic, and methodological breadth is similarly large: the individual contributions take us from the aesthetic principles of German Afropolitanism and the transnational connections between (South) Africa and Europe (the Netherlands) in contemporary Afrikaans poetry to female neocolonial enslavement narratives set in Nigeria, Belgium, and Austria. They further examine acts of provincialising Europe by African Americans in Switzerland and autobiographical texts about growing up Afro-Czech during the Cold War. Methodologically, the authors draw on concepts from African or Black European studies, African American studies, critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, diaspora studies, ethnography, intersectional theory, and/or postcolonial studies, etc., in addition to and/or in combination with more traditional theories and methods of literary studies such as genre studies, imagology, intertextuality, narratology, or rhetoric. They approach the different diasporic constellations by combining, for example, classical text analysis with West African Sankofa philosophy, or by drawing from colloquial Black Afrikaans poetry or from autobiographical Afro-Czech texts to re-perspective specific European-African relations and their politics of memory. Others enrich the Eurocentric field of imagology with postcolonial and feminist concepts such as “strategic exoticism” and “intersectionality”; or they integrate ethnographic notions such as “participatory observation” and “thick description” into their literary analyses and comparisons.

For all the breadth and “scavenger methodology”, however, there are also some notable constants. A particular focus of the contributions in this issue are genres or intertextually related groups of texts – Afropolitan literature, vernacular poetry, slave narratives, and autobiographical writings – that

re-imagine or reverse the gaze of “the (white) European” directed at “the (Black) African”. They also consider how narratives address, construct, and possibly upend representations of Europe and Europeans as a (fragile) unity (in contrast to merely national representations), thereby contributing to a better understanding of the intricate relations between transnationality and nationality, sameness and difference in Europe. Whereas up to now the focus of literary research on Black Europe has mostly been on Western Europe – individual nations, but also larger units such as “Black Britain” or smaller ones like “Black Paris” –, this special issue shifts the perspective slightly towards Central Europe and specifically to the German-speaking lands. The contributions focus on some of this region’s urban (Berlin, Bern, Vienna) and provincial (the Swiss Leukerbad and rural Austria) sides, and on several of the languages and dialects spoken (Swiss German, an Austrian dialect, Czech). This – as well as the insights by several German-based scholars of Black German and African European literatures provided in the interview series – adds some literature-specific perspectives to the mostly historically oriented research undertaken by the *Black Central European Studies Network* (BCESN), which was founded already in 2014. The focus on Central Europe was not planned from the beginning of our project but emerged in the period between our colloquium and the preparation of this publication. It is certainly related to the fact that we editors grew up and live in Austria and Germany and have been connected to universities and research institutes in these countries through most of our studies and careers. As a result of the position that we are speaking from and of the networks we have built, this special issue – with its specific focus as well as its weaknesses and imbalances – has come into being. The gravitation towards Central Europe is not exclusive, however, as some contributions in this issue also deal with South African-Dutch or Nigerian-Belgian connections, for example.

In the first article, titled “Beyond the Word: Aesthetic Principles of Afropolitanism in Sharon Dodua Otoo’s *Adas Raum*”, Mahamadou Famanta delves into the concept of Afropolitanism, which emphasises the interconnectedness of global histories and cultures with a particular focus on Africa and its diasporas. He explores the origins of Afropolitanism, its connections to related discourses like “Négritude” and “Postcolonialism”, and considers the German context where labels such as “Afro German” (“afrodeutsch”), “Black German”, “Afropean”,

and “Afropolitan literature” intersect. Drawing on Achille Mbembe’s insights, the article identifies two key features of Afropolitanism – the *aesthetics of entanglement* and *l’en-commun (the in-common)* – and showcases how *Adas Raum* (2021, trans. 2023 as “Ada’s Realm”) exemplifies this aesthetics through its intricate poetics and engagement with interconnected histories and cultures. Famanta argues that the novel portrays multiple singularities across diverse temporal and spatial contexts, ranging from West African coastal regions to Europe, and spanning from the fifteenth to the twenty-first century. In doing so, the novel draws inspiration from the Akan philosophy of Sankofa, which encourages learning from the past. By examining Afropolitanism through the lens of entanglement and commonality, the article goes beyond viewing it merely as a label or identity marker. Instead, it seeks to uncover the underlying aesthetic principles that contribute to a deeper understanding of Afropolitanism’s significance in contemporary Afropean literature.

The connection of global histories and cultures that characterises Afropolitanism also plays a central role in Margriet van der Waal’s contribution “A Letter to Jan Van Riebeeck: Rethinking Transnational Connections in Contemporary Vernacular Afrikaans Poetry”. However, the focus shifts from contemporary German prose to poetry written in Kaaps. In her analysis of poems by the Black Afrikaans writers Ronelda Kamfer (2011) and Nathan Trantraal (2017), van der Waal explores their profound engagement with the colonial experience and the complicated intertwining of Europe and Africa, particularly in the Netherlands and South Africa. The poems not only critically reflect on post-apartheid South Africa but also revisit historical moments of coloniality, settler colonialism, and slavery introduced by the Dutch East India Company’s establishment of a refreshment station at the Cape under Jan van Riebeeck’s command. The contribution delves into two key aspects. Firstly, the poetic texts reveal an obscured dimension of the Dutch colonial experience, prompting us to think beyond conventional Dutch-Afrikaans relationality as it was expressed in the notion of *stamverwantschap* (“tribal kinship”). Secondly, they shed light on the impact of this historical period on contemporary subjectivity, social relations, and everyday experiences, illuminating the after-effects of colonialism across multiple transnational locales. By giving voice to these marginalised subjects, the poems redefine the transnational

entanglements between Europe and Africa, contributing to a broader understanding of the complex dynamics at play, and addressing their absence from the main public sphere and literary consecration.

Sandra Folie’s article “The White Continent of Night. Re-Imagining Europe in Women’s Neocolonial Enslavement Narratives: *On Black Sisters’ Street* and *Joy*” explores fictional portrayals of Europe from the perspective of another marginalised group: Black African women trafficked for sex work to Europe. Chika Unigwe’s novel *On Black Sisters’ Street* (2009) and Sudabeh Mortezaei’s film *Joy* (2018) depict the lives of young women who have emigrated from Africa (mainly Nigeria) to Europe (Belgium and Austria respectively) in search of a “better life” – some with and some without the knowledge that they would have to pay back the immense debt for their passage through sex work. Folie examines these narratives, which draw on the genre genealogy of slave narratives, as instances of women-authored/-centred *neocolonial enslavement narratives*. She proposes this term for fictional works that deal with various forms of human trafficking and modern slavery from the late twentieth century onwards, addressing Europe’s ongoing exploitation and oppression of its former colonies. In a comparative text and film analysis, informed by postcolonial and intersectional theory as well as imagology, the article examines the decentring of the white European gaze in Unigwe and Mortezaei’s works, which strategically exoticise Europe/ans while offering Black female re-imaginings of the continent and its inhabitants.

In her article “Provincialising Europe ‘from the Inside’: James Baldwin’s and Vincent O. Carter’s Writings about Switzerland”, Gianna Zocco takes us to another European country that is rarely mentioned in connection with Black literature. Baldwin and Carter, two African American writers from the same generation, ventured from Paris to Switzerland in the 1950s, delving into a lesser-known and more provincial part of Europe. While Baldwin’s essay on Switzerland gained recognition in his collection *Notes of a Native Son*, Carter’s *The Bern Book* remained obscure until its recent reprint. Despite their apparent lack of awareness of each other’s work at the time, Baldwin and Carter employ similar motifs and textual strategies in their writings. They both discover in Switzerland something they consider as distinctly European, and they use their perspectives as a means to examine themselves and the world at large. Their gaze at the “Swiss Others” ironically mirrors the ethnographic gaze of white Europeans at

Black Africans and subverts colonial dichotomies. While both use their setting for acts of “provincialising Europe”, only Baldwin maintains the position of a detached observer in the style of a colonial ethnographer, whereas Carter’s way of giving up distance toward his observed subjects is remindful of the ethnographic method of participatory observation. Zocco’s article focuses on three main aspects: Baldwin and Carter’s exploration of “Europe” using Switzerland as a representative of the continent, the dynamics of gazes present in their works, and their reflections on European culture and questions of ownership and appropriation.

In “Growing Up Afro-Czech During the Cold War: Tomáš Zmeškal and Obonete S. Ubam”, Dobrota Pucherová also explores autobiographical and autobiographically inspired works. However, her article takes us from the far west of Central Europe to its heart, the Czech Republic, where Afro-Czechs, one of the country’s smallest ethnic minorities, have gradually emerged and found their voice in public since the 1960s. Descendants of African and Afro-Cuban students invited during the Cold War, they now integrate and establish themselves professionally as Czech society becomes more open to discussions on racism and diversity. Tomáš Zmeškal, born to a Czech mother and a Congolese father, exposes covert and overt racism in his memoir *Sokrates na rovníku* (“Socrates on the Equator”) and in his novel *Životopis černobílého jehněte* (“The Biography of a Black-and-White Lamb”). Obonete S. Ubam, a Czech-Nigerian writer and activist, explores his Nigerian heritage in the memoir *Sedm let v Africe* (“Seven Years in Africa”) and interviews influential Afro-Czechs, including Zmeškal, in his latest book *Náš černobílý svět* (“Our Black-and-White World”). Both writers address the uncertainty of identity experienced by the second generation of Afro-Czechs, growing up as Black individuals in white families and a majority white society. Pucherová’s article examines how Black Czechs perceive Czechia and how these narratives challenge both the official narrative of a racially equal society during the Cold War and that of a liberal, multicultural democracy after communism.

The five research articles are followed by a somewhat unusual, but in many ways complementary section. Indeed, for “Sketches of Black European Comparative Literature Studies: A Series of Interviews”, we prepared a questionnaire and asked eight international scholars of different generations and disciplines to send us their answers: Elisabeth Bekers (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Jeannot Moukouri Ekobe (Ludwig Maximilian

University of Munich), Polo Moji (University of Cape Town), Deborah Nyangulu (University of Bremen), Jeannette Oholi (Dartmouth College), Anne Potjans (Humboldt University of Berlin), Nadjib Sadikou (University of Flensburg), and Dominic Thomas (University of California, Los Angeles). Although our selection of scholars is by no means representative, the specialisations of our interviewees cover Black European literatures from different countries and languages, combined with different thematic interests. With the plurality of voices covered, we want to make it clear that we two editors – both white, female scholars of the same generation living in Germany – are aware of our own limits in terms of speaking with legitimacy and authority about African European literatures. It is our conviction that the aim of sketching Black Europe (and Black European comparative literature studies) can only succeed when different voices are heard and when one takes it to heart that “[a]cademic knowledge production in Europe gives rise to a specialised set of viewpoints and approaches, and these frequently, and structurally, reproduce mechanisms of (racial) exclusion”.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, we find it a great enrichment for this issue that the interviewees took the time to answer our questions, which range from their personal understanding of “Black Europe” to the specific contribution of literary scholars to this field of research, the relationship between academia and activism, and authors and works that have inspired them or that they would like to engage with in the future.

Inspiring authors and works about literary Black Europe and beyond can also be discovered in the review section that concludes our issue. It brings together five thematic (and three non-thematic) reviews. The thematic reviews cover recent publications on Afropolitan world literatures, Black travel writing, (re)imaginings of the national in contemporary Afropean literatures, and race in Early Modern European drama. Dobrota Pucherová discusses the volume *Afropolitan Literature as World Literature*, edited by James Hodapp, whose contributions attempt to link the two polarising discourses on Afropolitanism and world literature in their literary analyses. The next reviews by Lindokuhle Shabane and Lisa Tackie cover two very different works of/about Black travel writing:

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116 Felipe Espinoza Garrido, Caroline Koegler, Deborah Nyangulu, and Mark U. Stein. “Introduction: African European Studies as a Critique of Contingent Belonging”. In: *Locating African European Studies: Interventions, Intersections, Conversations*, edited by Garrido, Koegler, Nyangulu, and Stein, New York: Routledge, 2019, pp. 1–28 (6).

Nanjala Nyabola's *Travelling While Black: Essays Inspired by a Life on the Move*, which is not a travelogue but a text that embeds the author's "politico-philosophical musings in stories and personal narratives", and Isabel Kalous' *Black Travel Writing*, which analyses *Contemporary Narratives of Travel to Africa by African American and Black British Authors*. The book Laura Steindorf reviews, Jeannot Moukouri Ekobe's *Die (Re-)Imagination des Nationalen in Zeiten der Transformation: eine afropäische ästhetische Intervention* ("The (Re-)Imagination of the National in Times of Transformation: An Afropean Aesthetic Intervention"), focuses on three Black European authors (writing in French, English, and German) and their strategic use of "aesthetic devices to narrate the transformation process from a national to a transnational understanding of history and identity". With the last review, we take a big leap back in time, to a period and a genre that we do not cover with the other contributions in the special issue. Daniel Syrový discusses how Noémie Ndiaye, in *Scripts of Blackness. Early Modern Performance Culture and the Making of Race*, "sets out to describe the 'circulation' of racialised thinking in Europe" through plays from Early Modern England, Spain, and France.

This special issue, compact as it may be in scope, would not have been feasible without the hard work of all our contributors who wrote original research articles, answers to interview questions, and reviews. Additionally, the great support of many colleagues, whose work remains almost invisible to readers in the finished product, was also crucial in bringing this publication about. We would like to thank all contributors and peer reviewers as well as Niki Fischer-Khonsari, Brigitte Le Juez, Judith Lippelt, and Ronja Quast for their help in editing, proofreading, and translating as well as with organisational matters.

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