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SO BITTER, SO BÖSE: SAMY DELUXE DEFINES A BLACK GERMAN IDENTITY THROUGH HIP-HOP

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Digital Object Identifier: <https://doi.org/10.13023/etd.2021.171>

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SO BITTER, SO BÖSE: SAMY DELUXE DEFINES A BLACK GERMAN IDENTITY
THROUGH HIP-HOP

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Brenna R. Byrd, Professor of German Studies

Lexington, Kentucky

2021

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

SO BITTER, SO BÖSE: SAMY DELUXE DEFINES A BLACK GERMAN IDENTITY THROUGH HIP-HOP

Samy Deluxe, a Black German Hip-Hop artist from Hamburg, Germany, has become a staple in the German Hip-Hop realm. Since the start of his career, he has tried to replicate the genre that originated in the Bronx and apply it to a German setting. Samy Deluxe raps about with social criticism, German political issues, and racism. Not only has Samy Deluxe established a discography of politically driven music, but he has also used his platform to establish a Black German identity for himself in a German context.

This has not been an easy feat, due to issues within German society that, while perhaps unknown to most white Germans, make it difficult for Black Germans to become fully accepted as “German.” In my research, I explore the history of German identity and the philosophies about Germanness that still linger that make it a challenge for those like Samy Deluxe to find themselves and their identity in Germany. I use this history to analyze Samy Deluxe’s autobiography, filmography, interview commentaries, and discography to establish a definition of how Samy Deluxe sees himself fitting with a German society.

KEYWORDS: Black German, Hip-Hop, German Identity, German Literature, Samy Deluxe

Michaela N. Culley

05/04/2021

Date

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following thesis, while an individual work, benefited from the insights and direction of several people. First, my Thesis Chair, Dr. Brenna Byrd, whose enthusiasm, support, and dedication to this research made it possible for me to grow as a writer and as an intellectual. Next, I wish to thank the rest of my Thesis Committee: Dr. Hillary Herzog and Dr. Nels Rogers, who provided timely and instructive comments and evaluation throughout my research and writing process. Thanks to all of their dedication, feedback, and insight, this thesis was able to reach its full potential.

In addition to the technical instrumental assistance above, I received equally important assistance from my friends and family. My mother, Susanna Culley, who has been my loudest cheerleader since signing up for German in high school. Her on-going support throughout my entire academic career has been critical to my own personal growth. In addition to my mother, I would like to thank my two former professors, and now dear friends, Dr. Judith Atzler and Dr. Guido Halder, who supported me along every step of the thesis writing process and served as my personal search engine for everything “German.” Last but not least, I would like to thank the “German Pals,” whose constant encouragement and jokes kept me going as we were met with virtual learning for the majority of our graduate education. Thank you so much, friends, for being there for the good and the bad.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

As I think back to 2018, I recall hearing the song “Integration,” by Al Gear, an Algerian-German rapper for the first time on a randomly generated Spotify playlist of German rap music. This song, released in 2012, contrasts three characters in a German setting and looks at how each responds to those that are different from them, including two clichés on both sides of German migration. In the first verse, the speaker is a Muslim migrant who recently arrived in Germany, who feels angry that others in Germany are trying to assimilate him and his family, as he feels they are trying to overwrite his values with the “German” way. He expresses anger about being in Germany and makes a claim that even though there is a war in his homeland, that Germany will be the country to destroy his life and his family.¹ Following this verse, there is a German who wishes to bring back the old German borders, a sense of “purity” to the national identity², and most importantly for him, that foreigners “go back home.”³ This character goes as far to talk about violence towards minority groups⁴ and supports his violence with claims that refugees coming to Germany are parasites and ruining the welfare of Germany⁵. The last character, which pulls the whole song together, talks about the best of both worlds, and how integration has benefited him and his family, while building relationships with

¹ “In meinem Land sein Krieg deshalb ich hier bleiben muss / Doch diese scheiße Land machen mein Familie kaputt” (Al-Gear, *genius.com*).

² “Ein nationales Vaterland, ein reines Vaterland, die altdeutschen Grenzen...” (Al-Gear, *genius.com*).

³ “Ausländer raus, dat is’ unser Land” (Al-Gear, *genius.com*).

⁴ “Trag ein Hakenkreuz auf der Brust und schieß auf euch Affen / Werde zum Mörder wie Störkraft und schieß auf Kanacken” (Al-Gear, *genius.com*).

⁵ “Ihr undankbaren Parasiten, damit ist jetzt Schluss / Denn euer Drecksvolk macht unser Land kaputt” (Al-Gear, *genius.com*).

others who respect his culture and his beliefs⁶. The song is full of stereotypes towards Germany and towards an unknown “Heimat,” or homeland, of a migrant to Germany, bringing up issues of integration, migration policy, and racism within Germany. This song introduced me to and sparked my interest in a world of analytical rap music in the German scene; a world that was larger than I could have imagined at the time.

What drew me to exploring this topic more deeply, however, was the experience of first learning about Afro-Deutsche, or Black⁷ Germans, in one of my graduate seminars while reading *Farbe Bekennen*, which is a “mosaic of poetry, interviews, history, and theory” which places Black Germans in German history (Gunter, 73). For so long, I had learned about Turkish-Germans as “the” minority group within Germany. I had a realization that the field of German studies was biased towards the literary canon, which is, quite honestly, very white. Reading this collection of autobiographical accounts of Black German women from various generations changed my perspective towards how I looked at Germany, minority groups, and immigration within German borders, which led me to research and examine a Black German experience, since the topic of Black Germans is often neglected within the field of German studies.

In this analysis, I chose to look at one Black German rapper, specifically, and how he has taken on the systemic racism that defined his feelings of and identification with Germanness throughout his career. Samy Sorge, commonly known as Samy Deluxe, often uses his platform as a popular musician and Hip-Hop artist to address issues of

⁶ Mein bester Freund ist Deutscher. Du fasst es nicht? / Er respektiert meine Religion und fastet mit (Al-Gear, *genius.com*).

⁷ I choose to capitalize the B in Black throughout my thesis because I follow the convention that Black people have been racially disrespected in the “lower case” throughout history. Please read more about this choice at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/brookingscapitalizesblack/>.

identity, misrepresentation, and racism within German society. Born of a white German mother and a Black Sudanese father, he often expresses emotions and feelings of non-belonging in German society because of his skin color. Samy Deluxe toys with a fluid identity through multiple forms of media, including his autobiography, interviews, music videos, and songs. This fluid identity is one characteristic that Black Germans share and its representation the one consistency in works created by Black German artists, as there is no prescription in German society on a “standard Blackness” (Gunter, 74). Samy Deluxe asserts his positionality in a German context surrounding German social issues and while doing so, he situates himself into the German canon as an author and artist whose works serve just as much ideological function and influence as those that are typically found in the German canon.

In order to understand how Samy Deluxe made it to be one of Germany’s most successful rappers, one must first understand what has created the society and social structures which exclude those who look like and are treated as Samy Deluxe has and continues to be treated today. Samy Deluxe has struggled with his identity and belonging within a German context from an early age; he was assumed to be adopted as a child⁸, an immigrant as a young adult⁹, and most significantly, a non-German¹⁰ for his entire life.

Understanding Samy Deluxe’s exclusion from society first starts with understanding the

⁸ “Die Eltern sind weiß. Die Tochter ist weiß. Natürlich: Der Junge ist adoptiert.» Was hätten sie auch sonst denken sollen?” (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 21).

⁹ “An der Jahnschule definierte sich mein Anderssein immer über meine «afrikanischen Wurzeln», also über etwas, das für mich gar nicht greifbar war. Ich hatte damals überhaupt nichts mit Afrika und noch weniger mit meinem Vater und der Familie im Sudan am Hut. Hier, in Bude, war ich für meine englischen Mitschüler vor allem ein Deutscher” (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 24).

¹⁰ “Jedes Mal, wenn ich im Flieger sitz’ / Sprechen alle mich auf Englisch an/ Sie denken, ich bin auf der Durchreise” (Deluxe, *Mimimi*, *genius.com*).

roots of these assumptions and the varying definitions of Germanness throughout history as something that is ethnically white, despite Black people visibly existing in Germany for the past century (Campt, “Politics of Positionality” 111). This is why I find looking at Black German identity absolutely necessary; Black Germans are present and visible within German borders, but they do not feel that they are recognized as belonging to the national German identity, because the national German identity has typically been a very white-washed image. However, Samy Deluxe and other Black Germans have been working to change that image.

CHAPTER 2. EMERGENCE OF GERMAN NATIONALISM AND A NATIONAL GERMAN IDENTITY

The German national identity has been in flux since its first emergence, so finding one commonly accepted definition that applies to everyone who is “German” is a difficult task. There has been much research on defining an identity; whether that be regarding how one defines their own identity, others’ identity or whether or not one can claim an identity themselves or if it is assigned to them. For the purposes of this thesis, I am using the definition of “narrative identity,” which is defined by Dan P. McAdams and Kate McLean as “a person’s internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imaged future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose” (233). People construct and internalize an evolving story for their lives, which is why identity is always fluctuating and performative, depending on the group with which one is interacting (McAdams & McLean, 233). The relationship of the national identity to the personal identity is further complicated if those two circles do not overlap. Additionally, defining one singular national German identity is a complex task, especially because the borders and conceptions of a German state have changed consistently throughout history, and it has often taken on a white male figure as the subject of its definition.

Wolfgang Hardtwig, a German historian, writes that the first phase of a “German” nationalism can be traced back as far as the 1500s. German nationalism continued to grow and change throughout the following centuries leading up until its first peak in the 1730s after the Seven Years War brought desires of imperialism to German speaking kingdoms (Hardtwig, 45; Berger, 22). Although at the time of this first high-point of German nationalism there was not yet an official German state, Hardtwig writes about the

motives for creating an organized sense of nationalism for German speaking societies. The economic crisis in the 1770s called for new social relationships between German speaking kingdoms, specifically those of political nature, according to Hardtwig (46). At this time, one could see organized nationalism occurring throughout larger metropolitan areas, where individuals demonstrated that they “had something to be proud of” as being part of the German nation (Berger, 22). However, it is important to note that Hardtwig does not refer to the rise and growth of German nationalism as continuous; rather, it appears in highly concentrated amounts in defined and established areas (45). This first emergence of German nationalism set the stage for spreading national pride, while also providing those who view the history of German nationalism with evidence of a strong, passionate foundation, which is still alive in many political and social groups in contemporary Germany. Philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder is often referenced when defining German identity. Herder suggests that identity is established by those with shared language, cultural community, and shared history (Dann, 53). Herder’s notion of nationalism focuses on creating national sovereignty along with others who share what makes one “German;” although, at Herder’s time, Germany was not a nation and rather a fragmented group of small kingdoms which found connections with one another on the basis of these identifying characteristics.

In contrast to Herder, other figures, such as 18th century professor and scholar Karl Friedrich Cramer, believed the creation of a German identity should stem from unity, equality, and brotherhood, while being governed by one fairly voted popular

figure¹¹ (Dann, 66). Verfassungspatriotismus, or constitutional patriotism, as defined by Müller, “designates the idea that political attachment ought to center on the norms, the values, and more indirectly, the procedures of a liberal democratic constitution” (67). The concept of Verfassungspatriotismus, suggests that people with differing views, beliefs, and traditions, can still connect with one another based on a governing body, which unites people despite their differences. This concept excludes the association to a national culture; rather, it creates an approach to a politically based association (Müller, 67). Jürgen Habermas, who coined this concept of Verfassungspatriotismus, attempted to create a “collective identification for postnational Germany” after World War II (Müller, 67). It is also important to note that this concept has been criticized by some, such as Cattien, as being Germany’s way of being patriotic without being “straightforwardly nationalist,” because it permits multiculturalism, which following World War II, was necessary for Germany’s future as a global power (190). Verfassungspatriotismus, according to Hogwood, was created in reaction to and as a rejection of the concept of the Kulturnation, which entered political conversations in the 1970s, as the more conservative approach to nationhood.

In contrast to Herder’s definitions of Germanness, one should recognize that Habermas’ constitutional patriotism is not founded on associating with others with those similar customs, traditions, and languages; rather it is a cosmopolitan approach to nationalism and belonging based solely on location and governing bodies. Observing these two different ways one views identity ultimately determines how one assigns and

¹¹ “...in der Hoffnung auf die Durchsetzung einer modernen Nation in Deutschland, so der Kieler Professor Karl Friedrich Cramer: “Deutschland, ein Volk! eine Brüdernation! nach gleichen Rechten durch Volkspräsentation und ein freiwillig erwähltes, eingeschränktes Oberhaupt regiert!...” (Dann, 66)

claims identity, which can be relatively complex when it comes to different groups coexisting alongside one another in one nation.

A necessary component to understanding German nationalism today requires one to understand the concept of a German Leitkultur. Bassam Tibi, a professor of political science in Göttingen originally sparked the conversation of having a European Leitkultur. His definition of Leitkultur is that it is a “concept of culture...forged on the belief that different, sequestered cultures should remain separate in order to retain their identities and avoid otherwise inevitable cultural conflicts” (Pautz, 40). One can find this echoed in the recognition of similarities in language, religion, and cultural and artistic history in the Kultur-Artikel 35 of the Einigungsvertrages after the unification of East and West Germany (Thierse, 98).¹² This definition, though, “first emerged in the context of a nationwide debate on the ‘integration’ of migrants...into the German nation,” which suggests that it might have arisen in order to provide Germany “a ‘normative consensus’ that can hold German society together,” in this case, against any foreign influence (Cattien, 182). Norbert Lammert, a former president of the German Bundestag, published an article in 2006 titled “Verfassungspatriotismus und Leitkultur” in which he discusses how these two concepts cannot exist without one another within a German context. The new, politicized, Lammertian definition of Germany’s Leitkultur and its influence on the establishment of a German identity has been debated due to its exclusive nature. More

¹² “Daher beginnt der Kultur-Artikel 35 des Einigungsvertrages mit dem Satz: »In den Jahren der Teilung waren Kunst und Kultur – trotz unterschiedlicher Entwicklung der beiden deutschen Staaten – eine Grundlage der fortbestehenden Einheit der deutschen Nation.« Dieses Verbindende der deutschen »Kulturnation«, mit gemeinsamer Sprache und gemeinsamen religiösen, kulturhistorischen und künstlerischen Traditionsbeständen bis hin zu einem nie wirklich abgerissenen kulturellen Austausch zwischen den beiden Teilgesellschaften, machte die Einheit so selbstverständlich und beförderte alle Bedenkensträger, auch wenn sie eigentlich gute ökonomische Argumente hatten, ins öffentliche Abseits”(Thierse, 98).

often than not, those who do not fit the mold that the *Leitkultur* creates can therefore be excluded from claiming German identity. Lammert touches on the debate about German identity in German society and about the elitism that is attached with its meaning. He writes in his own definition, “die *Leitkultur* in unserer Gesellschaft ist nicht mehr und nicht weniger als die notwendige Selbstverständigung über ihre Grundlagen und gemeinsamen Orientierungen. Dabei spielen Geschichte, historische Erfahrungen, Sprache, Traditionen, religiöse und weltanschauliche Überzeugungen eine unverzichtbare Rolle” (41). Unlike the original definition by Tibi, Lammert’s definition of *Leitkultur* now includes a shared history and language. When these characteristics that guide one’s self understanding do not line up with others in German society, if they do not have these shared qualities or characteristics that make one German, they can be excluded from “Germanness.” In contrast to this belief, Lammert states that “die Multikulturalität unserer Gesellschaft empirisch ebenso offensichtlich wie die Notwendigkeit verbindlicher Regeln” (39). Lammert makes it clear that *Verfassungspatriotismus* could only exist with a *German Leitkultur*, which is close to Herder’s beliefs regarding a collective identity based on a shared history, language, and traditions. To follow this statement, Lammert references Kurt Biedenkopf, a former member of the German Bundestag, who confirms Lammert’s idea: “Wenn Deutschland multikulturell sein und dennoch seine Identität nicht verlieren soll, braucht es bei allen verschiedenen kulturellen Ausprägungen einen roten Faden, eben eine *Leitkultur*“ (qtd. in Lammert, 39). This idea, however, is relatively problematic in its linguistic nature. Biedenkopf writes this quote, saying that if Germany wants to remain multicultural and preserve its identity, then Germany should have a *Leitkultur*. However, he is also inherently arguing that Germany

only has one identity that should be referred to as the “primary” German identity, due to the singular nature of the word. If Germany, presumably German politicians and patriots, want to keep one singular German identity while promoting a supposed multiculturalism within the German state, then the concept of multiculturalism has failed as a concept, as multiculturalism would struggle to exist at the same magnitude as the leading culture (Lammert, 40).

This exclusivity of German identity is not new to Germany or German culture, though. Nietzsche’s 1885 *Beyond Good and Evil* text provides evidence of the beginnings of a German nationalistic and white supremacist ideology. Nietzsche’s vision of German identity lines up the German nation at the time with a “higher force,” that can place the rest of history below itself (Cattien, 199). At the time in which Nietzsche made this comparison, Germany had just unified all of the smaller federal states and this newly formed Germany celebrated the newfound patriotism and national belonging that came with the unification. Nietzsche writes that Germans, at least those who identified as German during the mid-19th century, never grew tired of the question: “was ist deutsch?” and claims that Germans are “unfassbarer, umfänglicher, widerspruchsvoller, unbekannter, unberechenbarer, überraschender, selbst erschrecklicher, als es andere Völker sich selber sind” (175). By setting the German people apart from all other peoples, and by defining them by nature as more complex and more mysterious than any other possible people, Nietzsche feeds into a German supremacist ideology. The German identity is so complex that, to him, it simply does not exist; rather, Nietzsche claims that the German soul is complex, mysterious, and chaotic—so much, that Nietzsche claims that Germans are not born; one becomes German through the development of one’s self

(176). Nietzsche goes as far as saying that the term “development” is innately a German discovery¹³, which equates Germanness to development (Nietzsche, 176). Thus, in order for Germany to take control of its own history, Germany “needs” its Leitkultur to assert its “freedom against certain moments of German history,” including moments in which they may not have been as powerful as other European nations (Cattien, 201).

Nassehi, on the other hand, reminds us of the original definition of Leitkultur that Lammert has politicized: Leitkultur is a “guiding culture for whom the individual is irrelevant and the whole is everything” (73). This Leitkultur has always been based on “unity and singularity” and a reflection on Germany’s “entire cultural self-image,” (Nassehi, 72). This becomes problematic, however, when something disrupts this self-image and the Leitkultur is challenged. There are many different components that make up Leitkultur. As a guiding culture, according to Nassehi, the Leitkultur includes everything which Germany uses to define its self-image. Various definitions of Leitkultur focus on and include the German language, German politics, German philosophy, and German literature. All of these can be exclusionary of people who may not subscribe to the historical foundations tied to the German identity within these topics.

When one looks at the German literary canon taught in schools and in German studies programs around the world, for example, one will see the well-known “Dichter und Denker,” or poets and thinkers, of the German speaking world. Andrew Bowie published a book titled *From Romanticism to Critical Theory* in 1997 in which he discusses German literary theories. In his novel, he talks about the German canon and

¹³ “Der Deutsche selbst ist nicht, er wird, er „entwickelt sich“. „Entwicklung“ ist deshalb der eigentlich deutsche Fund und Wurf im grossen Reich philosophischer Formeln...” (Nietzsche, 176).

which texts belong to it and how this is determined. While writing about this determination, he writes that if one is “primarily concerned with unmasking... ideological functions” of a text, then that text has already been deemed essential because of its ideological influence (8). While looking at the German canon, Bowie discusses the membership of the canon consisting of “socially and academically accepted literary works,” which is controversial, because these texts are predetermined based on what others, i.e. the “modern European bourgeoisie,” determine is worth being read and studied by the public (6, 8). This is also touched on by Hogwood, who mentions that the nationalist movement sparked a social movement towards a “Bildungsbürgertum,” which created a “marginalised class of educated commoners” (126). This provides clear evidence of the link between national pride and the bourgeois class, as the upper class were the ones determining what was to be read by all “Others.” However, if this is the rationale which determines the texts of the German literary canon, one might question why it has stayed relatively the same throughout history, if our ideals change as we progress as a society, especially since Bowie mentions that the rise and changes of literature and art “are virtually connected to changes...in modern thought” (1).

In a short essay on “Defining and Teaching the Canon in German Studies”, Albrecht Classen wrote on the “unwritten criterium” that have determined the German canon in the past. He includes texts that have “forced us to reveal ideological biases, religious manipulations, and political agendas” embedded inside of texts one finds in the German literary canon (1). If one uses this to determine membership to the canon, then contemporary writers and artists should also find belonging within the German canon. This is not to say that we should erase those like Thomas Mann or Franz Kafka from the

canon, but “we must also be courageous enough to grant heretofore muted...voices to be heard” (Classen, 2). And if we, as Germanists, “accept the canon for pragmatic purpose, then it must be malleable enough to facilitate new names and texts to compete with those that we regard as timeless and central” to the German literary canon (Classen, 2). The German canon has the ability to adapt to modern thought; however, with it being both influenced by and an influencer of *Leitkultur*, those who wish to have their works incorporated in the canon may struggle to find their belonging in both the *Leitkultur* and the German canon. If one cannot see themselves in literature that is, by definition, “German,” then how should they be expected to find themselves as “German?”

CHAPTER 3. GERMAN IDENTITY POST FALL OF THE WALL

Germany is a unique country when it comes to the definition of a national identity in comparison to other European nations such as France and Great Britain, who have had centuries to build a collective identity. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Germany had to recreate itself in several aspects. German borders changed, certain aspects of German language changed, and most importantly, the definition of who is a German changed. Echoing Herder and Lammert, Anne-Marie Le Gloannec, a French political scientist, writes about national identity as an idea that “involves a common past and a common culture shared by those inhabiting a common territory” (134). If this is what the national identity *should* be, then the German identity created under the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany also needed to be rewritten in order to combine the histories of these two halves of the German state and a “one size fits all solution” was not a possibility (Le Gloannec, 134). In order to create a new German identity, those in positions of power had to consider the desires and motives for this new identity. This reunited Germany felt global pressure to create a new identity and a new standard of living, matching that of other Western countries, such as the United States and Great Britain, for those living within German borders (Le Gloannec, 131). This global pressure was sponsored particularly by the United States, who played an important role in redefining German identity as well as influencing how Germany wanted to be perceived by the rest of the global community.

In an attempt to push out the East German elites and communist ideals by the Western German leaders to modernize and overwrite the “new man” and the “new state” that was established in the East, the merge between East and West neglected minority

groups, such as Turkish-Germans who came to Germany as Gastarbeiter or guest workers and were living in Germany at this point for several decades at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall (Le Gloannec, 133). In an attempt of creating an identity, “the *Volk* (people) became a mythical element of permanence, purportedly defining identity” (Le Gloannec, 129). The “jus sanguinis” law, the principle that nationality is defined through blood, first prevailed because it is what Germany used to determine belonging to its constantly changing borders and institutions (Le Gloannec, 145). The concept of jus sanguinis pairs with this sort of mythical element of permanence to a German state, because even if the borders were to change, the blood would remain the same, and nationality would be assigned to those with the original blood of that nation. However, noting this “völkisch” definition of identity as a foundation of the Kulturation, which considered blood and ethnic origins, one must recognize that it could only grow parallel to Verfassungspatriotismus, which allows for all “Others” to coexist with one another (Hogwood, 136).

The concept of a Kulturation provided Germans with a sense of togetherness and “nationhood expressed through ethnic and cultural identity” (Hogwood, 136). The desire for as Kulturation replaced the national desire for a “‘völkisch’ concept of nationhood,” after World War II, when the equation between the terms “people” and “race” became common, and the cultural definition of “Volk” was replaced by a biological definition (Berman, Mazón, and Steingröver, 46 and Hogwood, 136). This linguistic change altered the definitions of how people could find their belonging, since tying blood and race together is only one component of creating a nation in which people are related to one another based on similarities. Thus, the “Volkskörper,” or the national body, transformed

to a *Kulturnation*, which holds its basis on similarities in language, religion, and cultural and artistic history, rather than solely ethnic ties to national borders. This concept has thus only granted citizenship “to those who have successfully shed every vestige of ‘alienness’ and have, to all intents and purposes, become committed Germans” (Hogwood, 138). This would prove difficult for Turkish-German guest workers, who became victim of this *Kulturnation* after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Le Gloannec claims that there is a “lack of a clear German identity” and that the “notion of common interest seems to split up into a mosaic of particular interests,” which create smaller communities to which Germans can claim belonging to (Le Gloannec, 129). This issue of a blurry German identity only grew stronger post the fall of the Berlin Wall, as the attempt to create one identity tried to merge vastly different backgrounds, beliefs, cultures, histories, and traditions. After Germany’s reunification, minority groups in Germany, mostly those of Turkish-German descent, tried to focus on creating their own identity, or their own “*Nischengesellschaft*,” of the overarching national identity (Le Gloannec, 132).

Joyce Mushaben’s definition of a “*Nischengesellschaft*” is seen arising within areas of migrant settlements, specifically those with Turkish-German guest workers who moved to Germany post World War II. According to Mushaben, a *Nischengesellschaft* forms in areas where there are like-minded individuals with common backgrounds and common struggles within one social construct (78). As Le Gloannec writes, the merger of two worlds, being Eastern and Western Germany, tried to form one overarching belief system for all Germans. Yet, these migrant communities, according to Mushaben, are considered the “real losers of unification,” as they were ultimately rejected by the

German state and left out of the new national German identity, despite seven million migrants living in Germany by 1990 (73). Mushaben supports this argument with a shocking statement: “Prior to 1990, persons who met the formal naturalisation requirements could still be rejected at the discretion of bureaucrats (Ermessen) as ‘not in the best interest of German culture’” (73). When this type of criterium exists, one realizes that the “Ausländerproblem” of the nineties was more so a “German problem,” because the so-called “lack of integration” among migrants was not of their own doing (Mushaben, 73).

One might say that the “German problem” and the “lack of integration” of which Mushaben writes, was not left in the nineties. Thomas Kemper wrote “Migrationshintergrund-eine Frage der Definition!” in 2010, which highlights the complexity that this word carries in definition. Kemper mentions that the term “Migrationshintergrund” requires individuals to consider aspects such as citizenship, country of birth, parental or grandparental birthplace, the age at which the family entered the country, and generational status. All of these aspects create a complicated, complex definition, and in the age of globalization, a term with which many can identify. The main three characteristics that assign someone a “Migrationshintergrund” come from someone’s citizenship, birthplace, and language; if one of these does not fit the “norm” of being born in and a citizen of Germany and growing up in a household where German is spoken, then they are recognized as having this “Migrationshintergrund” (Kemper, 316). It has been difficult to decide to whom one assigns this term, as people normally have a combination of these characteristics defining their migration background.¹⁴ This has

¹⁴ “Daher ist eine Kombination mehrerer Merkmale unabdingbar. Allerdings ergeben sich hier neue Probleme, denn bei genauerem Hinsehen zeigt sich, dass aufgrund der unterschiedlich gewählten

proven mostly difficult for those who are Germans, but are assumed to have a Migrationshintergrund, such is the case for Black Germans.

Merkmalskombination die Ergebnisse von Studien nicht oder nur schwer aufeinander beziehbar sind” (Kemper, 320).

CHAPTER 4. SCHWARZSEIN ODER DEUTSCHSEIN?

In Susanne Zantop's book *Colonial Fantasies*, she makes connections between desire and colonialist fascination within a German context, which still feeds the dynamics at play in current German society. She writes about the German fascination of overseas colonies, while also bringing to light the hierarchy that was established in the eighteenth century at the peak interest for colonial fantasies (10). This "natural," out-dated, hierarchy about which Zantop writes suggests that the white male was "predestined by biology to a position of physical and cultural dominance" over all others; meaning, colonizers were able to use this hierarchy to justify slavery and mistreatment of others with the excuse that it was "natural" (5). This hierarchy is rooted in early German thought, specifically that of 18th century philosopher, Friedrich Hegel. Hegel depicts the Black man as the "antithesis" of the typically white, male European, who is "free, reasonable, irrational, and in full possession of will" (Wright, 297). Hegel writes of this contrast between concepts of East and West, developed and undeveloped in *The Philosophy of History*. He writes that some parts of Africa, natives are "civilized and enlightened," whereas some others still fit into Hegel's mold of a stereotypically underdeveloped colony (151). He places the Black man in a "barren, desolate, unpromising desert" in which the people and their mindsets are completely foreign (201). Hegel places all Black people under one stereotype, that is that they are "unfree, unreasonable, irrational, and lacking will" and that the Black version of man is lesser in contrast with the traditionally white European (Wright, 297). Noting this stereotype, Hegel does not necessarily neglect Black people from co-existing with the white majority

in Europe; however, he does note that they are outsiders and are not as equally present in European society as their white counterparts are.

Using Hegel's thoughts to look at how German looks at, what Zantop calls the "native Other," explains German fascination with overseas colonies. The "native Other," who Zantop defines to be Black people, Amerindians, and "m*lattoes¹⁵," became the center of German imagination, which established a "cultural residue of myths about the self and other(s)" (Zantop, 3, 7). By creating an internal discourse defining who these "Others" were, German writers were starting to "to define what was 'German,' and what was 'un-German.'" (Zantop, 7). In doing so, and by defining what was German, writers developed a national space that defined national characteristics, which "could be contrasted with other Europeans, with whom Germany competed for moral, economic, or political supremacy" (Zantop, 7). This desire for "colonial possessions and a sense of entitlement" increased simultaneously while German nationalists started contrasting themselves with other European nations, which could suggest feelings of oppression that other nations in Europe had exclusive national identities (Zantop, 7; Kontje, 70). As Germany looked to their European neighbors and their versions of identity, the concept of "race" in its modern, biological definition," also started to arise on a global scale, which was one of the leading factors which sparked how "'race' became defined as a series of immutable physical properties, accompanied by equally immutable intellectual and moral characteristics" (Zantop, 5). The concept of race arising as Germany began to develop its own identity could be why contemporary German identity struggles to look at Black

¹⁵ Because "'M*latto' was an even older historical label with associations left over from the days of slavery," I treat the term the same as the N-word in this essay by censoring the spelling (Berman, Mazón, and Steingröver, 3).

people as a “non-Other.” As written in *Not So Plain as Black and White*, “African Germans combined what was supposed to be separate...the group was legally defined through the one-drop rule,” which should have made the question of belonging clear to answer (46). Nonetheless, defining the German race by blood was established to keep Germans white; however, combining “Black” and “German” was greeted as something that should have been a possibility (Berman, Mazón, and Steingröver, 46). Blackness and Germanness were not expected to overlap, so once they did, nationalists attempted to create a separation between the two groups: “Humans thus objectified and pathologized could not be seen as equals, as fully entitled citizens, and least of all as ‘Germans.’”

It is difficult for Black Germans to construct their own identity against the history of German identity, as it has been so exclusionary and complex. So how can the Black German identity be similar to the other types of German identities discussed thus far? It has been made relatively clear through first-hand accounts, such as in *Farbe Bekennen*, that the Black German experience is ambiguous and open to many interpretations. Joyce Mushaben writes about niche communities and how these help form an identity. Her definition believes that a niche community forms naturally in areas where there are like minded individuals with common backgrounds and common struggles in one given society. However, because Black Germans do not always have access to other Black German niches in their communities, they are unable to create her version of a niche community. In order to combat this, some Black communities within Germany form associations in which other Black people can join them to discuss politics, cultural events, customary African traditions, and just be with others like them, which was the case for Samy Deluxe and other Black Germans in Hamburg (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 61).

In this case, the Nischengesellschaft is rather a conscious effort to form a community of like-minded individuals, which while it does not follow the Mushaben's formation of a niche community, it did provide Black Germans a sense of belonging.

For many Black Germans born and raised within German borders, they are constantly misrecognized as Africans, though they have “established a German birthplace, parents, and education” and have known nothing other than Germany for their whole lives (Wright, 297). Wright references the encounters that are written about in *Farbe Bekennen*, “Showing our Colors,” a collection of autobiographical accounts from Black German women throughout various generations (Opitz). While writing about *Farbe Bekennen*, Wright clarifies that not many white Germans are capable of imagining or accepting someone who is Black and German (298). Audre Lorde is credited for coining the term “Afro-German,” though the hybridity between the identities can be recognized for linking Black Germans to the African diaspora, rather than to emphasize their Germanness (Gunter, 71). This issue and incapability of acknowledging Blacks as something other than the “Others” in a German setting directly stems from German history and the Eurocentric view that many white Germans innately have based on a predominantly white German national identity. This future discourse can only take place if Germans not only accept the creation of a Black German identity but adopt Black German identity as a form of German identity.

Wright explains that the Black “Other” is often recognized as an “American problem,” because of the historical racial inequalities between Black and white Americans. Even in the American discourse, while Blacks are still minoritized, “they are recognized as having been born and raised in the U.S., even if racists believe they do not

belong” (Wright, 298). Black Germans are not greeted with this same recognition. Kemper contrasts this aspect between Germany and the United States. He writes that physical characteristics (*Körpermerkmalen*) are one of the most obvious identifiers of “visible minorities” (320). For some minorities within Germany, such as light-complexioned Russian people, for example, they are able to blend into society and are not automatically assigned an “outsider” character description. For People of Color, that is not always the case. Black Germans receive often little to no recognition for being both Black and German, even though most Black Germans have little to no experience with their African heritage (Wright, 298). In the United States, a Black person is, for the most part, not assumed to be an immigrant from Africa or the Caribbean; they are assumed to be an African American. Yet, despite national integration efforts, People of Color are not recognized as belonging in a German setting. Priscilla Layne writes in her novel, *White Rebels in Black: German Appropriation of Black Popular Culture*, that “For centuries, indigenous white Germans have perceived white skin as the norm, and therefore, the presence of black bodies...immediately signified social change” (1). It is almost a reflex for many white Germans to assume that Black people are foreign within a German society. The Black German population mostly resulted from African immigrants coming to Germany, as well as African American troops that were present after the First and Second World War (Campt, “Politics of Positionality” 111). The presence of Black people in Germany called for another look at what it means to be German, as German identity, added a physical layer. The physical appearance of Black people in Germany is “immediately perceived as ‘blackness,’ which in turn is constructed to mean African (or African-American), as foreign or external to German culture (Campt, “Politics of

Personality” 112). Priscilla Layne references Timothy Schroer’s work, *Recasting Race after World War II: Germans and African Americans in American-Occupied Germany* while discussing current German attitude towards Black Germans, primarily because it brings the issue of whiteness to the forefront of his study on postwar Germany (Layne, 4-5). Schroer writes that after the end of World War II, that “American policy makers consistently sought to persuade the Germans that they were not Aryans, they were white” in order to alleviate some of the German guilt following the end of World War II and the Holocaust (qtd in Layne, 5). Schroer goes on to further explain that while trying to “bridge the division between Germans and other whites simultaneously reinforc[ed] the division between Germans and blacks” (qtd in Layne, 5). While Germans were trying to rectify their own racial identity, they indirectly further distanced themselves from Black Germans in creating a new German identity. Similar to that which is stated in Zantop’s analysis, Germans were busy focusing on defining what was German and un-German, that they did not create an identity that was all inclusive (qtd in Layne, 5). The United States, though with the good intention of helping the national German heal, ultimately harmed the way Black Germans were able to find themselves in German society.

Since many Black Germans do not have communities of other Black Germans to grow up with in Germany, some Black Germans adopt the lifestyle of African-Americans, or other members of the African Diaspora where Black people have established communities and identities, such as in France or England. Wright writes, that most Black Germans were “born and raised apart from one another and, although they share knowledge of German racism and ignorance most whites and non-Afro-Germans

cannot fully know, they come from a wide range of class, ethnic, geographical, as well as historical backgrounds” (301).

“In the United States, African Americans grow up with a history of their cultural heritage and the struggle of Blacks and other people of color,” writes Campt (“Politics of Positionality” 112). This sense of community builds strong relationships and support systems for African Americans. For Black Germans, this type of shared communal identity is rare. Black Germans seldom have relationships to their African/African American cultural heritage or others with a shared African identity and they rarely have a “recognized place in German history” (Campt, “Politics of Positionality” 112). For this reason, Tina Campt completed a project looking at and examining the emergence and presence of Black Germans throughout photography. Her project is unique, because it is one of the rare attempts at placing Black Germans in German history and allowing Black Germans to see themselves as part of a national German identity.

In Campt’s essay “Pictures of ‘US’? Blackness, Diaspora, and the Afro-German Subject,” she looks at the Black German subject in historical accounts. Photography and imagery in this sense invites both the Black German community to see themselves in German history while also introducing other audiences to understand and see when and where Black Germans were present throughout German history. Campt writes that photographs and images capture moments while creating and becoming the meaning that is depicted in them (“Pictures of ‘US,’” 142). In Campt’s essay, she explains that photography was one of the first “modes of belonging” for Black people in Germany. She further explains that these “modes of belonging urge us to consider *nation* as an essential framework through which diasporic membership is negotiated,” rather than the shared

customs and mores, which we see in other explanations of a German sense of belonging, such as with Lammert for example (“Pictures of ‘US’” 141). Photography, through Campt’s research, provides evidence of how race existed in the Black German family, and how Blacks in Germany were represented before Black Americans entered the conversation post World War II.

The importance of seeing Black Germans in visual media influences how people address the concept of “Blackness.” Campt writes about remarks made by those examining these photographs in her essay and their assessments of Blackness as if it is a spectrum, assigning the words “black,” “brown,” and “colored” to all different people based on characteristics such as hair texture and physical features (“Pictures of ‘US’” 145). Throughout Campt’s essay, she shows photos of Black Germans present in German history, which is often whitewashed, as Campt says (“Pictures of ‘US’” 146). The presence and documented imagery of Black Germans existing throughout German history makes a case that the Black German identity is not something new. Examining the Black German identity throughout this history looks at the identities of those visible in Campt’s essay. An identity only exists when people consciously create it; when this is suppressed, one can ultimately feel stuck existing between multiple identities, none of which are suited fully for themselves.

CHAPTER 5. HIP-HOP: FRESH FROM THE BRONX TO BERLIN

Hip-Hop first arrived in Germany from the Bronx in the 1980s, and now serves as one of Germany's most popular musical genres (Ahlers, 458). As a genre, it includes more than just rapping. Hip-Hop culture consists of beatboxing, break dancing, graffiti, scratching, and of course, rapping. Hip-Hop culture first arose in the United States, which created a space for a new artistic variation in urban spaces. This movement also happened to allow for social and political critique, while simultaneously allowing individuals' originality to flourish on several levels. Although Hip-Hop is predominantly associated with African Americans in the U.S., the ownership of German Hip-Hop is still up for debate.

Leonard Schmieding wrote an essay in which he discusses Hip-Hop in the German Democratic Republic, providing insight into how the genre was first introduced to Germany. In its early phases, he writes about how Hip-Hop centric films such as *Beat Street*, alongside *Style Wars* and *Breakin'*, introduced Germans in both the East and West to an entirely new and American scene, which was spreading rather quickly internationally (107). Viewers found films such as *Beat Street* captivating, as "the message of 'keeping it real' against all odds" was authentic for the scene and appealed to young peoples' interests (Schmiedling, 107). The GDR permitted this film to be publicly shown because it was a "perfect mix" between an entertainment film and social critique, which, while this is one of the main elements of the music genre and culture, it was also an easy way for the GDR to incorporate the "rags to riches myth" (Schmieding, 107; Ahlers, 463). The film *Beat Street* focuses on protagonists "coping with living in the ghetto" and the role that Hip-Hop plays in their everyday lives (Schmieding, 107-8). This

film ultimately gained widespread attention among young audiences, especially People of Color, and more and more people wanted to participate in the culture that was shown in the film.

After the release of these films in German theaters, the fashion as seen in the films also made its way to German shops. Schmieding writes that “young people are particularly prone to use fashion signifiers in striving for difference, otherness, and authenticity” (109). Hip-Hop fulfilled this desire for difference and otherness within state limitations for those who were against the principle of uniformity in the GDR. *Beat Street* also sparked new fashion among young people in the German Hip-Hop scene; youths were using “DIY” clothing to create a “ghetto-style,” which Schmieding says, “created an atmosphere with a whiff of New York” (112). For many, the style played just as big of a role in defining Hip-Hop culture as the artistic components did. While some may have been starting to follow and mimic this scene, it did not truly reach all of Europe until 1982, when “non-Germans [were] appearing on the nation’s television screens” (Peabody, 1).

Torch, a Haitian-German rapper, is known for being a pioneering figure of the German Hip-Hop movement. Torch, along with his group members Toni L and Linguist, started a group called Advanced Chemistry, who was among the first to release a socially conscious rap album in the German language in 1992 (Peabody, 1). He and his group members focused their German rap music on many social issues within German society. With the release of this album, they included a song titled “Fremd im eigenen Land,” which deals with issues many other future German rappers would address in their social critiques of Germany. This song expresses the group members’ marginalized position in

German society, including themes that seem to be timeless within the genre of German Hip-Hop, such as feelings of non-belonging based on physical appearance, as they are repeated by other minority rappers throughout the following decades. Linguist, one of the group members, says “our music seeks to address issues that are normally not addressed in Germany” (qtd in Peabody, 1).

The first stanza proves this, as the group pushed the social limits of what Germanness is. It consists of lyrics that provide a social critique on the microaggressions¹⁶ that the group members have faced based solely on physical attributes. The members share that they were treated differently just because they do not “look German.” They are assumed to be foreigners, and have to combat strangers to prove their belonging within Germany:

Fahr' ich zur Grenze mit dem Zug oder einem Bus

Frag' ich mich, warum ich der Einzige bin, der sich ausweisen muss

Identität beweisen muss!

(Ist es so ungewöhnlich, wenn ein Afro-Deutscher seine Sprache spricht)

Und nicht so blass ist im Gesicht?

Das Problem sind die Ideen im System

(Ein echter Deutscher muss auch richtig deutsch aussehen)

Blaue Augen, blondes Haar, keine Gefahr

¹⁶ The group members of Advanced Chemistry are multinational and multi-racial; Torch, a Haitian-German rapper, Toni L, an Italian-German rapper, and Linguist, a Ghanaian-German rapper all have tried to confront anti-immigrant ideas within a German context. In doing so, they express the inherent racism they have faced as growing up as an ethnic minority in Germany through their music. Stevie Gunter writes on *The Prosumption of Afro-German Discourse After the 1980s*, and writes that “performing micro-aggressions causes the White audience to recognize the problematic acts as such through the perspective that... forces upon them” (80). Advanced Chemistry’s aim is to have their White audience think about the racist encounters that ethnic Germans face daily.

Gab's da nicht 'ne Zeit wo's schon mal so war? (Advanced Chemistry, genius.com)

These lyrics are one of the first instances in which German music brought to light the struggles Germans from minoritized groups faced in German-speaking society. Advanced Chemistry questions the inequalities they encounter as minority Germans, especially regarding their appearance and citizenship. They constantly have to “prove” their Germanness to others. The group ends this stanza with “Gab's da nicht 'ne Zeit wo's schon mal so war?” which carries some agitation within the question itself. Advanced Chemistry had experience with being assigned with having a “Migrationshintergrund,” before the word even made its way into the common German language.

This song also touches on the “otherness” that minority figures are assigned in Germany, which mentions a dialogue that minoritized individuals hear often within German society:

"Gehst du mal später zurück in deine Heimat?"

Wohin? nach Heidelberg? wo ich ein Heim hab?

"Nein du weisst, was ich mein..."

Komm lass es sein, ich kenn diese Fragen, seitdem ich klein

Bin, in diesem Land vor zwei Jahrzehnten gebor'n

Doch frag' ich mich manchmal: Was hab ich hier verlor'n?

Ignorantes Geschwätz, ohne End'

Dumme Sprüche, die man bereits alle kennt

"Eh, bist du Amerikaner oder kommste aus Afrika?" (Advanced Chemistry, genius.com)

This stanza brings up points that are still present in contemporary German society. Many Germans assume that just because someone is Black, that they cannot be from Germany and that they must be either an African-American or from Africa. The group raps about being interrogated about their belonging and their origins, as if no one has seen someone who looks like them before. Though the song was released in the 1990s, the themes and complaints in the lyrics are unfortunately not exclusive to the group, Advanced Chemistry. Advanced Chemistry brings these issues to surface that other rappers, like Sammy Deluxe, feel relates to their own situation as an “ethnic German.”

CHAPTER 6. MEETING SAMY DELUXE

Dis wo ich herkomm, Samy Deluxe's autobiography that he released in 2009, takes readers on a journey from his adolescent years through to the start and highpoints of his early career. Samy Deluxe is a Sudanese-German rapper from Hamburg, Germany who became famous at the relatively young age of 21 years (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 6). Most of his discography contains works from his solo career, though he has been featured in songs with other German rappers, such as Afrob and Torch, who also happen to create music surrounding social critique within a German context. Growing up as a mixed-race boy in Hamburg, Samy Deluxe expresses through music, interviews, and his autobiography, that he never felt as if he was looked at as a German, nor did he feel as though he belonged in Hamburg, even alongside others who looked like him. The "Black side" of him distanced him from other Germans, while the "German side" distanced him from other Black youths:

“Die Afrikaner, deren Eltern aus Ghana oder dem Senegal stammten, waren komplett cool mit ihrem Schwarzsein, und die Halbschwarzen, die ich am Gänsemarkt kennenlernte, wirkten auf mich auch sehr souverän. Zumindest konnten sie ziemlich entspannt mit ihrem Anderssein umgehen. Ich nicht. Ich war dadurch, dass wir im noblen Eppendorf wohnten, ein bisschen «außen vor». Und nach wie vor war ich ziemlich unsicher, wo ich eigentlich hingehörte.”

Samy Deluxe's comment here tells his audience that he struggled with finding his belonging within a German society from a young age, and that he felt that all others had it "easier" than him finding their place within German society because of their non-hybrid ethnicities. Michelle Wright actually uses Black German communities as a counter

discourse from Black people in Britain and France, as she claims that they were so differently placed in social constructs. For this reason (297-8). As Wright explains, in France and Great Britain, “racist discourse posits Blacks as Others from within-- physically part of the nation, but in other ways utterly foreign and thus utterly incapable of being integrated into the nation” (297). However, in Germany, many Black Germans are misrecognized as “Africans,” or in general terms as “outsiders,” even though there has been an “extensive conversation [that] has established a German birthplace, parents, and education” for this population (Wright, 297).

Samy Deluxe about his experiences growing up in Hamburg and the attempts to find his belonging, or his niche. He tells readers that he was present in the Black community in Hamburg, to which he often references a customary “Verein von Afrikanern in Hamburg” named “African Heritage” (61). This group, which tended to meet and discuss cultural and political themes surrounding Black German heritage, also had subgroups in which members could participate. Samy Deluxe writes about a round table discussion group, a dance group, and a choir group, all of which the Black German community in Hamburg were able to participate. This association is one of the first stepping stones that led Samy Sorge to become Samy Deluxe. Although the community in which he grew up was predominantly white, he was able to meet with others who shared interests with him on a deep level that his white friends may not have been able to understand. At the same time, he simultaneously claims membership to the “sehr blonden und blauäugigen deutschen Rap-Szene,” a scene which he later critiques in his music when talking about his own participation in the German music scene (61). This scenario which Samy Deluxe describes places Samy Deluxe into two very different communities.

And though they did not necessarily emerge in areas naturally, based on like-mindedness and common struggles, such as the communities of which Mushaben writes, they do help shape Samy Deluxe's niche in German society.

In order to identify with various groups in German society, Samy Deluxe, given this discourse, has used his music to create an attempt at a Black German identity for himself, or his own mode of belonging, as Campt explains in her "Pictures of Us" essay. For Samy Deluxe, the smaller subgroups in which Samy Deluxe participated were not enough for him to feel belonging; he needed to locate himself in a larger, national community. Campt, while discussing photography as a form of viewing history, writes that "local rootedness and national belonging is the ground from which transnational and diasporic affinities, differences, allegiances, and solidarity must necessarily be forged" ("Pictures of Us," 151). Samy Deluxe amplifies his "local rootedness" in his music, mentioning his roots in Eppendorf, the district of Hamburg where he grew up:

“Die Leute wollen's nicht einsehen,

doch ich leb' hier schon mein Leben lang

Und wenn ich mecker' über dieses Land

Sagen sie: „Geh doch hin woher du kommst!“

Okay, dann geh' ich halt nach Eppendorf

Ich hab' auch angefangen mit Rappen dort” (Deluxe, *MiMiMi*,

genius.com)

This example not only emphasizes his locality by mentioning the district name over the city name, but it also establishes his credibility in the locale.

In *Dis wo ich herkomm*, Samy Deluxe provides an introduction to his life as a Black young man in Hamburg. His struggle as a Black body in Germany started early in his life, when he first encountered the negative connotations attached to the word “black.” Kenneth Gergen, a sociologist who published an article titled “The Significance of Skin Color in Human Relations,” makes notable points about skin color and the overbearing role that skin color plays in identifying personage. Though published in 1967, his article writes on the dangerous reactions towards “race” and precisely, how these reactions to color can be harmful to Black people in society. For example, taking the German language for example, where words like “Schwarzfahren” and “schwarzer Magie” are used in daily life and carry negative connotations, one can clearly see that these negative reactions to color carry meaning further than just on a physical level. The mindset that created these connections between language and “Blackness,” holds its roots in those clinging to the familiar and being hesitant to welcome the “Other” (Gergen, 395). This theory lines itself up with the guidelines to identity formation as seen in Herder and Nietzsche’s beliefs regarding creating a national identity, namely equating belonging to the description of a Kulturnation. Keeping this in mind while reading Samy Deluxe’s autobiography, one must consider the discrimination and prejudice found within the German language itself with these negative words and phrases. Samy Deluxe writes that he felt victimized by this type of language and that various examples, “...von schwarzer Magie über schwarzen Humor bis hin zu Schwarzfahren,” did not make him feel welcomed into German society solely based on his skin color being black (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 6). The attachment of the word “black” to these negative concepts bothered Samy Deluxe from an early age, and one can see the effects these negative associations

with blackness have had throughout his life. To reference Gergen's argument again, if a group's culture is heavily influenced and prides itself on feelings of familiarity, there may be actions of subconscious preference that may play a more prevalent role in cultures than what is seen on the surface. Furthermore, if groups within a social setting hold these subconscious preferences to interact with those who are familiar to them, provided they share the same or similar cultural roots, then it is inherently a problem for creating relations with those that would fall under the category of "the unfamiliar." Evidence for this statement is visible through Samy Deluxe's childhood, which he talks about frequently in his music, interviews, and his autobiography.

Samy Deluxe's relationship with Germany was not the most positive experience during his coming-of-age years. He struggled through feelings of exclusion for most of his young life. He discusses that the only others who he saw that were accepted and able to fit into German society as figures other than white were "die Bauarbeiter von der Bahn, die Männer von der Müllabfuhr und die Schulanfänger" (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 23). Samy Deluxe was used to seeing people who looked like him in service positions, but not positions of authority or pop culture figures, that is, until he looked to America. It is important to note the lack of representation in media and in positions of power that Samy Deluxe encountered in his coming of age years. Seeing Black men in solely service positions made him feel alienated from the rest of society around him. For this reason, when the Hip-Hop scene first emerged as the new, cool thing in the 80s and 90s and Samy Deluxe was able to see those who looked like him in Hip-Hop culture, he was able to dream about himself in similar roles to those that he was seeing within media related to the genre. When he recalls his first encounters with American Hip-Hop culture, he shares

that he felt so connected to the culture because he was able to see those who looked like him, and they were “cool,” since they had positive traits that he aspired to have. Mostly, Samy Deluxe was able to use these figures as a reference point for building his own success story of “giving back¹⁷” to Germany, because it provided him a creative space to make a name for himself. This American influence ultimately led to his personal transformation during the late 80s, when Hip-Hop culture really became present in Samy Deluxe’s life. His love of the genre started with the film, *Colors- Farben der Gewalt*, in which one learns of gangs in LA. According to Samy Deluxe, this film portrays important elements of Hip-Hop culture. Viewers see gang related graffiti painted on public walls, they hear the rap music that the gang members were listening to at the time, and they witness what is recognized as street etiquette and culture (Deluxe, *Dis wo ich herkomm*, 23-4). All of these components combined create the Hip-Hop culture that Samy Deluxe found himself infatuated with during his early teenage years.

One of his trips to the United States in the winter of 2005-6 brought him to San Francisco, where he saw Black men and women in a wider range of professional and societal roles. He saw people that looked like him as police, models, journalists, and virtually any other job he could imagine (Deluxe, *Dis wo ich herkomm*, 26). Thinking back to this and other experiences in his earlier years, he recalls how incredible and comforting it was for him to see Black actors and professional athletes on television. His response to seeing these figures was positive, as it didn’t feel so strange, foreign, or uncomfortable¹⁸ to be Black anymore (Deluxe, *Dis wo ich herkomm*, 25). However, this

¹⁷ “Dieses Land hat mir etwas gegeben, ich will was zurückgeben” (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 19).

¹⁸ Es fühlte sich nicht mehr ganz so seltsam, fremd und außergewöhnlich an” (Deluxe, *Dis wo ich herkomm*, 25).

initial encounter gave Samy Deluxe negative feelings towards Germany, what he calls his “jugendlicher Heimathass,” because he was envious of the America he saw in the media (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 25). In his adult years, he critiques the diversity “front” that he believes America presents to the rest of the world, particularly concerning unity between Blacks and whites. One could look at this as a reflection of Samy Deluxe’s own beliefs towards identity and belonging on a national level. Samy Deluxe writes, “Je mehr Amerika in mein Leben kam, je mehr ich vom Land der unbegrenzten Möglichkeiten träumte, desto weniger schlimm erschien mir der deutsche Albtraum“ (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 24). This “German nightmare” comes up frequently in Samy Deluxe’s book and he elaborates on it in his song, “Weck mich auf (aus diesem Albtraum).” To Samy Deluxe, this nightmare appears to be the life in which he encounters not only racially based problems within German society, but also social problems within the German setting. The song “Weck mich auf” describes Samy Deluxe’s vision of this nightmare and the many aspects therein:

“Wir haben miese Karten, regiert von Psychopathen
Verwaltet von Bürokraten, die keine Gefühle haben
Kontrolliert von korrupten Cops, die oft Sadisten sind
Verdächtige suchen nach rassistischen Statistiken
Gefüttert von Firmen, die uns jahrzehntelang vergifteten
Informiert durch Medien, die's erst zu spät berichteten
Scheiß aufn Unfall im PKW, Schäden von THC, wir hab'n bald alle BSE
Und du schaust noch auf dein EKG bevor dein Herz stoppt”
(Deluxe, *Weck mich auf*, genius.com)

He is obviously dissatisfied with these aspects of his life, and is calling for change. This call for change is one of his ways of addressing his feelings of negativity towards the society which excludes himself and others like him.

In an interview early in Samy Deluxe's career with Deutsche Welle, Peter Craven talks to Samy Deluxe about rap, travel, and rhymes. This provides us with an interesting look at the earlier years of his career and provides Samy Deluxe with a space to talk about some realizations he has had throughout his lifetime. Samy Deluxe shares in his book that in his earlier years, he wanted no part of any political conversations, but now, he wants to give back and become a part of the conversations happening around political matters¹⁹ (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 19). In this interview with Peter Craven, Samy Deluxe shares that it was always his dream to travel to the US, but he also shares that it was not the "multicultural" country that he expected, the more he got to know life and the Black and white divide in the States:

"...Because of recent years I've been in the States so much, my ex-wife was American, and it was always my dream you know, in my youth like America, the country of all dreams and it's so multicultural and has so many Black people and white people mix everything and when I came there and the more time I spent there I was seeing that it's really not a big unity you know like when you can walk on the street and somebody walks behind you and you can tell by the way they talk if they are Black or white and and and language is definitely like, like one of the most distinct things of a culture and then, then I don't see that there's one American culture, there's a Black American culture, a white American culture, Latin American culture, and for, for us here I think there's a better way to kind of live together, I don't have like a slang that a Turkish guy couldn't have or you know..."

(Talking Germany, 04:31-5:04)

In this comment, he neglects to articulate that while he does not have slang that a Turkish German could not have, a Turkish German *could* have slang that Samy Deluxe would not have. This statement maintains Samy Deluxe's definition of multiculturalism really being multi-ethnicism.

¹⁹ "Früher dacht ich «Fick Poltik!», heute will ich mitreden (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 19)

He shares his hopes that Germany can create a better unity between Black and white people than that of what he witnessed in the United States. To Samy Deluxe, he envisions a full integration for all within German borders and for those citizens to reject the foreign or the “Other.”. In the United States, Samy Deluxe expected an idealized open, welcoming, non-segregated society; however, this was not the case. He recognizes that the situation is not better in Germany, but he wants to fix that. Samy Deluxe, in his mind, wants to take on this goal headfirst through his socio-critical rap, to encourage and ensure that the Black/white divide in Germany does not turn into a false front as he perceived in United States culture. Here, Samy Deluxe argues against pure Verfassungspatriotismus without a Leitkultur; rather, he sees different communities as not being unified in their cultures as a problem, which suggests that Samy Deluxe is more in favor of Herder’s approach to defining national identity. To Samy Deluxe, having the exact same language and language style is a signifier of a shared identity, rather than being united by respect for and belief in a common governing body.

Craven later asks Samy Deluxe a question about his belonging, to which he provides an interesting outlook on his own identity. Craven asks, “Let me ask you this, in the US for example, they talked about African Americans, are you an African German?” to which Samy Deluxe replies:

“Well in German, what they say is Afro-Deutsch, which means Afro-German, and I think that’s, that’s just like wrong because Afro is not, uh, afro is a hairstyle you know and I don’t, I have straight hair so I could never grow afro, so I don’t use that, that word and I think yes, it’s different all those terminologies you know...”
(Talking Germany, 04:31-5:04)

With this response, Samy Deluxe distances himself from Audre Lorde’s and May Ayim’s works as defining who Afro-Germans are. Originally, the term Afro-Deutsch was created

to oppose “more commonly used names like ‘half-breed’ [or] ‘m*latto’” which have stronger ties to the mistreatment of Black Germans in the past, particularly to slavery and racial classification schemes, such as those used by the Nazis in World War II (Berman, Mazón, and Steingröver, 3). One would think that Samy Deluxe, according to his attitude about being Black in Germany, would recognize and appreciate the progression that this term brought on to the Black German community nationwide. Instead of adopting the usage of this term, however, he mocks the phrase and uses his hair to shield himself from being relegated to this category of “Afro-Germans,” which could be seen as an act of distancing himself from the African diaspora.

This is not the first time that Samy Deluxe references his hair being a signifier of his hybrid Black German identity or his lack of Blackness in general. In the 2016 interview with 3nach9, a talk show from Bremen, Samy Deluxe talks about his search for identity as always being complicated, even today, though he is involved with others with African heritage. In this conversation, he tells 3nach9:

“...die Leute haben mich oft so N*ger und solche Wörter genannt und dann habe ich aber glatte Haare, und wenn ich denn darauf reagiert habe, dass sie mich N*ger genannt haben, haben sie gesagt, du bist ja nicht ein richtiger N*ger, weil deine Haare sind glatt und dann war ich noch verwirrter und wusste jetzt nicht auf wen ich wütend sein soll oder darf...”

(3nach9, Samy Deluxe, 02:20-02:36)

While Samy Deluxe reflects on this moment, he clarifies just how difficult the establishment of his identity has been throughout his career. In this comment, he expresses that he not only was assigned an ethnic slur that dissociates him with Germanness, but he also shares that he was told that he also did not belong to the identity that is associated with the slur either, specifically because of his hair being straight. This

places him somewhere in the middle of all of these identities; could Samy Deluxe identify as a German, Black, or a Black-German?

CHAPTER 7. WOHER KOMMST DU WIRKLICH?

Craven asks Samy Deluxe about his experiences as a child in Germany. Samy Deluxe has made it clear that he did not have the easiest upbringing. He recalls memories of moving into a new apartment in a nice neighborhood with his mother and feeling that he did not necessarily belong there. He talks about his struggles as a Black child living in Eppendorf, a suburb outside of metropolitan hotspot Hamburg. He tells Craven,

...we didn't have the matching Mercedes-Benz that every other neighbor had, and we didn't have, for me especially, I didn't have the matching skin color, you know, like and at some point like I was standing in front of my own house and people, like neighbors that moved in new they were asking me, like "Can I help you?" and I was like, "No, can I help you?" you just moved in, you know, I lived here before you.

(Talking Germany, 03:52-4:12)

This scenario is just one of many that Samy Deluxe has experienced of feeling as if he is an outsider in his own country. In his book, *Dis wo ich herkomm*, he writes more about his feelings of exclusion from German and Germanness as a child. Samy Deluxe writes, "Meine deutsche Mutter, mein deutscher Stiefvater und meine kleine deutsche Schwester hatten es bald schwer mit mir – und ich mit ihnen und allen anderen" (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 21). He goes on to explain that he always felt as if he was a foreigner, or an outsider. People assumed he had to be adopted, because his mother, his stepfather, and his sister are all white. Growing up and having people assume you are an outsider to your own family would naturally result in feelings of ostracism from those all around one's self.

Samy Deluxe does not talk about this experience exclusively within interviews, though. He opens one of his collaborative songs, "Adriano," with a lyric that touches on how he was treated as a child in Germany. "Adriano" is a re-release of the song "Adriano

(Letzte Warnung)” by Brothers Keepers, another rap group that wrote and released songs dealing with social critiques and responses to extremism occurring in German society.

The song “Adriano” was written for and by Brothers Keepers in honor of Alberto Adriano, a friend of the group members, who was murdered by Neonazis in a city park. The song’s lyrics deal with racial inequalities and is a call for action to politicians to act in response to the civil injustices and hate crimes that occur far too frequently without any policy change. Samy Deluxe opens the song with, “Ich hörte schon in Kindergarten, Leute zu mir N•gga sagen...”, which signifies the ignorance of a Black German consciousness that is a component of German society (Deluxe, *Adriano*, *genius.com*). Being called ethnic slurs at such a young age is very telling of the inherent racism that exists and is taught, to the point that a Black boy in a kindergarten class is being insulted based on his skin color.

Samy Deluxe also raps about racism in other regards in his career. As heard in the Deutsche Welle interview, Samy Deluxe has experienced a great deal of racism and microaggressions throughout his entire life. The issues that Samy Deluxe encountered during his upbringing are likely what resulted in him releasing the song Mimimi. Samy Deluxe’s song Mimimi, released in 2016, raps about his and others’ experiences as designated outsiders in Germany. The song, representing German Mitbürger mit Migrationshintergrund, contains Samy Deluxe’s, and probably other minorities’, experience with microaggressions. As Kemper writes, the term “Migrationshintergrund” come from someone’s citizenship, birthplace, and language, and in this case, assigned to those those who are non-Germans, born outside of German borders, and have a native language of something other than German (316). For the case of Samy Deluxe, he could

falsely be assigned as having a Migrationshintergrund because people equate his Blackness with Otherness. In this song, his listeners hear about his experience as not being accepted as a German, solely based on this issue of his skin color. His lyrics explain the exclusion he has faced throughout the majority of his life as well as other “Mimimis.”

In Samy Deluxe’s song, *Mimimi*, he opens the song with the lyrics, “...viele von uns [Mimimis] sind hier geboren, doch die Herkunft steht immer im Mittelpunkt” (Deluxe, *Mimimi*, genius.com). These lyrics are telling of how Germans have stereotypically assigned those that do not fit the typical physical mold of a “German” as being outsiders; Germans assume that anyone who is not white cannot be German. While Black Germans are not necessarily new to Germany, there is still a widespread misconception that Germans should fit the mold of being a light complexioned, light haired, slim body.

In the song *Mimimi*, Samy Deluxe raps these lyrics, which follow common German microaggressions towards foreigners, or those that look like what Germans assume a foreigner should look like.:

Die Leute wollen’s nicht einsehen,
doch ich leb’ hier schon mein Leben lang
Und wenn ich mecker’ über dieses Land
Sagen sie: „Geh doch hin woher du kommst!“
Okay, dann geh’ ich halt nach Eppendorf
Ich hab’ auch angefangen mit Rappen dort
Aber das ist nicht, was du meintest, ne
Du willst, dass ich in meine Heimat geh’
Ich schwör’, dies’ Land hier ist so ignorant
Wahrscheinlich bricht es bald ’n Weltrekord“

(Deluxe, *Mimimi*, genius.com).

These lyrics express Samy Deluxe's frustration with the Germany in which he has grown up. He is told to go back to his "Heimat," which is assumed to be of the African Diaspora, while in reality is Germany. This stanza tells listeners that Samy Deluxe not only felt excluded as a youth in Germany, but he felt pushed out of German society, especially when you are told to "go home," when you already are home. In *Dis wo ich herkomm*, Samy Deluxe classifies his experience in his Heimat as "eher unheimlich" and talks about the stereotypes he has been and continues to be assigned based on the color of his skin (19). He raps that anytime that he complains about Germany, he is told to go back to where he came from.²⁰ Samy Deluxe writes about this type of comment in his autobiography, *Dis wo ich herkomm*. In his autobiography, he writes about a conversation that he claims was inevitable throughout his life as a Black German:

"Wo kommst du denn her?"

"Aus Hamburg."

"Nein. Du weißt schon, was ich meine. Wo kommst du ursprünglich her?"

"Ah, ja, verstehe. Also mein Vater ist aus dem Sudan, und meine Mutter ist aus Deutschland."

(*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 54).

In this conversation, Samy Deluxe explains exactly the type of situation that he raps about in Mimimi. He is a German, born and raised; yet, he is not accepted nor recognized to be a German, according to these recollections. However, this situation is somewhat exclusive to his upbringing in Germany. Samy Deluxe writes that this was not exactly the situation while traveling outside of Germany. In England, the United States, and even in Sudan, that conversation went differently:

²⁰ "geh doch hin woher du kommst" (Deluxe, *Mimimi*, genius.com).

“Wo kommst du her?”
“Aus Deutschland.”
“Ah, verstehe, cool.”

(*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 54).

It is interesting to see the differences between these two sets of dialogue. He writes, “Hier [in Deutschland] bin ich Ausländer, im Ausland bin ich Deutscher. Irgendwas stimmt da nicht” (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 54). In Germany, the one thing that signifies him as not being a German, is simply, what he calls, his “afrikanische Wurzeln” (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 53). This term shows his indifference to his roots, namely his paternal roots, which feeds into his issues of acceptance. Samy Deluxe was always accepted as being a German in England, Sudan, and the United States; though, he does say that now and then he is further questioned about his background because he does not “look” German (*Dis wo ich herkomm*, 54).

Language is a component that arises quite often with Samy Deluxe. Language to Samy Deluxe is a large signifier of his belonging to Germany, because one of the main “qualifiers” of integration in the discourse on immigrants in Germany is the ability to speak German. However, because of his skin color, people often approach him and speak English. In Mimimi, one hears of Samy Deluxe’s experiences while traveling:

Jedes Mal, wenn ich im Flieger sitz’,
Sprechen alle mich auf Englisch an,
Sie denken, ich bin auf der Durchreise,
Dabei bin ich gerade angekommen

(Deluxe, *Mimimi*, genius.com).

The audience that is being addressed is made aware of the inherent racism and assumptions about Black bodies that is established within German culture. This stanza is a multi-layered demonstration of the assumption that those that look like Samy Deluxe,

those with a skin color other than white, are placed and recognized as outsiders within German context.

Firstly, these lines suggest that Germans make many assumptions about one based solely on bodily signifiers. Samy Deluxe expresses that during his travels, strangers assume that he cannot be German, simply because of his skin color. Because Samy Deluxe is Black, flight attendants and service workers do not approach him with the assumption that he speaks German; rather, they assume he speaks English, because Germans have typically assigned Blackness to foreignness, specifically Americanness. This line also brings up a migration issue that has been widely debated within Germany, especially during the time when the song was released in 2016. In 2015, Angela Merkel opened German borders to welcome an unlimited number of immigrants into the country as a part of Germany's free immigration policy. Knowing that this political event occurred right before the time that Samy Deluxe released this song makes one question whether or not this song was a response towards migrants moving to Germany, as the second part of this stanza leads with Samy Deluxe stating that he is assumed to be in his "Durchreise," suggesting that he is on his way to Europe for the first time, again, solely based off of his skin color, the only marker that makes him different than any other person who was born and raised in Germany. As this song was released in 2016, he writes that he is grouped together with the incoming flow of migrants into German borders, as he says "Dabei bin ich gerade angekommen." This line not only shows Samy Deluxe creating space between himself and refugees, but he also reasserts his "local rootedness" in Germany and his claim to ethnic, cultural Germanness.

In 2018, Samy Deluxe collaborated on a re-release of this song with Afrob, Eko Fresh, Motrip, and Chefket. These artists titled the song “Mimimi Takeover”, in which all of the artists on this song and added their own freestyle verses about their previous experiences as Mimimis in Germany, highlighting public perception of them as “Mimimis.” This song, though released in a different decade and by different people, carries the same themes of marginalization as Advanced Chemistry’s song, “Fremd im eigenen Land.” In both songs, they mention the conversation that occurs between many minoritized individuals when approached by a white German. They are questioned about actually being German, and have to prove their belonging within German society; yet, when asked where they are from, they are often asked a follow-up question about where they are *actually* from.

CHAPTER 8. HALLO DEUTSCHLAND, KENNT IHR MICH NOCH? ECHTEN HIP-HOP!

In the interview with Peter Craven, when asked about what sets German rap apart from rap in other countries, he shares his opinion that sets the stage for his motivation of being a German rapper. He states, "...Germany is not a country where young people could really, uh, rely on old German culture to integrate it into, you know, like, any new music" (Talking Germany, 01:39-01:48). This comment suggests that Samy Deluxe, as well as other rappers, have to look to America or Britain to be inspired. German culture, according to Samy Deluxe, does not have enough quality opportunity from which German rappers can gain spark. Following this comment, he touches on French rap and that he knows other German rappers that listen to French rap and use that rap to gain inspiration. He says:

"...French rap definitely has, like, for me, like, a little bit more [of its] own identity than German rap, because German rap always kind of follows up on, uh, not, not what I do, you know, but what the rest does, so they always try to follow up on stuff that is, you know, current worldwide"

(Talking Germany, 02:03-02:19).

This statement suggests that Samy Deluxe, among all other German rappers, believes himself to stand out as unique, that no others have done before him. To Samy Deluxe, German rap has the gangster image, but not the socio-critical image that he brings to the scene. He feels that he is creating his own type of German rap; he believes he is doing something that has not been done before by introducing his social critique through rap, rather than through a novel or play.

In the music video for *Poesie Album*, Samy Deluxe elaborates on this point a bit further. He dissociates himself from the German music scene and shows how what he does is different from other genres of German music and even others who are present in

the German rap scene. His contributions to German rap is one of a kind and he distances himself from others in the German music scene. The video for *Poesie Album* starts out with Samy Deluxe sitting at a white desk, in a white room, wearing all white. As he opens an old, leather bound book with the album logo from his first self-titled album, *Samy Deluxe*, he speaks directly to his audience: “Guck mal hier, dies’ mein Poesiealbum/ Schau’ mal rein, in mein Poesiealbum,” after which he opens the book and the video pans to a white page that says “Schwarz Weiss” in graffiti like lettering, which has a multi-layered representation for Samy Deluxe. While “Schwarz Weiss” is the name of one of Samy Deluxe’s albums, it also aims to represent how he sees himself in a German society (Poesie Album, 0:00-0:22).

In the first stanza of the song, Samy Deluxe talks to his audience about his dissatisfaction with the music scene in Germany. He opens the song with:

Hallo Deutschland, kennt ihr mich noch?
Kennt ihr das noch? Echten Hip-Hop!
In 'nem Land, wo man sogar mit 'nem Hit floppt
Wo der Soul keine Seele hat, der Rock nich' rockt
Wo bei Funk oft der Funke nicht überspringt
Und der Reggae leider nach Schlagerliedern klingt
Und der Rap so 'ne schlechte Reputation hat
Wer kann dieses Gefühl von damals wiederbringen?

(Deluxe, *Poesie Album*, genius.com)

This stanza, paired with the visuals in the music video, show Samy Deluxe’s distance and dissatisfaction with the music culture within the German music scene. As he quickly raps these lines, the music video paces at an equally fast speed. In the video, one sees the lyrics written out as Samy Deluxe raps them. This stanza shows two of Samy Deluxe’s most important perspectives for examining his membership to the German Hip-Hop scene. The first perspective looks at his rejection of the reputation of the gangster rap

scene that the general public associates with the Hip-Hop scene. When Samy Deluxe mentions the lines of “Und der Rap so 'ne schlechte Reputation hat / Wer kann dieses Gefühl von damals wiederbringen?,” the word reputation has a skull and crossbones, a knife, and brass knuckles shadowing behind the word; all of these objects are associated with the violence and danger attached to the gangster rap subgenre of Hip-Hop, in which Samy Deluxe does not participate, as he does not see it as the “real” Hip-Hop that influenced his music and his career. This comment is namely an attack on the other subgenres of German Hip-Hop, which are more heavily identified with gangster rap. However, it also signifies a change in Samy Deluxe’s approach to the genre. Earlier in his career, he did associate Hip-Hop with the film *Colors- Farben der Gewalt*, in which one learns of gangs and gang violence as related to the Hip-Hop scene. As one sees in the video, when he talks this “echten Hip-Hop,” a man in early 90’s Hip-Hop style attire and a large boom box appear next to the lyrics, which ties to the question with which he ends the stanza: “Wer kann dieses Gefühl von damals wiederbringen?,” bringing back remnants of nostalgia from the Hip-Hop of his childhood and early career. As he ends the stanza with the question of, “Wer kann dieses Gefühl von damals wiederbringen?,” we see the words “wer bitte, wer kann es?” surrounded by question marks in a cartoon like writing. Samy Deluxe follows this up with a signature line with the words, “und ich nehm ihn unter,” which suggests that Samy Deluxe will rise to this challenge and be the one to bring back “real Hip-Hop,” which, just as identity, is enigmatic and open to many interpretations.

Samy Deluxe struggles with creating an identity in the German Hip-Hop realm because of the perceived negative associations brought to the genre by other rappers,

combatting this by distancing himself from the gangster rap subgenre. In the same music video, when he transitions to talking about himself in the rap scene, he addresses others in the German rap scene,, and says “Denn ich hab’ dieses Haus hier mit aufgebaut / Ihr habt’s demoliert, ich hab’s renoviert” (Deluxe, *Poesie Album*, *genius.com*). The house of which Samy Deluxe raps is the German Hip-Hop world, and he claims that the “Ihr,” meaning the other rappers outside of his classification of “echten Hip-Hop,” have ruined the scene, but he brought it back and made it better than it was before. Samy Deluxe raps these lyrics and asserts his dominance over the German Hip-Hop world.

CHAPTER 9. DER NEUE ERICH KÄSTNER (WAHRSCHEINLICH!)

Samy Deluxe has attempted to create an identity for himself that he feels he has not seen elsewhere, despite recognizing the efforts that other rappers and artists have made in an effort to create an identity for those that are also of a multi-ethnic identity. He claims that what he is doing is unique and original, and the work he is doing has not been seen in the history of German Hip-Hop, as is heard through the interview with Peter Craven. Yet one also hears, if one listens closely enough to Samy Deluxe's lyrics, that he sees his work as something that is of such quality, that has not yet existed in all of German literary history. In the song *Poesie Album*, Samy Deluxe raps: "Ich reime Reime so wie Heinrich Heine," in which he directly compares his art form to that of Heine, a poet of the German literary canon (Deluxe, *Poesie Album*, genius.com). The visual that Samy Deluxe pairs with this lyric is also worth noting, as he takes a black and white photo of Heine, draws a chain with a dollar sign around his neck, and proceeds to draw a sideways ballcap on the image of Heine, to place Heine in the Hip-Hop scene, just as Same Deluxe is placing himself in the literary world (*Poesie Album*, 02:37-02:40). Through this imagery, Samy Deluxe is indirectly talking to others in the German canon and telling them that they are the same as him, to equate his works with theirs.

In the music video, Samy Deluxe attempts to write something with a quill pen, but it does not write. He then shakes the pen, and two blots of ink come out like an explosion of ink on the paper. These two blots of ink form two silhouettes of Goethe and Schiller, who are named in the stanza, appear and become the center image below the lines "so bitter, so böse" (*Poesie Album*, 01:38-01:48).

In his 2011 release, *Poesie Album*, he raps:

“Ich bin so Schiller, so Goethe, so bitter, so böse
Noch immer der größte Poet, der hier lebt
Wenn ihr jetzt noch mehr wollt
Fütter ich euch deutschen Dichtern Reime
Bis ihr alle Brecht wie Bertolt”

(Deluxe, *Poesie Album*, genius.com).

In these lines, he not only compares himself to Goethe, Schiller, and Brecht, but he also puts himself above them in saying that he is “der größte Poet, der hier lebt.” At this point, one must look at the author's purpose and intention. In Samy Deluxe's lyric, “Ich bin so Schiller, so Goethe,” he is stating that his intention was just as those of Schiller and Goethe, who wrote to encourage a literary movement. This line tells his listeners that he not only believes that his work is on par with that of the famous “Dichter und Denker,” in German literary history, but that he is also above all of them himself by being the best poet that has ever lived within a German speaking society. The phrase “Land von Dichter und Denker,” commonly used to refer to Germany, is a loaded phrase, as it suggests that Germans are intellectual elites, therefore placing it and Germans above other nations. In the “Poesie Album” video, Samy Deluxe places the words “Dichter und Denker” in a noose, while rapping “Der Richter und Henker für Dichter und Denker,” relating the moral of the novel *Der Richter und sein Henker* to the “Dichter und Denker” of German literature (Poesie Album, 02:42-02:45; Deluxe, *Poesie Album*, genius.com). The symbolism of the noose in this lyric could be pointings particularly towards the lynching and brutal mistreatment of African Americans, which serves as one of the most obvious symbols of the injustices that Black people face in the world. John Plews, in an analysis of *Der Richter und sein Henker* defines the importance of “‘natural’ victory” in the novel as a “kind of social justice” that “occurs at the very moment justice would otherwise be seen to have failed” (92). In the case of Samy Deluxe's argument, this would mean that

the “Dichter und Denker” of German society have not achieved this victory naturally and Samy Deluxe deems it unjust that the “Dichter und Denker” of the German canon are victors within the literary world. Thus, Samy Deluxe expresses his dissatisfaction with the German “Dichter und Denker” in his song and music video for *Poesie Album*.

Referring back to Bowie’s commentary on defining the German literary canon changing alongside modern thought, one does not necessarily see contemporary social changes appearing in Samy Deluxe’s idea of German literary canon. To Samy Deluxe, he feels that he needs to identify as a poet among others in the traditional canon and line up his works alongside those like Goethe and Schiller. However, to combat this statement, if Samy Deluxe did expand his view of the canon, he would recognize that there are other literary figures who have done work similar to himself, such as May Ayim and Audre Lorde. Regardless of leaving these figures out of his envisionment of the canon, he states that this is a goal and a true marker of his success for his rap career in the next part of the song:

“Das ist für mich echter Erfolg
Wenn der Text noch mehr rollt
Und ich schein' wie der Morgenstern
Hoffe, dass ihr alle aus den Reim' und den Worten lernt
Meine Damen und Herren
Was würde ich bloß tun hier, wär' ich nich' Rapstar?
Wahrscheinlich wär' ich der neue Erich Kästner”

(Deluxe, *Poesie Album*, genius.com).

These lines tell us that it is not only one of Samy Deluxe’s goals to become a famous rapper in Germany, but that his abilities are along those of the famous, well-known, white, male “Dichter und Denker.” Samy Deluxe is arguing that he also belongs in the literary canon that other famous literary figures have influenced to create a national identity of Germanness. In this song, he shows that he not only sees himself belonging to

what he conceptualizes to be the German canon, but he is also demanding that his lyrics be taken as seriously as famous literary works. Samy Deluxe, while seemingly ignorant of other Black German authors such as Audre Lorde and May Ayim due to the lack of references to them in his songs, books and interviews, maintains his works as being among the first Black German works that have canonical potential. He persuades his listeners that he is creating his own mode of belonging and showing that he is aspiring that in the future, others will talk about him just as they do Goethe, Schiller, and Kästner.

In the video for *Poesie Album*, Samy Deluxe showcases several figures of the German literary canon. Using Classen's commentary to support Samy Deluxe's "bitter und böse" side, Samy Deluxe is justifying that his works, just as Schiller's and Goethe's works, demand us to examine ideological biases and political agendas, which is very clear through songs like *Adriano* and *Weck mich auf*, in which Samy Deluxe calls on politicians for political change to the mistreatment of minorities (1). Furthermore, Classen's commentary supports Samy Deluxe's argument that he meets the criteria to become part of the German canon. In Classen's essay, he writes that we, as Germanists, need to be courageous enough to hear out those who have typically been muted within a German context, including minority authors and those who may not typically be in curriculum. For Samy Deluxe to be recognized in the German canon would be to not only unmute him, but it would also require a decolonization of the canon, which would require a total transition in how one looks at and defines Germanness through art and literature.

CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSION

In Samy Deluxe's search for belonging, he has identified himself as a rapper, a poet, a German, a Black German, and an artist. While Samy Deluxe is perhaps yet to find his belonging within the German literary canon, we are witnessing his acceptance into mainstream cultural discourse through his activism and music releases of the present day.

Samy Deluxe's intention of finding himself in the German canon does not include him trying to rewrite and remove those who are already established in the German canon to make room for himself as a Black German. One could argue that Samy Deluxe's concept of German identity has more in common with the concept of German identity of thinkers like Herder and Nietzsche rather than the constitutional identity proposed by Habermas. Samy Deluxe speaks German, he has German blood, he was born and raised in a German society, he knows the cultural and literary canon and locates himself within it, therefore he is German. However, he is still not accepted as a German by most of German society. One might question why Samy Deluxe is more in favor of a constrained approach to defining his German identity rather than the *Verfassungspatriotismus* approach, which would actually work in his favor, and from where his desire to become part of the German literary canon emerges, which, historically, has a basis in the German *Leitkultur* and the *Kulturation* approach to belonging.

It would appear as if Samy Deluxe does not want to become part of a multicultural Germany; he, along with other German rappers like Afrob and Torch, want to be recognized as German. In this attempt to be recognized as German, he is also attempting to "decolonize the German canon" in his own way. Though Samy Deluxe

does not see his work as an act of decolonizing, Samy Deluxe's commentaries and works identify with Layne's commentary that "decolonizing [of] the German canon does not mean throwing out all of the 'dead white men', but instead, it means that including and incorporating Authors of Color in more general themes help students see these authors as *belonging* to the canon of German literature" (Decolonizing, 98). Using Layne's explanation to find Samy Deluxe's belonging in the canon places him alongside Goethe and Schiller, rather than replaces them with him.

Other subjects that warrant further investigation of Samy Deluxe's identity would be what roles masculinity and social standing play in his belief of what counts as being German. It is telling that the authors he finds to be role models are white males. One might question whether this is willful or if it is due to a lack of exposure to other Black Germans, primarily those who are female. Secondly, looking at whether or not his social standing or class plays a role in his self image as belonging to a German nation would also warrant investigation, as Samy Deluxe has often mentioned aspects of bourgeois lifestyle as the goals he aspired to achieve. He references role models as those in middle and upper class jobs and mentions a feeling of nonbelonging because his family did not have a Mercedes-Benz as the others in his neighborhood had. However, it could be questioned whether or not the music and art he produces is done in order to distinguish himself as not being in the working class with intent, or if it is a symbol of how fragmented Black German identity can be.

Examining Samy Deluxe's approach to Black Germanness contrasts with what one sees throughout other German approaches to Blackness. Samy Deluxe, in comparison to many other Black German figures, examines his Blackness as something that is not

new to a German context; rather, his self expression and his approach to identity is a new concept that has not yet been established, nor accepted to the national identity that makes one “German.” If Nietzsche, and those who subscribe to his views, defined Germanness as something that is so complex it goes beyond definition, that to be German is to be in a higher state of development, then it could be said that Samy Deluxe, in arguing that he is more advanced than other German rappers, a better poet than the most famous poets, and ultimately the only one who can “save” German Hip-Hop, could locate himself with Nietzsche’s definition by arguing that he has achieved this state of higher development. German Hip-Hop is not just a main-stream genre to Samy Deluxe; it is a movement that he has engaged in leading to create a dialogue surrounding belonging, integration, racism, and the exclusivity within the concept of “Germanness.” Perhaps Samy Deluxe’s rap will open a chapter within the German canon, which would once again, redefine what it means to be a German; however, in order to reach that point, Black Germans need to be recognized as what they are: Germans.

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