



Sara Lennox. *Remapping Black Germany: New Perspectives on Afro-German History, Politics, and Culture.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016. 376 pp. \$31.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-62534-231-7.

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As Sara Lennox notes in her introduction to this new edited volume, Black German history and cultural production have increasingly become the focus of academic attention over the last decade and a half. Lennox sets three overarching and interlinked aims for this collection, which grew out of a conference originally held at the University of Massachusetts in 2006. The first is to challenge the lingering misconception of Germany as an exclusively white country through demonstrating the long history of a Black presence in Germany and the active role that Black Germans have played in German society. Secondly, the volume serves as an introduction for those unfamiliar with the field of Black German studies. Thirdly, and crucially, the various chapters are not simply designed to add further detail to previous research in the field, but instead collectively and individually they serve to underscore the importance of reconceiving German history, politics, philosophy, and culture in light of the significant contributions made by Black Germans. Taken together these three aims, which the volume largely succeeds in meeting, also feed into a project of "deprovincializing" Germany (p. 2). Lennox calls in particular for white scholars to recognize the influence that race thinking has had on the shaping of the German past as well as the present and challenges scholars to place Germany's under-

standing of race and its treatment of people of color within a comparative transnational framework.

The volume begins with Lennox's effective introduction, which also discusses the emergence of the field and provides a short but useful overview of the history of a black presence in Germany. It is concluded by an epilogue in the form of an intriguing and provocative conversation in which Lennox and Peggy Piesche debate, among other things, the role of white academics in black German studies. In between are thirteen chapters of varying length and quality, which have been written by a mixture of activists and academics working in a diverse range of disciplines including gender studies, film and literature studies, history, and German studies. Although the volume is not intended to be a comprehensive account of black German studies, and there is no clear organizing structure, the thematic and chronological range of the contributions is impressive. This extends from looking at the experiences of black Germans from the Enlightenment to the present day and covers black German activism and resistance, literary production, and self-representation.

Like Lennox, Maureen Maisha Eggers is one of several contributors who rightly highlight the central role played by black German female activists from the 1980s onward in both initiating

the recovery of the history of a black presence and in the development of the black German social movement. Eggers's chapter further underlines how their work has informed understandings of blackness in Germany, challenged hegemonic narratives, and promoted epistemic change. Black German cultural and knowledge production is taken up in subsequent chapters by Nicola Lauré al-Samarai and Dirk Göttsche. The former considers a variety of cultural forms such as literature, music, and visual art as a part of a "communifying process" which can aid black Germans' self-definition, challenge marginalization, and resist their exclusion from narratives of German history (p. 53). The latter's contribution complements this through looking at the development of black German literature in more detail. Göttsche argues that postmillennial texts, produced by a new generation of black Germans, communicate with earlier influential publications through intertextual references, demonstrating the development of a diasporic tradition. For Göttsche, in presenting stories of achievement these more recent publications mark a collective sense of growing self-confidence and engagement with mainstream culture.

Over the next eight chapters the focus of the volume shifts to consider aspects of black German history. Among these, Tina Campt's chapter serves as an introduction into her ground-breaking use of private photographs to interrogate the everyday life of black Germans during the Nazi period. In doing so Campt demonstrates their determination to be considered German as well as the levels of acceptance they could find in some communities. The fine line between inclusion and exclusion at a local level is further underlined in the reprinting of excerpts of the remarkable story of Martha Stark. Stark's rich account of living in Germany during the Third Reich, introduced here by Felicitas Rütten Jaima, was originally serialized in the *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1949. It details the increasingly violent discrimination Stark faced as well as the importance of family and friendship

ties in shielding her, and later also her children, from this threat. Chapters by Heide Fehrenbach and Piesche focus on the black experience in post-war West and East Germany respectively as well as on German representations of blackness. Fehrenbach's chapter provides a good summary of elements of her influential research into representations of race in post-1945 West Germany. Focusing on the "children of the liberation," children born to white German mothers and African American occupying troops, she shows that in German understandings of race antisemitism was replaced by a black/white binary of difference, similar to that of the United States. Piesche, writing from an insider position on black German children born to white German women and foreign visitors, illustrates that in East Germany anti-black racism was similarly pervasive despite outward claims of solidarity with so-called oppressed people.

The final two contributions and the epilogue turn to look at the future of black German studies and the black German movement. In a thought-provoking contribution, Fatima El-Tayeb argues that the black German experience should be considered within a transnational context of black Europe and in relation to other minority communities, rather than through the lens of the African American experience. She advocates the adoption of aspects of queer theory as a means of exploring the idea of diaspora and urges the need to create counter-memory discourses which challenge hegemonic narratives. The final chapter is a transcript of a fascinating 2012 discussion involving different generations of black German scholar-activists in which both the past and the present are also discussed. In conversation with Eggers and Piesche, two of the founding figures of the black German movement, Katharina Oguntoye and Katja Kinder, provide insiders' insight into the early stages of the movement. Looking positively to the future, they also reflect both on how the social and political situation for black people in Ger-

many has changed and how the nature of activism has changed.

While *Remapping Black Germany* has much to offer, the subtitle of the volume, suggesting that the reader will find "new perspectives" on black German studies, is a little misleading. As Lennox notes in the preface, the volume has been a "long time in the making" and in the intervening period between the holding of the original conference and the publication of the proceedings, many of the authors have since produced longer, more in-depth studies about their chosen subjects elsewhere (p. viii). Indeed, just under half of the chapters are either republications or revised versions of pieces already in publication. Equally, while several of the chapters likely made for important inputs to the original conference, here they feel like underdeveloped sketches which would have benefited from more space and substance. Despite these shortcomings, in collecting together in one volume the work of key scholars and activists who have made and continue to make significant contributions to the development of the field, the volume works best as an accessible, wide-ranging, and effective introduction to black German studies.

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