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CHAPTER 5

The Fall of the Berlin Wall Transnational: Images and Stereotypes in Yadé Kara's *Selam Berlin* and Paul Beatty's *Slumberland*

Gianna Zocco

Abstract

The fall of the Berlin Wall and its literary representations have often been described as a purely (white) German affair, as a discourse regarding (East/West) German identity. Taking on Leerssen's claim for a trans-/postnational imagology, this article provides an analysis of two novels depicting the fall of the Berlin Wall from transnational, not-(only)-German perspectives: Yadé Kara's *Selam Berlin* (2003) and Paul Beatty's *Slumberland* (2008). Comparing images and stereotypes used by both the Turkish-German narrator of Kara's and the African American narrator of Beatty's novel, it aims to undertake an exemplary case study of how imagology may be employed in contexts characterized by complex interferences of national, ethnic/racial, and urban ascriptions of belonging.

Keywords

transnationalism – German reunification – African American literature – Turkish-German literature – Berlin

1 Introduction: Postnational Imagology and the Case of Berlin

When Joep Leerssen calls for a "postnational" imagology that should pay particular attention to the increasingly concurrent articulation of identity constructs "at urban, national/ethnic and translational (global and/or diasporic) levels" he names the study of metropolitan cities and their images as "more and more intriguing imagological working ground" (2016, 28). Similar to Slobodan Vladušić, who had a few years earlier reflected on the project of an "urban imagology" (2012, 176) interested in "the point where national and

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urban characterisation clash" (ibid., 178), Leerssen finds the multiethnicity of modern cities and the "tribalization of society, both in terms of lifestyle groups and in terms of the multiculturalization of immigration societies" (2016, 28) particularly challenging for imagology, highlighting that this aspect "confronts us with a sharp departure from traditional notions of culturally or temperamentally homogenous nation-states" (ibid.). Of the European metropolises that come to mind for such research, Leerssen explicitly names Amsterdam, Berlin, Brussels, Rome, and Vienna, among others.

How is this valid for the case of Berlin? Given that the former capital of the Kingdom of Prussia developed into a relatively cosmopolitan city in the course of the eighteenth century[1] and that it became known for attracting writers and artists from all over the world when it, in the Weimar period, "was the capital not only of the newly founded German republic but also of international Modernism" (Duttlinger 2017, 95), it is hardly surprising that Leerssen considers Berlin—now the capital and largest city of the reunified Federal Republic of Germany—intriguing for imagological research. Yet an imagological perspective on Berlin risks neglecting these cosmopolitan, international aspects when it chooses to focus on one of the more recent historical periods that Berlin is—ironically—most famous for internationally: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the transition from a divided city to the capital of a reunified Germany in 1989/1990.

Constructed in 1961 and officially called the "Antifaschistischer Schutzwall" or "Antifascist Protection Rampart" by German Democratic Republic (GDR) authorities, from its beginnings the Berlin Wall did not only possess the material reality of a 155 kilometre-long guarded concrete barrier but also the qualities of a symbol. As Maurice Blanchot pointedly put it, it came to be seen as expressing "the problem of opposition between two cultures within the same cultural context, of two languages without inner relation inside the same language" (1994, 346). Given this common perception of the wall as symbolizing the inner division of *one* people or nation, it was a German-centred perspective and what could be called the imagological mode of "intracultural foreignness"[2] that dominated the public discourse in the period of German reunification: with many observers seeing the *Wende* as "a purely German-German affair" (Yildiz 2017, 221), early academic publications emphasized how the brutality of the wall expressed the “damage that was done to the *German* soul” (Keune 1996, xiv, emphasis mine). Related to this, the Saidian notion of “othering practices” was implemented to analyse a West German dominated discourse of difference evolving around the same time that the protest chants changed from “We are the people” to “We are one people,” and manifesting itself in hetero-stereotypes of East German otherness that typically evoked images such as the “Trabant,” the “Banana,” or the East German dated style of clothes (Stein 1996, 334, 337). While the period of reunification was thus accompanied by what Cees Nooteboom pointedly called “racist jokes about people with the same color of skin” (2001, 119), the actual perspective of Berlin’s inhabitants with other colours of skin and/or ethnic backgrounds has received much less (public and academic) attention. It is in this spirit that Jeffrey Jurgens—in a study on five young boys from Kreuzberg who shared the fate of becoming “wall victim[s] from the West”[3]—notes “the lack of academic attention that has been paid to migrants’ experiences of German division and reunification” (2013, 2); and it is in the same spirit that the Afro-German poet May Ayim laments in her poem “blues in black and white”:

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[1] Under the reign of Frederick the Great (1740–1786), Berlin became home to a sizable Huguenot and Bohemian population, as well as to a Jewish community (cf. Erlin 2017, 13).

[2] I borrow this term from the title of the book *Intrakulturelle Fremdheit. Inszenierung deutsch-deutscher Differenzen in Literatur, Film und Theater nach der Wende*, edited by Ortrud Gutjahr, which is announced to come out in 2022 with publishers Königshausen und Neumann.

> reunited germany
> celebrates itself again in 1990
> without immigrants refugees jewish and black people
> it celebrates in its intimate circle
> it celebrates in white
>
> 1995, 82[4]

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[3] The five boys—among them two from Turkish and one from an Italian immigrant family—all drowned in the 1960s and 70s while playing on the riverbank of the Spree near their homes in Kreuzberg. Since the riverbank belonged to the Western part of the city but the entire width of the Spree to the East, locals and officials from West Berlin hesitated to enter the river fearing that they would be shot by Eastern border guards, while East Berlin officials did not (or not soon enough) come to help the drowning boys. The case of five-year-old Cetin Mert, whose death in 1975 was the last incident of this kind, was commemorated in a newspaper article titled “A Wall Victim from the West” by Dilek Güngör in May 2000, and later studied in Jurgens’s article of the same title (2013).

[4] All translations are my own unless stated otherwise. Original: “das wieder vereinigte Deutschland / feiert sich wieder 1990 / ohne imigrantInnen flüchtlinge jüdische und schwarze menschen / es feiert im intimen kreis / es feiert in weiß.” Unfortunately, my English translation of Ayim’s poem is not able to reproduce her use of the medial capital I (German: “Binnen-I”) in “migrantInnen,” which highlights that the heterogeneity of the people excluded in the celebrations of reunification is not only a heterogeneity of ethnic/racial and national backgrounds but also one of gender. The “Binnen-I” is a nonstandard alternative for linguistic cases which traditionally require a generic masculine form.

2 A Turkish-German “Wenderoman” and a Satire of African American Expatriate Fiction

A spirit similar to the one detected in Jurgens’s study and Ayim’s poem can be found in the two novels that this article focuses on: Yadé Kara’s *Selam Berlin* (2003) and Paul Beatty’s *Slumberland* (2008). Both novels recount the fall of the Berlin Wall and the period of transition from perspectives opposing the view of reunification as an exclusively “German-German affair” as well as the overall celebratory mode already criticized in Ayim’s poem. *Selam Berlin*, a novel written in German by the Turkish-German writer Kara (born 1965) and awarded with the Adelbert von Chamisso Promotional Prize and the Deutscher Bücherpreis for a first book in 2004,[5] narrates the events from the perspective of nineteen-year-old Hasan Selim Khan Kazan, who has grown up commuting between Berlin and Istanbul and who self-identifies as a “Kreuzberger” to counter people’s need to categorize him as either “Kanacke” or “Almanci” (Kara [2003] 2004, 5).[6] While both Kara (who came to West Berlin as a six-year-old and still lives there)[7] and her protagonist can thus be considered examples of “those who have migrated to and *settled* in the city” (Yildiz 2017, 208), the African American Beatty belongs to the group of international writers of “Berlin literature” “who see themselves and are seen by others as mere transient guests” (ibid.) and tend to write in their original languages. As Yildiz points out, it is typical for such writers (Christopher Isherwood might be considered a prototype) to experience Berlin “as a curious spectacle or site of adventure,” whereas the literary production of those who adopt the city as their new home offers “a different challenge to the conception of what Berlin is and of who counts as a Berliner” (ibid.). In this sense, the Los Angeles–born Paul Beatty (born 1962) explains in an interview that it was a tour that first brought him from New York to Berlin in 1993, where he later spent a “rough year” (Sylvanise 2013, 6) as a sponsored writer, after which “I’ve gone back many times” (ibid.). While his fictional protagonist, the African American DJ Ferguson W. Sowell, does not go to Berlin as a writer, his relation to the city can similarly be seen in terms of a temporary adventure. The gifted graduate of a music academy, who—driven by “acute left-handedness, a fear of crowds, and what I consider to be my healthy hatred of self” (Beatty 2008, 23)—provocatively calls himself DJ Darky, decides to go to West Berlin in the late 1980s after inventing a “beat *presque parfait*” (ibid., 33) that can only be ratified by The Schwa, a little-known avant-garde jazz musician mysteriously linked to the (actually existing) Slumberland Bar in the borough of Schöneberg.

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[5] Despite its success, no English translation of *Selam Berlin* is available. However, an English version of the first chapter can be found online. See Kara (2009).

[6] “Kanacke” is a German, often derogatorily connoted term typically used for people with Turkish or Arabian roots, whereas “Almanci” is a Turkish derogatory term for people with a Turkish background living in Germany and/or adapting to a German way of life after returning to Turkey.

[7] Scant biographical information is available about Yadé Kara. For a relatively extensive and reliable source see her entry on Literaturport, a web portal offered by the Literarisches Colloquium Berlin and the Brandenburgisches Literaturbüro: https://www.literaturport.de/Yade.Kara/ [October 1, 2021].

Though the backgrounds of Kara’s and Beatty’s protagonists are just as different as the discourses that the two novels have primarily been related to—Kara’s novel has been seen as “the first Turkish-German ‘Wenderoman’” (Fachinger 2007, 247) and Beatty’s as an update and a revision of African American expatriate fiction about a Black American’s journey to a purportedly more progressive country (Stallings 2013, 190–191)—a comparison between the two seems intriguing from a transnational imagological perspective. First, the young male protagonists share the fate of having grown up as belonging to the marginalized groups of African Americans and Turkish-Germans and are thus equally used to being perceived through restrictive stereotypical lenses. Second and following from this, both protagonists have developed an often ironic or satirical way of reacting to the essentialist notions they encounter and of being particularly perceptive of the “ambivalence” of the stereotype, which—in the words of Homi Bhabha—is “a form of multiple and contradictory belief” that “gives knowledge of difference and simultaneously disavows or masks it” (1994, 77). Third, the two novels share similar timelines that encompass each protagonist’s experiences in West Berlin (and in Istanbul and the US, respectively) before November 1989, their witnessing of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the days immediately after, as well as the depiction of life in (soon-to-be) officially reunified Germany.

Making use of these similarities in the timelines of the novels, this article aims to analyse the triangulation of images and stereotypes concerning notions of East/West German, Turkish-German/Turkish, African American/American, as well as “Berlinian” identity in three steps: I begin with an investigation of the protagonists’ experiences as young men with a Turkish and African American background in West Berlin before the fall of the wall, which includes a consideration of the comparisons drawn between West Berlin, Istanbul, and the US. The next part then focuses on the fall of the Berlin Wall and the period immediately thereafter—a time Berlin finds itself in a state of exception, which Kara’s protagonist calls a “Berlin Party” ([2003] 2004, 9), whereas Beatty’s character finds that the image of badly dressed, euphoric, insecure East Berliners reminds him of the situation of African Americans in the US. Finally, I investigate the development of both plots after the opening of the wall has become a new normality, and conclude with a reflection on the pessimistic endings of both novels: while Hasan eventually discovers the “nomad inside me” (Kara [2003] 2004, 382)[8] and feels an urge to move away, *Slumberland* shows Ferguson as part of the curious endeavour to—in the words of The Schwa—rebuild “the Berlin Wall with music instead of concrete, barbed wire, and machine guns ’n’ shit” (Beatty 2008, 199).

3 A Hicktown with a Wall around It and an Island of State-Supported Hedonism

Although the main plotline of *Selam Berlin* chronologically recounts the events from November 9, 1989 until October 3, 1990 from Hasan’s perspective, the novel includes various flashbacks covering the protagonist’s experiences as a child and young adult in the “island city” of West Berlin. Throughout the narrative, Hasan highlights that his connection to the city is that of a native, a “gebürtiger Westberliner” (Kara [2008] 2010, 57), whose Turkish family background differs from the stereotype of the uneducated, typically Anatolian, Turkish migrant worker with rural manners:[9] He explains that his parents—his father a former student of aircraft construction with communist convictions, his mother the descendant of a rich Istanbulian family—first came to Berlin when his father received a university fellowship and that they initially planned to return to Istanbul after a few years, but his father’s semesters in Berlin quickly “[…] turned into decades, the airplanes became airplane ticket sales in a travel agency, and the parliament a political association in a backyard in Kreuzberg” (Kara [2003] 2004, 163).[10] As a consequence of these delusions and an ongoing “north-south decline” (ibid., 10)[11] between his parents, the life of Hasan’s family was characterized by the experience of permanent commuting: since Hasan turned thirteen, he and his brother attended the German school in Istanbul and lived in the Turkish metropolis with his mother during most of the year, while his father stayed in Kreuzberg at the travel agency, became a frequenter of the Berlin–Istanbul airline, and was only joined by his family in the summer months.

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[8] “Der Nomade in mir.”

[9] A description of the stereotype of the Turkish migrant worker, as well as a brief account of the older image of the Ottoman Empire as Western Europe’s “strongest Other: Islamic, alien, cruel and tyrannical” can be found in the entry on Turkey in Beller and Leerssen’s imagology survey (Kuran-Burçoğlu 2007, 255).

[10] “Doch aus den Semestern wurden Jahrzehnte, aus den Flugzeugen wurde Flugticketverkauf im Reisebüro, und aus dem Parlament ein politischer Verein im Kreuzberger Hinterhof.”

[11] “Nord-Süd-Gefälle.”

As a result of this life in the mode of "transit" (ibid., 17) Hasan's perspective on West Berlin (and Germany) is characterized by comparisons with Istanbul (and Turkey). It is noteworthy that in these comparisons widespread stereotypes about Germans and Turks are juxtaposed with more original and often contradictory images: for example, Hasan's description of his father's preference of "the order and security on German motorways," "the clean roads and proficient people," and "the reliable agencies and bureaucrats" (ibid., 10)[12] complies with attributes commonly associated with the German hetero-stereotype (among them "diligence, efficiency, obedience, systematic thoroughness, a penchant for neatness" (Beller 2007, 162)). On the other hand, Hasan strongly disagrees with the equally common hetero-image of Berlin as "a metropolis of modernity in industry, lifestyle, arts and literature" (ibid., 163) when describing his native city as a "small-sized hicktown with a wall around it" that he likes for its lucidity and calmness (Kara [2003] 2004, 12).[13] Although this unusual description of (West) Berlin and its inhabitants is occasionally joined by more expected characteristics such as the city's hectic pace, the social expectation of a critical and direct attitude, and the wet and cold weather (ibid., 31, 102, 125), the image of Berlin as a "village" (ibid., 326) is further reinforced through the contrast with Istanbul. As Petra Fachinger observes, it is in Istanbul, rather than in Berlin, where Hasan locates a cosmopolitan "Western society in constant flux" (2007, 252), which—holding the typically German hetero-stereotype of Turkish-German migrant workers as an "uncivilized pack" (Kara [2003] 2004, 120)[14]—looks down on Berlin and its Turkish inhabitants, and is oriented toward Florida, Boston, and New York (ibid., 157). Even more surprising is the fact that Hasan ascribes qualities historically linked to (Weimar) Berlin and its status as "the European capital not only of sexology but also of sexual libertinage" (Krass and Wolf 2017, 189–190) to the predominantly Muslim city of Istanbul:

> This city was like a raped mistress that tried to defy the whole chaos with her last power and beauty. Everything collided. There were quarters, where people were walking around in shalwar and chador. Some streets further transvestites and prostitutes philandered with their suitors.
>
> KARA [2003] 2004, 12[15]

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[12] "Er mochte die Ordnung und Sicherheit auf deutschen Autobahnen. Ihm gefielen die sauberen Straßen und tüchtigen Leute. Vor allem mochte er die zuverlässigen Behörden und Bürokraten."

[13] "Aber es war ein überschaubares Kaff, mit einer Mauer drum herum."

[14] "Unkultiviertes Pack."

[15] "Diese Stadt war wie eine vergewaltigte Mätresse, die dem ganzen Chaos mit letzter Kraft und Schönheit zu trotzen versuchte. Alles prallte aufeinander. Da gab es Bezirke, wo die

Compared with Hasan's refusal to describe Berlin in cosmopolitan and culturally liberal terms, the first experiences of *Slumberland*'s protagonist Ferguson on West Berlin territory show a higher degree of complying with the positive hetero-image of the city as providing "for a living out of counter-normative, creative identities" (Webber 2017, 9). While Hasan laconically notes that he knows "every nuance" of the hostile "common Berliner's tone against foreigners" (Kara [2003] 2004, 18),[16] Beatty's protagonist makes a different observation early in the novel, when admitting that he misses his native Los Angeles:

> […] but what I don't miss is the fear. In Los Angeles my fear was audible. […] you'd never guess that we black men are afraid of many things […]; however, what we fear above all else is that out there among the 450 million other black men who inhabit this planet is an unapprehended habitual offender, a man twice as bad as Stagolee and half as sympathetic, a freeze-motherfucker-or-I'll-blow-your-head-off-nigger on the lam who looks exactly like us. Moving to Berlin reduced the fear of being mistaken for someone else to almost nothing.
>
> 2008, 18

In particular, it is the atmosphere in the Slumberland Bar—where Ferguson is hired as a "jukebox sommelier" (ibid., 44) and starts a brief romance (which soon develops into a longer-lasting friendship) with the bartender Doris—that recalls common images of both Weimar Berlin and enclaved West Berlin: "This was Berlin before the Wall came down. State-supported hedonism. Every one-night stand a propaganda poster for democratic freedom and third world empowerment" (ibid., 62). Or, even more bluntly: "Slumberland. The room pulsed with sexual congeniality. My vow against lustful miscegenation was quickly forgotten" (ibid., 64).

Although an African American security guard's statement that "Germany is the black man's heaven" and that "you just have to let them love you" (ibid., 58) proves, in this sense, true for Ferguson, there are more nuances to his perceptions of West Berlin. Citing some of the common hetero-stereotypes partly also accepted by Hasan, he emphasizes the cleanness and the gray weather conditions of the city (ibid., 8–11), and laments "the puzzling absence of air conditioners and wall-to-wall carpeting" (ibid., 57). In an allusion to the genre

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Leute in Shalwar und Tschador herumliefen. Einige Straßen weiter schäkerten Transvestiten und Nutten mit ihren Freiern."

[16] "Das war der übliche Berliner Ton Fremden gegenüber, und ich kannte jede Nuance dieses Tones."

of the slave narrative with its typical ending in the “free states” of the North,[17] he compares himself to a runaway slave stranded in a city “populated entirely by Quaker abolitionists,” who—while friendly on the surface—hide their racist convictions in “subtle get-the-fuck-out-of-my-country-musings like, ‘Wow, I can’t believe you’ve been here three months already. When are you going back to America?’” (ibid., 51). After becoming friends with Doris and her new boyfriend Lars, Ferguson reflects intensively on issues related to their German and his own African American background. For example, he observes that it seems part of the German auto-image to note the “Germanness” of “anything involving sexual perversion, punctuality, obsessive-compulsiveness, and oblique references to the deep-rooted national malaise,” whereas he finds it more adequate to propose “the reflex to characterize such things as ‘very German’” as part of his German hetero-image (ibid., 61). When considering the reasons that led to the quick ending of his romance with Doris, racial stereotypes are, interestingly, not mentioned at all, whereas he considers their belonging to different nationalities crucial: “The inevitable clash of puritanical Americanism and German pragmatics. I should have known from the start it could have never worked” (ibid., 74).

The absence of racial issues in Ferguson’s conflicts with Doris is contrasted with the role of Blackness in his friendship with Lars, a freelance pop culture journalist. Similar to the sexual attraction that the white female guests of the Slumberland Bar feel for Black men,[18] Lars holds a special fascination for Blackness that operates along the schema of exoticism. As Leerssen points out, such positive appreciation of something other typically involves two characteristics: on the one hand, it is the search for a preferable alternative led by the dissatisfaction with domesticity; on the other hand, it often functions as “ethnocentrism’s friendly face,” meaning that the other culture is appreciated exclusively in terms of its strangeness and thereby “pinned down to its local colour and its picturesque elements” (2007, 325). Both aspects can be found in the characterization of Lars. Regarding the former, he is shown as strongly influenced by “German guilt,” a condition earlier called the “national malaise” and described as the inability to admit to any feelings of patriotism (Beatty 2008, 84). Regarding the latter, Ferguson finds Lars asking him questions such as “What’s it like listening to jazz with no white people around?,” which—according to the protagonist—reveal a belief in “the mystique and exclusivity of Negro expression”

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[17] For a brief and easily available description of this genre, see Andrews (2008).

[18] In this sense, the novel also compares the Slumberland Bar to “a repressed white supremacist’s fantasy. At almost every table sat one or two black men sandwiched by fawning white women” (Beatty 2008, 59).

(ibid., 92). As Ferguson's deconstructive use of the racial slur "Darky" in his stage name reflects, he not only refuses such beliefs but sees his own musical ambitions as opposed to them. As Christian Schmidt puts it in his analysis: "Instead of becoming a true racial artist, however, DJ Darky uses music to eradicate blackness as a label for art and, thereby, to dissimulate what he calls a fourteen-hundred-year 'charade of blackness' on the novel's opening page" (2014, 156).

4 East German Otherness and the Dynamic of Gazes

Hasan's description of West Berlin as a (mostly) likable hicktown and Ferguson's image of "the black man's heaven" (Beatty 2008, 58) share—despite their differences—one feature: the only minor or indirect role that the wall and Berlin's fate as a divided city has on the protagonists. While Ferguson admits that he never even saw the wall (cf. ibid., 113), Hasan recounts that the family's apartment in Kreuzberg's Adalbertstraße was located next to it, as a consequence of which the physical symbol of the "Iron Curtain" not only turned into a playground to shoot balls against and hold races along (cf. Kara [2003] 2004, 48) but became almost invisible to him: "Eventually, I did not notice the wall anymore. It stood there, as cars, trees and dog shit just stand on Berlin streets" (ibid., 35).[19]

For both protagonists, this ignorant or trivial attitude about the city's division fundamentally changes when they learn about the fall of the wall. In *Selam Berlin* Hasan's experience of November 9, 1989 is recounted in the opening chapter: On the day in question, he is daydreaming on the sofa of the family's apartment in Istanbul when he discovers the news from the television. His first reaction is characterized by the contrast between the wall's sudden transformation into a place of international public interest and his own more familial relation to it:

> Trabants drove through the border crossing Bornholmerstraße to West Berlin. A woman in a fur coat poured sparkling wine on the engine hoods. Thick men in Volkspolizei jackets were hugging and patting on each other's backs. […] Crowds at the wall; on the wall; on my graffiti wall … […]
>
> Suddenly streets, squares, places of my childhood were attracting the interest of world affairs.
>
> IBID., 8[20]

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[19] "Irgendwann nahm ich die Mauer gar nicht mehr wahr. Sie stand da, wie Autos, Bäume und Hundekacke auf Berliner Straßen halt so stehen."

[20] "Trabis fuhren durch den Grenzübergang Bornholmerstraße nach Westberlin. Eine Frau im Pelz schüttete Sekt auf die Motorhauben. Dicke Männer in Volkspolizei-Jacken

It is in these days of "revolution" (ibid.) in Berlin that Hasan's own emotional bond to the city becomes most visible. Not only does he admit his proudness of being a "Berliner" and identify with his native city "as if it were a state of its own" (ibid., 18),[21] thereby replacing the restrictive concept of national belonging with the "open identity" of being a Berliner.[22] Upon learning of the events, he also immediately wants "to join the Berlin Party and participate in everything" (ibid., 9).[23] Ignoring his mother's and brother's warnings that he—who has just completed his A levels—will inevitably be a "Kanacke" in Berlin and only find work as a taxi driver or waiter (ibid., 19, 15), he boards a plane to the city a week later.

Hasan's first impression of a reunited Berlin is positive: the sky above the city is "gleaming," the officer at Tegel airport is "gleaming," and he himself—feeling treated "as if I were the millionth guest worker"—is also "gleaming" (ibid., 20).[24] However, this image of brightness soon clouds over. On his way from the airport to Kreuzberg, he already notes that West Berlin has changed since all West Berliners have disappeared, expulsed by "a landslide of people with pale colour of skin and light hair" (ibid.).[25] And while he—like an ethnographer—observes in the subway how these "dull and thin," "well-behaved" "East people" in "beige and grey jackets" have "alert eyes" that observe everything attentively (ibid., 21),[26] he suddenly realizes that they are looking at him:

> Was my fly open? Or did I have leftover jam on my mouth? Was I from another planet? I felt examined like a camel in the Berlin Zoo.
>
> Was it my black hair? My Charlie Chaplin suitcase? What was there to stare at? I suddenly felt so alien in the Berlin subway with which I had practically grown up.
>
> IBID.[27]

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umarmten und klopften sich auf den Rücken. […] Massen an der Mauer; auf der Mauer; auf meiner Graffitimauer … […] Plötzlich standen Straßen, Plätze, Orte meiner Kindheit im Interesse des Weltgeschehens."

[21] "als wäre es ein Staat für sich."

[22] A more detailed analysis of Hasan's open identity of Berliner can be found in the articles by Kate Roy (2011) and Lyn Marven (2007).

[23] "Ich wollte voll in die Berlin-Party mit einsteigen und alles mitmachen."

[24] "Der Himmel über Berlin strahlte. […] Er strahlte. […] Aber jetzt kam ich mir vor wie der einmillionste Gastarbeiter […]. 'Willkommen im vereinten Berlin!' Ich strahlte zurück."

[25] "Eine Lawine von Menschen mit blasser Haut und hellen Harren rollte an."

[26] "Die Ostleute hatten beige und graue Jacken an. Darin sahen sie so brav aus. Sie waren nicht so fett wie die Westberliner. Nein, sie wirkten fade und dünn. Aber ihre Augen waren wach. Sie sahen sich alles genau an."

[27] "War mein Hosenschlitz auf? Oder hatte ich Marmeladenreste am Mund? War ich von einem anderen Planeten? Ich fühlte mich begutachtet wie ein Kamel im Berliner Zoo.

Interestingly, Hasan's first encounter with people from East Berlin shows strong similarities with the situation in which Ferguson learns about the fall of the wall. Unlike in *Selam Berlin*, where the event is told at the beginning of the book, Ferguson gives his account of November 9, 1989 in the middle of the novel and ironically calls it "the second-most embarrassing moment of my life," explaining that he "confirm[ed] every stereotype of American ignorance about world affairs and geography" as he—upon hearing that the wall just fell—replied: "What wall?" (Beatty 2008, 112). As a consequence, Ferguson first sees East Berliners on the street before he even knows what happened, when he suddenly finds the sidewalks crowded "with giddy, overly inquisitive Germans drinking Coca-Cola and noshing bananas and all moving in the same direction" (ibid., 110). Admitting that he was not even sure if they were German at first, he—like Hasan—finds their "incredibly un-eye-catching" style of clothes particularly noteworthy, highlighting that "they looked German, albeit with even tighter pants and uglier shoes" and that "the people seemed to be a lot like their clothes. They were a sturdy wash-and-wear group who favored comfort and practicality over style and flashiness" (ibid., 110–111).

One aspect that is remarkable about such descriptions in both novels is that they show strong compliance with the clichéd images and stereotypes recognized as "visible markers of otherness" (Stein 1996, 337) by West Berliners at the time. As Mary Beth Stein points out, it was "the dated style of clothes, the inferiority of products, the foreignness of dialects, and the strangeness of behaviors" (ibid.) that were most commonly regarded as indicating an East German background. While the style of clothes and typical forms of behaviour (such as staring at unfamiliar things) are seen by both Hasan and Ferguson as such markers, it is in particular the "native" Hasan whose reaction comes to mirror feelings of ambivalence, aggression, and superiority also shared by many West Berliners (cf. ibid., 334). He not only proudly admits his expertise at the ethnographic "game" of distinguishing East Berliners from West Berliners (Kara [2003] 2004, 22) but also self-assuredly claims: "The East people still have to learn a lot" (ibid., 23).[28]

A second aspect the two novels have in common is the dynamic of gazes the protagonists soon find themselves enmeshed in. While Hasan, in the long quote given above, feels like a camel in the zoo stared at by the East Berliners in the subway, Ferguson has a similar experience when he observes a young

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Waren es meine schwarzen Haare? Oder mein Charlie-Chaplin-Koffer? Was gab es da zu glotzen? Ich kam mir plötzlich so fremd vor in der Berliner U-Bahn, mit der ich praktisch aufgewachsen war."

[28] "Die Ostleute müssen noch viel lernen."

and "breathtakingly beautiful woman" "clomping the streets in the most ungainly pair of dogshit-brown-flats" and gawking at him "like I was the monkey masturbating in the trees" (Beatty 2008, 111). However, the reactions of the two protagonists are different. While the situation in the subway marks, for Hasan, the beginning of a process of alienation from his native city and its inhabitants, Ferguson draws on his own experience of marginalization in his native country to sympathize with the East Berliners and their naive euphoria about life in the "free" world:

> A large middle-aged man [...] spotted my black face in the overwhelmingly white crowd. He stumbled up to me and ensnarled me in a big bear hug. When he released me, he threw up his arms and shouted, "Ich bin frei!" *I am free!* Then, cribbing from Kennedy's famous speech, he whispered in my ear, "Ich bin ein Negro. Ich bin frei jetzt." [...]
>
> I suppose being East German was a lot like being black—the constant sloganeering, the protest songs, no electricity or long-distance telephone service—so I gave the East German Negro a hearty soul shake and a black power salute and wished him luck with the minimum-security emancipation he'd no doubt serve in the new German republic.
>
> IBID., 118

5 New Walls in the Reunified City

"The wall fell; it crumbled onto mum, Ediz, and me!" (Kara [2003] 2004, 310).[29] This statement that Hasan gives near the end of *Selam Berlin* can be seen as sad resumé of what German reunification eventually comes to mean for him. In its most obvious sense, this expression relates to the dramatic developments in Hasan's family, which is affected by reunification in a way contrary to the common view of it as bringing together long separated "brothers" and "sisters" (cf. Yildiz 2017, 221): In his case, the falling of the wall reveals that his father has had a long-term affair (and a son) with a woman from East Berlin, which irrevocably shatters the marriage of his parents and leads Hasan to realize that the union of his family required the "protection" of the "rock-solid" wall for its stability (cf. Kara [2003] 2004, 304).

This, however, is only one reason why Hasan eventually feels that the wall "crumbled" on him. The other has to do with his identification as "Berliner" as a more neutral, transnationally "open" notion of identity transcending people's need to categorize him as either German or Turk. With Berlin becoming the centre of heated discourses over German national identity, Hasan's proud auto-image as a native of the city, who—as in his ethnographic game of visually distinguishing Germans from East and West—belongs to the ingroup of old-established West Berliners looking disparagingly upon the newcomers from the East, cannot be maintained in the light of numerous experiences of discrimination. Such incidents do not only impute the hetero-image of the "other" to him, but they also have the bitter consequence that the falling of the wall eventually *limits* his freedom of movement to Kreuzberg, the part of the city which he considers most safe from racist threats (ibid., 334). The difficulties Hasan encounters are narrated over his experiences with people from different sociocultural and regional backgrounds, who—though often non-Berlin natives from other parts of Germany—all perceive Hasan in this stereotypical manner. One of the most noteworthy episodes concerns his getting a small role in a movie by a well-known German avant-garde director, who poses as liberal and cosmopolitan but turns out to have narrow-minded and even nationalistic ideas. In the movie, described as a "*Westside Story* à la Kreuzberg" (ibid., 220), Hasan is cast in the stereotypical role of a violent Turkish drug dealer, and his local knowledge of Kreuzberg is not used to create a sense of authenticity but exploited to affirm negative hetero-stereotypes. Similarly, the movie director treats Hasan in a way that recalls Bhabha's description of the stereotype as both "other and yet entirely knowable and visible" (1994, 70–71), meaning that he recognizes in him an "other" he already knows entirely: he is nothing but a "problem case" caused by the fate of being "disrupted" between two different cultures (ibid., 223).

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[29] "Die Mauer fiel; sie zerbröckelte auf Mama, Ediz und mich!"

In the course of *Selam Berlin*, Hasan's growing feelings of alienation in a reunified Berlin are amplified by the depiction of the similar experiences of his friends with multicultural backgrounds. In the context of this article, a character of particular relevance is the African American G.I. Redford, who becomes the boyfriend of Hasan's cousin. Through Redford, Kara not only draws a comparison between the experiences of Turkish-Germans in Germany and African Americans in the US but also draws attention to Hasan's belonging to an international group of migrants and marginalized people who—though often challenged by the difficulty of understanding each other's experiences (cf. ibid., 172)—are capable of feelings of solidarity and communion, and who—in the novel's sequel *Cafe Cyprus*—are even positioned as a new and superior elite: "We were carrying inside all the historic, cultural, and political differences, and we were growing through them and building bridges. We did not fit in any pattern and were basically something completely new; a mixture such as us had never existed on European soil" (Kara [2008] 2010, 317).[30]

Although the introduction of Redford and the reference to icons of African American culture such as Malcolm X, Alice Walker, James Baldwin, and Sidney Poitier (Kara [2003] 2004, 111, 169, 250) possibly makes the idea of comparing *Selam Berlin* to an African American novel set in Berlin more self-evident, the optimistic image of "building bridges" in *Cafe Cyprus* signals a strong contrast to *Slumberland*, which ends with a "Black Passé Tour" ironically entitled "Building Walls, Tearing Down Bridges" (Beatty 2008, 209). However, there *are* obvious similarities in Beatty's description of a reunified Berlin (though—as I will show in the following—the consequences drawn by the protagonists are different): what Anne-Rose Meyer described as one of the most disturbing experiences for Hasan—the sudden transformation of formerly convinced socialists into shopping maniacs and formerly liberals into chauvinists (2007, 74)—is also observed by Ferguson. He notes that his friends Doris and Lars only initially see their excursions to East Berlin "like travelling to see an extended family of stepsisters and -brothers" and that they grow increasingly "sour" about their "poor relations" in the East, emphasizing their fundamental otherness and describing them by negative hetero-stereotypes such as being lazy, unmotivated, and ungrateful (Beatty 2008, 136). In the same vein, he observes changes regarding their attitude about being German, noting that they are suddenly less shy about expressing their frustration with their nationality and recounting a scene where Doris expresses her anger about a journalist by exclaiming: "I hate this old Jew!" (ibid.). Using his knowledge of American history, Ferguson compares such transformations with the antebellum period in the American South, when the official abolishment of slavery led to more implicit forms of racist discrimination, and when new practices of othering made "the gilded cage of freedom seem […] more unethical than slavery" (Hoagland 2015, 149). In the words of Beatty's protagonist:

> Germany changed. After the Wall fell it reminded me of the Reconstruction period of American history, complete with scalawags, carpetbaggers, lynch mobs, and the woefully lynched. The country had every manifestation of the post-1865 Union save Negro senators and decent peanut butter. Turn on the television and there'd be minstrel shows—tuxedoed

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[30] "Wir trugen all die historischen, kulturellen und politischen Gegensätze in uns, und wir wuchsen daran und schlugen Brücken. Wir passten in keine Schablone und waren eigentlich etwas ganz Neues, so ein Gemisch wie uns hatte es nie zuvor auf europäischem Boden gegeben."

> *Schauspieler* in blackface acting out *Showboat* and literally whistling Dixie. There were the requisite whining editorials warning the public that assimilation was a dream, that the inherently lazy and shiftless East Germans would never be productive citizens. There were East Germans passing for West Germans.
>
> BEATTY 2008, 134

The consequences Ferguson draws from observing such similarities differ from Hasan's reaction to the changes in the reunified Berlin. Whereas Hasan hopes that the new dynamics in his native city can be disposed of by moving to London—a metropolis he considers more advanced in terms of interculturality—Ferguson perceives his privileged life in enclaved West Berlin as exceptional, with the reunified Berlin now approaching a well-known normality he had hoped to get away from. Although lamenting that the fall of the wall "had the unforeseen impact of quadrupling the number of white male assholes" he refrains from concluding that the "asshole-per-capita ratio" in East Germany is higher than in the West (ibid., 139),[31] and even sympathizes with people from the East, whose experiences come to resemble "a microcosmic Black experience that links modern-day otherness to modes of expulsion, migration, and exploitation found in the greater Black Atlantic" (Hoagland 2015, 148).

Ferguson's sympathy for the situation of East Germans in the reunified country increases when he encounters two Afro-German sisters from East Berlin who—as "others," both due to their skin color and their East German background—struggle with the "second-class treatment" (ibid., 137) they receive in their native country. The depiction of their experiences as nonwhites both in the GDR and in reunified Germany complements the perspective of the Black, male, American expatriate only temporarily staying in (formerly) West Berlin. By embedding their story in the contexts of the discrimination of Blacks during World War II and the evolution of the Afro-German movement in the 1980s and 1990s (ibid., 177–180, 190), Beatty not only widens the genre of African American expatriate fiction toward the "contemplat[ion] of discourses of race and blackness outside of a U.S. context" (Stallings 2013, 202) but ultimately articulates a sentiment shared by *Slumberland*'s Black expatriate community, the Afro-German sisters, and many East Germans: the experience that Ferguson's initial claim that "the charade of blackness is over" (Beatty 2008, 3), just as the euphoria over the becoming of "one" people in reunified Germany cannot be maintained, and that the official opening of walls and the mere installation of antislavery laws risks the tacit displacement of discrimination and separation into more implicit, less visible spheres. It is for this reason that Ferguson and his friends eventually come to rebuild the Berlin Wall through a public sound performance called "wall of sound"—a wall that can optionally be seen as "confinement, exclusion, or protection" (ibid., 198) and that, as Schmidt puts it, does not articulate a mere return to the former state of division but instead calls for a change of epistemologies by moving away from the predominantly visual model of the actual Berlin Wall to "an aural regime that highlights the fluidity of demarcations and resists binary classifications of any kind" (Schmidt 2014, 157).

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[31] He rather thinks that "Reunification and the rise of neo-Nazi activity had given the West German asshole the freedom to show his true colors" (ibid., 139).

6 Conclusion

It was the intention of this article to compare the literary depiction of the fall of the Berlin Wall in two transnationally oriented novels and, thereby, to undertake an exemplary, imagological case study operating at the crossings of national, urban, and ethnic/racial ascriptions of otherness. Although the two protagonists' different cultural backgrounds and different positions as second-generation Turkish-German migrant and African American temporary expatriate lead to divergent experiences in the former "island city" of West Berlin, the similarities in the recounts of the fall of the Berlin Wall are noteworthy. Not only do both novels depict the encounter of West and East Germans as structured by stereotypical modes of perceiving otherness, but they also show how the changes regarding German national identity have effects on the not-(only)-German protagonists. While the Turkish-German Hasan fails in his attempt to replace exclusionary national concepts of identity with the transnationally open, urban notion of the "Berliner" and grows increasingly alienated with his native city, the African American Ferguson experiences German reunification as a process resembling the situation in the antebellum American South, in which the short period of reconstruction eventually led to the installation of the Jim Crow laws and in which new racist stereotypes and less explicit forms of discrimination quickly evolved. The consequences drawn from these delusions are, however, quite different: *Selam Berlin* does not fundamentally doubt the idea that national models of identity can be replaced by transnational, open, and typically urban models more adequate to experiences of cultural hybridity and multiple forms of belonging—it simply depicts the Berlin of 1989/1990 as not advanced enough for this. *Slumberland*, on the other hand, expresses a more fundamental delusion about the possibility of permanently escaping limiting stereotypical ascriptions of otherness articulated in terms such as "Blackness" or "East Germanness." The final installation of a Berlin wall of sound can be read as an attempt to destabilize such national, urban, and/or ethnic/racial hetero-stereotypes by revealing their existence through irony and satire—a destabilization that, however, does not believe in the possibility of building or finding an "alternative world" (Schmidt 2014, 160) in some other country or time.

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