

## Migration and Urban Culture in East Germany. Representing Localities in Birgit Weyhe's Graphic Novel *Madgermanes*.

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### Abstract

The representation of the aesthetic and political dimensions of the city in the case of comics as a medium touches on a range of issues, from the relationship between comics and street art as well as the representation of urban space and popular culture as identity-shaping factors. Birgit Weyhe's graphic novel *Madgermanes* (2016) shows us a specific historical context: after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, a labor force was also needed in East Berlin, as a result of which the leadership invited cheap manpower from communist-oriented countries such as Vietnam, Cuba, Angola, or Mozambique. A total of around 15,000 guest worker immigrants arrived from the latter country in East Berlin within a decade. Three of them are the protagonists of the examined graphic novel, where their stories of integration difficulties, coping practices about finding a home, and rootlessness are told. In the case of the process of acculturation narrated in the medium of comics, the visual representation focuses on the contrast between cultures and the crisis of identity. In this particular graphic novel, this cultural shock is present through the popular and urban culture of the 1970s and 1980s. In this paper, we examine how this graphic novel intersects representations of locality, everyday life, and urban space with the perceptions and experiences of interculturality and media culture.

**Keywords:** East Berlin, Graphic Novel, *Madgermanes*, Mozambique, urban culture, culture shock, acculturation, migration

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Historical Background

Birgit Weyhe, a comic book artist and illustrator of German origin, released a graphic novel in 2016 that explores labor migration from Africa to Europe within modern German history. This work, associated with Afropolitan literature, has been translated into several languages and is considered a masterpiece. The comic, based on real events, tells the stories of three Mozambican guest workers and their difficulties in integrating, who arrived in East Berlin in the late 1970s. The premise of the story is that between 1979 and 1990, the GDR (East Germany) signed state

agreements with other communist allies, such as Vietnam, Angola, and Mozambique, to recruit guest workers to alleviate labor shortages. Despite being some of the most talented individuals from Mozambique, the workers were employed as butchers, locksmiths, mechanics, or textile workers, hoping they would acquire teaching, engineering, or medical qualifications in the "socialist brother country." The GDR only paid 40% of the workers' wages directly, with the remaining amount supposed to be reimbursed to the workers by the Mozambican government upon their return home (Schäfer, 2019). However, this never happened. A portion of their wages remained in their home country and

disappeared without a trace due to corruption and fraud. After German reunification, the guest workers were mostly sent back to their countries of origin (Eder, 2020). Since their return to Mozambique, the group, calling themselves “Madgermanes,” has been considered troublemakers, as they regularly protest in the capital, Maputo, demanding their rights, specifically their lost wages (Schäfer, 2019). Their name refers both to the phrase “Made in Germany” and the English word “mad,” meaning crazy (Nenno, 2022).

### **1.2. Localities in the Global Space of Graphic Novels – The Possibilities of the Madgermanes in the Emerging Graphic World Literature**

When examining the historical and cultural variations of the comic medium, the concept of “graphic world literature” first emerged in a transnational, transcultural, comparative perspective, notably through the experiences of global manga studies (Berndt, 2010). Later, this concept seems to have been developed mainly in relation to graphic novels (e.g., Ball, 2018; Kuhlman-Alaniz, 2020: 12). Participation in graphic world literature is revealed through its role in transnational, transcultural, global cultural exchanges (Schmitz-Emans, 2013). This claim recalls some characteristics of Goethe’s concept of world literature and applies them to the phenomena of graphic literature and comic media, while also invoking the dynamic interplay between national and regional literatures, infused with interculturality.

In this context, the “graphic world literature” corpus is not a union of the linguistic-cultural variations of the comic medium or comics as a literary type, nor a subset of these collections marked by masterpieces selected by some global canon. Rather, linking the concept of world literature with the comic medium arises primarily due to the growing prominence of graphic novels, especially in (sub) genres that are particularly suited to the transnational and global mediation of local experiences. These include comic reportage, expat comics, travelogues, and autobiographical comics, which have also found success in contemporary American and European comic cultures.

At first glance, it is striking that Madgermanes can contribute to the formation of an emerging global graphic literary canon in at least two ways. On one hand, like other Afropolitan comics and graphic novels, it portrays the experience of globalization from an African perspective.

The Afropolitan character is evident in the multiple ties to various locations and the “geographical polygamy” of the authorial and character trajectories (Beck, 1998: 127–135). Both the author-narrator and the characters move between geographical and cultural spaces. The depiction of local experiences and the interplay of references to (globalizing) popular media culture are characteristics of many Afropolitan graphic novels (Maksa, 2024).

On the other hand, Madgermanes is also significant in terms of the comic-based exploration of the socialist past, as it presents “individual stories that are processed and reflectively fictionalized from a bottom-up perspective, interpreting 1990 as a turning point that had a negative impact on their life events, thereby highlighting 1990 as a moment that stands out from the European context and the German national narrative” (Vincze, 2022: 222).

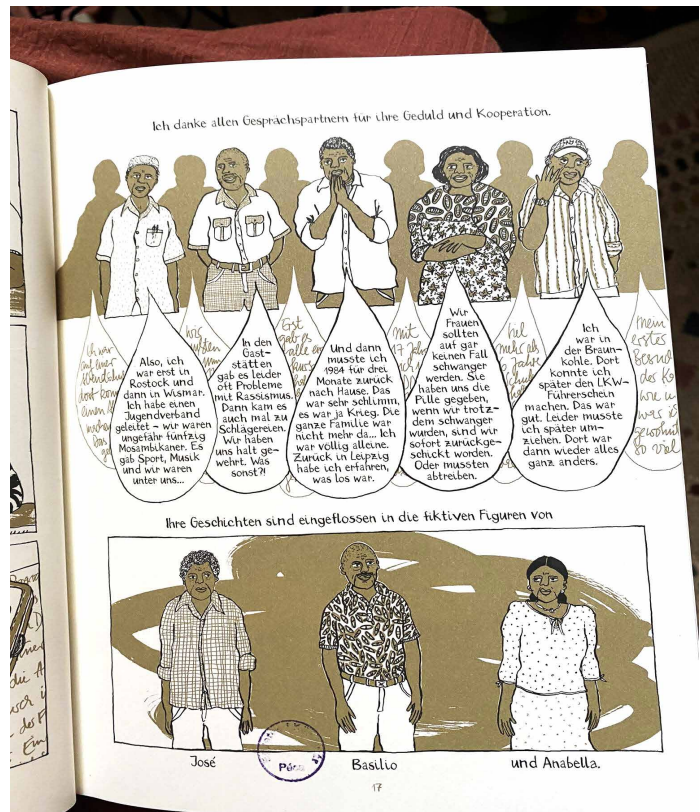
### **1.3. Structure and Objectives**

The broader narrative structure of Madgermanes consists of three main chapters, introduced by a framing narrative about discovering the story. Each chapter focuses on the experiences of a character from a fictional group of friends—José, Basilio, and Anabella—and depicts their shared memories, coping strategies arising from their migration situation (Schmid, 2019). The main characters are fictional, created by Weyhe based on stories and experiences gathered through meticulous research and interviews: the introverted, clever, bookish, and party-loyal José; the persistent, strong-willed, and determined Anabella, whose every action and decision is overshadowed by family tragedy; and Basilio, who is more interested in fun than work and revels in female attention (see Figures 1-2). Each character narrates a chapter of their life, describing the period when they moved from Mozambique to East Germany, experienced migration, and lived through the political transition. The chapters outline their relationships with each other and how they experienced the challenges of migration—either individually or collectively—and how they interpreted personal crises (e.g., the breakup between José and Anabella, with Basilio’s involvement). Their narratives provide a more nuanced view of their motivations for migration and the coping strategies they developed in the new environment.

The story also explores their mixed feelings towards the Portuguese colonial war and the Mozambican Communist Party, FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, Mozambican Liberation Front), as well as the civil war that followed Mozambique's liberation from colonial rule. While José loyally (and somewhat naively) helps the party organize informational evenings and cultural events in East Germany about his homeland (Weyhe, 2016: 84), Anabella tries to convince her lover that they are the losers of the system (Weyhe, 2016: 76-77), as they are merely cheap labor (Weyhe, 2016: 78). Anabella's story presents the most vivid divided perspective, showcasing the horrors of the end of Portuguese rule and the ensuing civil war (Weyhe, 2016: 167-171, 190-191). Her family, like every Mozambican family, supported the country's liberation from Portuguese rule, but they did not necessarily see the solution in the communism represented by FRELIMO (Weyhe, 2016: 168), but rather in the rival RENAMO

(Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, Mozambican National Resistance). Her two brothers are abducted on charges of aiding the enemy, and their mother falls ill as a result. Thus, Anabella is left to care for her younger sisters (Weyhe, 2016: 168). As the civil war drags on, the situation becomes unbearable, and Anabella decides to go to Maputo and apply for the guest worker program. Her efforts are successful, in no small part due to selling her body (Weyhe, 2016: 171).

The third character, Basilio, quickly realizes after arriving in East Berlin that nothing is sacred to the party (FRELIMO) and that he is only allowed to work as an unskilled laborer. His coping strategy becomes seeking enjoyment and following trends (partying, fashion, and consuming pop culture).



Figures 1-2: The author's research, the processing of stories, and the fictional characters (Weyhe, 2016: pp. 16-17).

The author guides the story through two different geographical locations—Mozambique and East Germany—along distinct timelines and political systems. In Mozambique, the narrative reflects the Portuguese colonial past and independence (1975), followed by the period of civil war, socialism, and the capitalist structure that became prominent from the late 1980s. The story's characters arrive in the socialist sister country, the German Democratic Republic, at the end of the 1970s. Here, the author presents East Berlin and the (popular) culture and social structure of the 1980s with meticulous detail and subtle references, depicting the period immediately preceding the transition to a free market and the fall of the Berlin Wall (Wende).

In the medium of comics, the depiction of the city's aesthetic and political dimensions touches on various issues, from the relationship between comics and street art to the representation of urban space and popular culture as an identity-shaping factor (Maksa and Murányi, 2023). In the case of Madgermanes, during the acculturation process explored in the medium of comics, the visual representation focuses on the contrast between cultures and the crisis of identity.

In our study, we examine how Madgermanes intersects representations of locality, everyday life, and urban space with experiences of media culture and interculturality. We demonstrate how the conditions of migration and spatial identity appear in the popular and urban culture of the 1970s and 1980s, in the built environment, political posters, lifestyle, music, records, clothing, and more. This study explores how the book portrays the migration destination and its capital—East Berlin and the GDR—and the historical events and changes occurring there, such as socialism, capitalism, racism, etc., through material relics, national symbols, and pop-cultural references. We also investigate the stages of migration, attitudes, and coping strategies that may be associated with these elements.

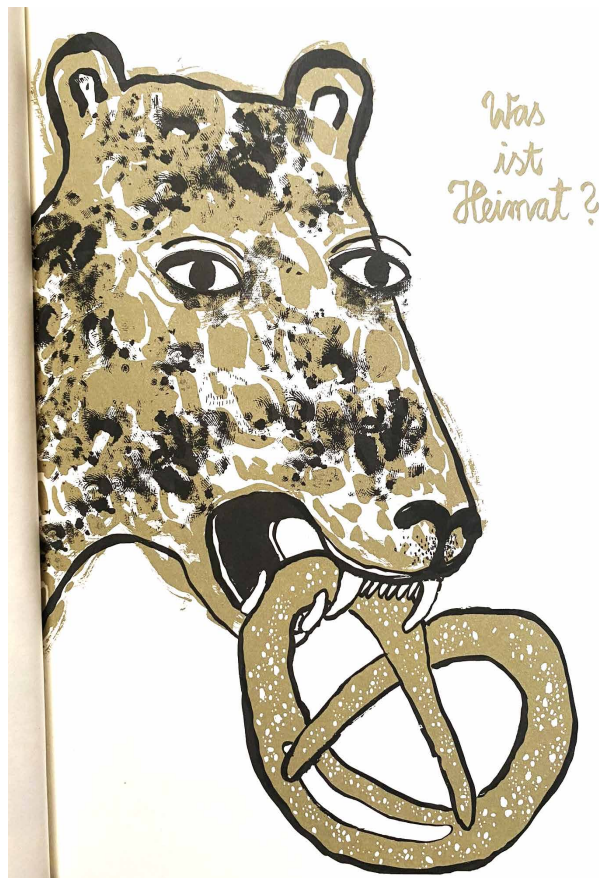
#### 1.4. Afropolitan Framing

The author frames the main narrative with his own experiences. At the very beginning of the work, she mentions that she grew up in Uganda and Kenya as a child, and also discusses how she found the topic and

how she researched and processed it. Weyhe's subjective experiences significantly influence not only the choice of topic but also the visual language of the comic, creating a connection between the two continents—Africa and Europe—understood as geographical-cultural spaces. This hybridity (Schäfer, 2019) is evident in the artistic language chosen by the author, the living conditions of the novel's characters, and the author's own life story, which connects to the work and becomes a part of it. Positioned between two worlds, Weyhe narrates the life stories of the interviewees from her unique perspective, weaving together autobiographical storytelling with biographical material.

Weyhe employs a distinct narrative strategy, relying on interviews conducted with people who have undergone a certain form of forced migration (Ashkenazi and Dittmar, 2020). From the documents and interviews, the author constructs the three fictional guest worker characters. Upon arriving in the Western world, the characters of the graphic novel respond differently to the migratory situation, and the phases of cultural shock (Oberg, 2006) vary individually, applying different acculturation strategies (Berry, 2005; Sam, 2006). The contradiction and tension in the characters' lives arise from this in-between status and their belonging to multiple cultural locations, which is reflected not only in the plot but also visually (Schäfer, 2019). Regarding the visual language of memory, Weyhe uses contemporary objects (photos, billboards, labels, stamps, etc.), alongside interviews and recollections, to depict time periods, complex changes, and developments, as well as to visually present the impressions and moods of the characters (Schäfer, 2019).

The characters' belonging to two or more cultural locations places them in a contradictory situation, creating the potential for cultural innovation and change. Weyhe's unique artistic language and graphic style present the question of belonging as an in-between state. The complex question of "What is home?" is illustrated by the author with a symbolic reference to belonging to two different cultural contexts: a pretzel (a classic German snack) hanging out of a leopard's mouth (Weyhe 2016: 13) (see Figure 3). Weyhe skillfully synthesizes the feeling of being



Figures 3-4: The question of “What is Home?” and the expression of the intermediate space; the confusion of sensory perceptions in Africa (Weyhe, 2016: p. 13 and p. 9).

“at home in the intermediate space” (Schäfer, 2019). In the comic, words, sounds, sensory impressions, and allegorical elements accompany one another, with the combination of word and image also hinting at the intermediate state. In the work, the relationship between image and text is more than just a technical matter, as it represents the space of cultural, political, and social contradictions. For Weyhe, the unique interplay of words and images allows him to express cultural and political contradictions, creating a novel iconotext, a pictorial-textual narrative. The use of images inspired by both “Western” and African impressions contributes to this. Not only the novel’s three main characters but also the author herself navigates two cultural spaces, seeking home and identity. In the novel, verbal text and linguistic narration serve to introduce the characters and advance the story, but the author prefers

to use images to depict emotions and feelings. This dual perspective is why Schäfer (2019) refers to Madgermanes as hybrid literature.

The depiction of sensory impressions and memories appears right from the framing, as the author recounts her personal memories of moving to Uganda (Entebbe). Upon stepping out of the airplane, she is struck by the heat of the runway, the soft and humid air, and the unfamiliar sounds (“The tarmac reflected the heat.” “The air was soft and moist.” “Louder foreign noises.” (Weyhe, 2016: 9)). Forty years later, during a trip to Mozambique, a similar confusion of sensory perceptions emerges, triggered by the heat radiating from the runway, the buzz of a foreign language, and the extreme humidity (Weyhe, 2016: 11) (see Figure 4). Although the author had never been to

Mozambique before, it still felt familiar, even more like home to her than Hamburg (Weyhe, 2016: 12).

In reference to the Afropolitan nature of Madgermanes, it is worth recalling the words of Achille Mbembe: “The awareness of the interweaving of here and elsewhere, the presence of elsewhere in the here and vice versa, this relativization of roots and primary belonging, and the way of embracing the peculiar, the foreign, and the distant with full knowledge of the facts, this ability to recognize our own face in the face of the foreigner, and to appreciate the trace of the distant in the nearby, to make the unknown familiar, to work together with what seems to be opposed—this is the cultural, historical, and aesthetic sensitivity that the term ‘Afropolitanism’ so aptly signals.”(Original text: „La conscience de cette imbrication de l’ici et de l’ailleurs, la présence de l’ailleurs dans l’ici et vice-versa, cette relativisation des racines et des appartenances primaires et cette manière d’embrasser, en toute connaissance de cause, l’étrange, l’étranger et le lointain, cette capacité de reconnaître sa face dans le visage de l’étranger et de valoriser les traces du lointain dans le proche, de domestiquer l’in-familier, de travailler avec ce qui a tout l’air des contraires – c’est cette sensibilité culturelle, historique et esthétique qu’indique bien le terme «afropolitanisme»” (Mbembe, 2006: 13).

## 2. Cultural Shock and Acculturation

The study of comics dealing with immigration and the effects of migration is not a recent phenomenon, as demonstrated by the exhibition and book *Bande dessinée et immigration (Comics and Immigration)* (Marie and Ollivier, 2013). In the context of our study, we would highlight the work of Sándor Klapcsik (2015), in which he examines the graphic novel *Persepolis* from an acculturation perspective. Here, the Iranian protagonist, Marji, goes through the stages of cultural shock during her years in Vienna.

Cultural shock describes the experiences of disorientation, anxiety, and confusion that newcomers face in a migratory situation due to an unfamiliar cultural environment. The concept was first introduced by Oberg (1960), who illustrated its phases with a U-curve, where the coordinates represent the time spent in the host country and the level of satisfaction resulting from the adaptation process. The

initial “tourist” or “honeymoon” phase is characterized by enthusiasm and euphoria. Everything is interesting and enjoyable, and experiences are often limited to the superficial aspects of the local culture, such as food, drink, shopping, etc. In this phase, the individual’s identity is still firmly rooted in their home culture.

The cultural shock phase is marked by feelings of discomfort due to linguistic and cultural barriers, a strong sense of disorientation, and a tendency to blame others. During this phase, individuals may return home, either due to external factors (e.g., the end of a study trip) or personal choice. In this case, they do not experience the subsequent phases of recovery, cultural adaptation, and adjustment. Consequently, they do not reach a state in which they can experience their own home culture while recognizing its downsides and, at the same time, remain open to the host environment without idealizing or portraying it negatively. This would eventually lead to a sense of belonging and acceptance of the new environment. When returning prematurely, individuals typically struggle with the difficulties of reintegrating into their original culture, experiencing what is known as reverse cultural shock (Bochner, 2006).

Berry introduces the notion of acculturation (Berry et al, 1988), which separates the cultural and psychological changes resulting from encounters between individuals and groups from different cultural backgrounds from those of the ethnocultural group and the dominant society. The model distinguishes between four types of relationships when approached from the ethnocultural group perspective (Berry, 2005). During integration, the individual seeks to preserve the values of the country of origin when integrating into the host country. In assimilation, the individual leaves the values brought from the country of origin and adopts the practices of the host culture. Segregation is when it is important to preserve the values brought from the country of origin without attempting to assimilate into the host country. Marginalisation occurs when it is neither important for the individual to preserve the values of the country of origin nor to integrate into the host country (Berry, 2005). Expectations of acculturation of different ethnocultural groups at the level of society as a whole can also be fourfold. Multicultural attitudes can be achieved where the majority, inclusive society is open and

accepting of difference. Segregation is an institutionalised form of social distancing expressed in physical separation. The melting pot attitude is a strong compelling force for the individual to assimilate, or one can even speak of exclusionary attitudes (Berry, 2005; Sam, 2006). The identity of the individual is significantly influenced by any phase of culture shock and acculturation attitudes.

The documentary character of the Madgermanes' imagery plays a crucial role. Weyhe uses meticulously documented material relics to create a visual language of the transnational dimensions of the historical period presented. On the one hand, these depict the legacies of colonialism embedded in popular culture, and on the other hand, they provide a faithful chronography of East Germany (Kraenzle, 2020). Photographs, posters, billboards, stamps, national and cultural symbols, flags, coats of arms, stamps, money, book

covers, newspapers, maps, postcards, packaging, street scenes, clothing can be interpreted as references to the period being narrated and depicted, as a kind of graphic memory, while the author also uses these symbols and material elements to convey the acculturation phases of the characters.

### 3. The GDR Stories of the Characters

Each of the three characters experiences migration, culture shock, and the stages of acculturation differently. Due to their pre-adaptation return to Mozambique, José and Basilio experience reverse culture shock. Anabella is the only one among them who adapts and settles in Germany.

For José António Mugande, the honeymoon phase is very short, almost non-existent, as he quickly moves into



Figures 5-6: East Berlin and Maputo, and the unification of the two systems under one ideology (Weyhe, 2016, pp. 24-25)

the cultural shock phase. He arrives at Berlin Schönefeld Airport on an Interflug flight. The Interflug logo appears throughout the book, representing great distances. From the moment he arrives, he seeks familiarity and similarities between Maputo and East Berlin, but everything seems strange and unfamiliar (Weyhe, 2016: 24). This sense of alienation is also reflected in the graphic novel's imagery. In Berlin, elements like the S-Bahn, snack bars (Imbiss), and the GDR emblem are characteristic. Meanwhile, in Maputo, the street scene includes women carrying loads on their heads, along with the presence of the Mozambican emblem (see Figure 5). The political parallel is illustrated through posters and stamps, emphasizing the handshake and solidarity between the two socialist brother countries (Weyhe, 2016: 25) (see Figure 6). Despite this, everything remains foreign, and José does not understand why he is there. He does not recall the flight, only that it was cold, that they were wrapped in blankets upon landing, and taken to the workers' dormitory, where the air felt strange and unfamiliar. It is cold outside, warm inside; he marvels at the radiator, something he had never known before. Alongside all this, the concept of punctuality emerges, with wall clocks displaying the time in every hallway (Weyhe, 2016: 26-32).

The speaker, José, then reveals that the reality does not align with the words of the Mozambican president, Samora Machel. The president had said that they, the country's best, were chosen for this journey to study as teachers and engineers in East Germany and to represent the future elite upon their return. In reality, however, they were forced to work in factories, following a strict plan, with no other choice (Weyhe, 2016: 36-40).

This marks the beginning of the assimilation phase for José. His supervisor cannot pronounce his name, so he starts calling him "Toni," a more Germanized version. Meanwhile, José also experiences racism. He is stared at in the streets, receives derogatory comments, and is not served in restaurants (Weyhe, 2016: 42-43). José begins learning German. Simultaneously, the recovery phase, or the cultural adaptation stage, begins. He starts reading in German, goes to the cinema and social events, and enrolls in a folk high school. His homesickness starts to fade when he discovers the library. Initially, he reads children's books and

youth magazines, encountering covers of contemporary bestsellers like Frösi, Mischka, and the Grimm fairy tales. The more he masters the language, the deeper he delves into the gems of socialist realist literature aimed at adults. The author illustrates this with various book covers (Ruth Werner: Olga Benario, Eberhard Panitz: Der Weg zum Rio Grande, Ernst Thälmann: Sohn seiner Klasse). Despite this, his days pass monotonously: work, education, reading, cinema. Visually depicted as well, José lives like a crab in its shell—alone, yet leading a meaningful life (Weyhe, 2016: 63-68).

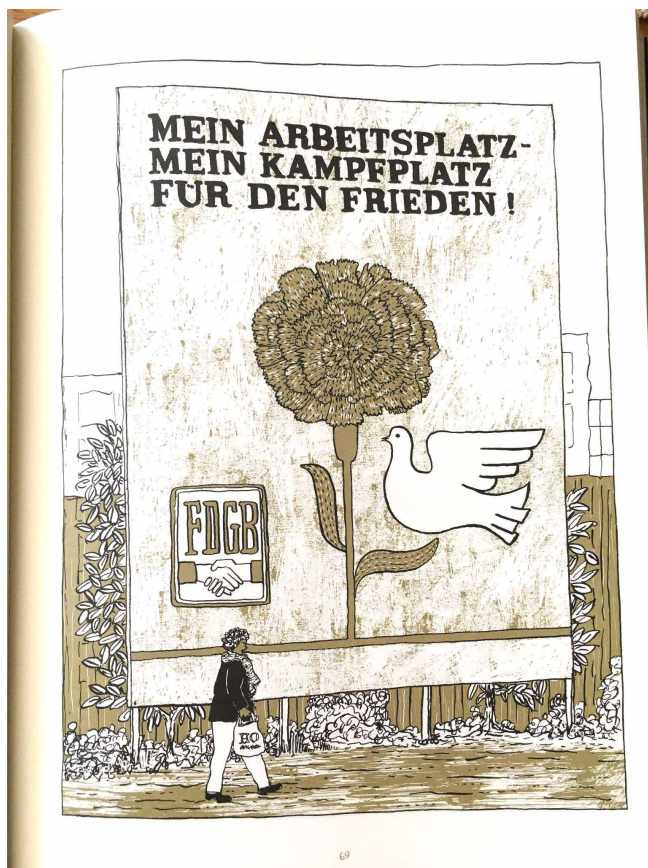
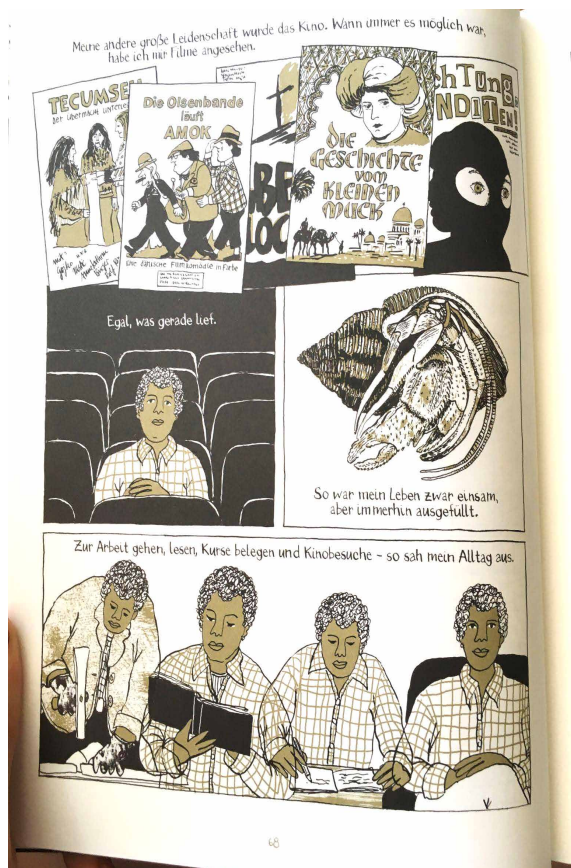
The framework, ideology, and idealization of the socialist political system permeate every area of life, including the streets. One example is the full-page mural of street art with the slogan "Mein Arbeitsplatz - mein Kampfplatz für den Frieden" ("My workplace - my battlefield for freedom") (Weyhe, 2016: 69).

This idealization is repeated later, especially in the case of José and Anabella, who are practically the only opposites in Mozambique's internal politics. Figuratively, it is expressed in the differences in ice cream packaging. According to José, the FRELIMO party fights against imperialism (the Lincoln poster or Ende Apartheid, which symbolizes this, appears as a world political projection). Anabella, on the other hand, believes that anyone who opposes the party pays with his life, and that Toni thinks the party is too big (Weyhe, 2016: 76-77).

His meeting with Anabella is a very beautiful and flourishing phase in José's life. In the courtship phase, she shows him many attractions, helps him to fit in. At this time, the characteristics of Berlin dominate the imagery. The Fernsehturm, the popular chocolates of the time, Alexanderplatz, trips to Müggelsee and the Nordsee, the Disco Eisenbahner are shown (Weyhe, 2016: 70-75).

José relocates from Berlin to Wismar after his break-up with Anabella, which we learn from a postcard. Here he is appointed brigade leader, as a plaque indicates. He is ostracised by his own people (and by the Germans). One reason is that he speaks very good German. He continues to help the FRELIMO party in its cultural work - the political poster with the slogan Solidarity reappears. He organises city visits, presents information about Mozambique to Germans. He knows East Germany better





Figures 7-8: José's Place in GDR's pop culture; political mural (Weyhe, 2016, pp. 68-69)

than Mozambique—maps of the GDR, Dessau and Weimar appear in the comic strip narrative (Weyhe 2016: 80-84). With the change of regime, however, times are changing. On the one hand, his contract is not renewed, and on the other, the socio-political climate becomes oppressive. He is subjected to daily atrocities because of his skin colour. The country's transformation is also reflected visually—only the letter D remains of the DDR, with the D and R crossed out, and the skinhead boot appears on the adjacent panel. On the same page, the end of the years spent in Germany is marked by the Interflug ticket (Weyhe, 2016: 85).

The second chapter of this graphic novel tells the story of Basilio Fernando Mota. Basilio, in the role of the narrator, describes the political situation in Mozambique, the colonial wars and the FRELIMO party (Weyhe, 2016: 99-101). The symbolism of the 1975 Portuguese Carnation Revolution

is shown - a little girl fires a carnation into the barrel of a soldier's rifle, an event that brings the independence of the colonies, including Mozambique (Weyhe, 2016: 102). As in José's story, the figure of President Samora Machel appears here, in a speech encouraging the students to learn, as this is their future. At the same time, the panel below is a counterpoint to this, suggesting that the population is still in favour of the traditional establishment and rejects innovation (Weyhe, 2016: 103). Basilio is the first to enrol in the programme, which allows the best in Europe to study with their socialist brothers. The common political ideologies are illustrated by the author through posters ("Turn to the light and not to the shadow") and stamps (fists clenched, solidarity inscription) (Weyhe, 2016: 104). However, references to the corrupt system and stolen wages (FRELIMO congress) also appear (Weyhe, 2016: 105).



Figures 9-10 José's cultural residues and knowledge of the GDR; regime change, new ideologies and return home with Interflug (Weyhe, 2016: pp. 84-85)

Basilio arrives in East Berlin with high expectations, where the reality is sobering. He doesn't speak the language, there are so many rules that are unusual for him. The author's depiction of German education and job opportunities is eloquent: a page from a German language book appears, showing skilled workers in a workshop, and explains the prepositions through their work. Basilio encounters many forbidden signs (e.g. it is forbidden to flirt with white girls), so he does much of his work in secret (Weyhe, 2016: 106-107). He lives for fun – photos show him in cool Western clothes, wearing sunglasses, riding a disc, courting beautiful German girls (Weyhe, 2016: 108) – and for a short time he thinks he has won the lottery five. Then he quickly sobers up from the initial euphoria of the honeymoon phase. Contrary to the initial promises, he is only given a menial job shovelling coal (Weyhe, 2016:

109). When he realises that he has no say in his choice of work and that there is no way up, he no longer takes the job seriously and escapes into entertainment and lifestyle, he follows a Westernised pattern. In Basilio's case, the emphasis on the importance of appearances, clothing (Weyhe, 2016: 110, 120-122), and the representation of pop cultural elements recur several times. These include album covers (Madonna, Michael Jackson, Tina, Amiga record label, Petra Zieger & Smokings, Bataillon d'amour (Weyhe, 2016: 117)), or the imagery of films (Die hard 2, Marked for Death - Steven Seagal, New Jack City, The Silence of the Lambs, The Last Boy Scout, Beverly Hills Cop (Weyhe, 2016: 148-149)). Sport and the sense of belonging to a community that comes with it are also important in Basilio's life (BSG Aufbau Berlin football team and the images of medals in boxing (Weyhe, 2016: 118).



Figures 11-12: Extremism and increasing racism after the Wende (Weyhe, 2016: pp. 138 and 140)

He tries to maintain the impression to his environment, to his family who stayed in Mozambique, that he is doing well and that his assimilation and integration into the majority society has been successful (Weyhe, 2016: 110-113). Like José, Basilio faces racism and exclusion on a regular basis (Weyhe 2016: 119, 132-133). One of these cases describes him being harassed by locals who say that he wears these clothes because he gets money from the West and shops there, and that this is why women like him. In fact, he buys women's blouses that have nice fabrics and patterns. The Vietnamese guest worker's friend makes him a jacket like the one in the Knight Rider series, in which he ends up posing in front of a Trabant (Weyhe, 2016: 119-122). At this point, the author refers to guest workers from other sister countries working in the GDR. He displays Vietnam-themed posters and stamps, and the narrative includes

Angolan guest workers with whom language is a bonding force (solidarity-themed posters and stamps) (Weyhe, 2016:121,123). When he is transferred to Hoyerswerda, Polish guest workers become his drinking buddies (Weyhe, 2016: 132-133).

The phase of recovery from culture shock begins when he meets the German Trudi (in front of the Konsum supermarket, where they queue for rarities such as bananas and Cuban peanuts) (Weyhe, 2016: 134-135) and they start a family. It is a comfortable time, her German family seems to like it, although Trudi's friends like to call her "Chocolate Man" (Weyhe, 2016: 136).

This idyll is brought to an end by the regime change. Many people lose their jobs, and extremism, racism and Nazism (swastikas, arm waving) are on the rise (Weyhe 2016: 138) (see Figure 11). A Nazi demonstration takes place in front



Figures 13-14: West Berlin sentiment and growing xenophobia after the regime change (Weyhe, 2016: pp. 214 and 235)

of a workers' hostel, which is set on fire, but the police do nothing. The white power emblem appears on the bald men's bomber jackets (Weyhe 2016: 140) (see Figure 12). Fed up, Basilio moves back to Berlin. Once again, he experiences a period of loss of ground, nothing in the city is the same. The old street signs are replaced, Leninplatz becomes United Nations Square. Most Mozambican migrant workers are sent home (Interflug), replaced by Turkish migrant workers. Basilio has no work, spends a lot of time alone, drinks a lot (Weyhe, 2016: 144). He eventually returns to Mozambique, where he experiences a reverse culture shock, similar to José. He finds it hard to find his place, his identity is defined by his ethnicity, which he expresses through language and national symbols (flag), and finally he finds his community, his fellow countrymen, with whom he starts to organise protests to get back their stolen wages (Weyhe, 2016: 148-153).

In the final chapter, Weyhe presents the migration experiences of Anabella Mbanze Rai. Her story is the most dramatic of the three. She has to go to great lengths to get out of Mozambique (including selling her own body) and her family is completely destroyed by the civil war. This trauma and the break-up with José lead Anabella to refuse to return to her country at the time of the regime change and to do everything she can to integrate. She arrives in Berlin in the spring of 1984, with Interflug (Weyhe, 2016: 172), and the circumstances of her arrival are illustrated by photographs (Trabant in front of the Continental rubber service station; "The GDR is our homeland!" on the workers' shelter; "Long live May 1st!" on the closed pub window (Weyhe, 2016: 173)). Initially unable to distinguish between white women and men, she is housed in a dilapidated building, her life is all about work, and that too according to a plan (illustrated in the 5-year plan (Weyhe, 2016: 174). She meets José in

a compulsory German language course, with whom she quickly falls in love. José helps her a lot to find her place (honeymoon phase, integration), introduces her to cinema, theatre, library, takes her on excursions. The author provides a chronology with pop-cultural references, book covers (Theodor Fontane: *Effi Briest*, *Freiheit für Nelson Mandela*), film and theatre posters (Beverly Hills Cop, *Mutter Courage und Ihre Kinder*) (Weyhe, 2016: 179). She is placed in a factory producing hot water bottles, but finds it difficult to fit in, as she does not understand the language and the (pop)cultural references (Weyhe, 2016: 184). She enrolls in night school to obtain her school-leaving certificate (textbook covers: mathematics, spatial science, chemistry, literature, civics, biology (Weyhe, 2016: 188-189). She supports her family financially, although she receives much less money than she expected. Here, the author illustrates women's equality, its false appearance, with a crossed-out political poster: 'For the same work, the same pay, vote for the SED' (Weyhe, 2016: 190). The phase of loss of ground, of cultural shock, is at its deepest when she learns that her entire family has perished in the civil war. The darkest grief is expressed by the author with two full black pages (Weyhe, 2016: 194-195).

The recovery phase begins with the change of regime. She arrives in West Berlin, where she is surprised by what she sees: people drinking in the streets, punks, shops full of goods, street music. It's a different world, a foreign one for her (Weyhe, 2016: 214). The GDR is just a thing of the past to take home as a souvenir (Weyhe, 2016: 215). Anabella knows it's only a matter of time before the status of guest worker is abolished. The new Germany will not take over their contracts, so hers will be terminated. She does not want to return home under any circumstances, so she turns to a lawyer. Finally, she succeeds and is granted a work permit (Weyhe, 2016: 217). Free at last, not tied to a job or a state plan. To support this, a crossed-out image of a man holding a flag with communist symbols on one side and a hot water bottle on the other appears (Weyhe 2016: 218). She enrolls in the medical faculty at the University of Tübingen. There she meets a black woman from Chicago who suggests that she should try to be 'white', as much as possible, by taking off his headscarf. She realises that she has to assimilate in terms of appearance (Weyhe, 2016: 224-225). The author

illustrates this process with a product package containing a patch of hair, which makes her Afro hair straight (Weyhe, 2016: 227). In the adaptation phase, she does her best to assimilate. She is aware that this will open up opportunities for her, but she will always be an exception (Weyhe, 2016: 228). It is a trip to a medical congress in Brazil that brings out her feelings about Mozambique (Portuguese language, plants and smells from her home country). She realises that Germany can never replace her original homeland (Weyhe, 2016: 229). At the same time, she already lives according to the values she experienced in Germany. In Brazil she is disturbed by the obvious poverty (homeless man sleeping on the street), that Brazilians have a different sense of time, they are often superficial. She is happy to fly back to her adopted country (no longer with Interflug) (Weyhe, 2016: 234). She finally gets German citizenship (passport display), but at the same time exclusion and racism are part of everyday life (whistling behind her back, press reports about foreigners' crimes, a wall advertisement with the caption *fuck schwarze nigger*) (Weyhe, 2016: 235).

#### 4. Conclusion

Madgermanes contributes to the formation of a globalizing canon of graphic world literature in several ways. As an Afropolitan graphic novel, it presents the African perspective on the experience of globalisation in a framed narrative. The Afropolitical character, however, is not only manifested in the multi-locality of the authors' and characters' life trajectories, but also in the way in which the graphic novel deals with the socialist period: the representation of the socialist and regime change period also lifts Madermanes out of the European context and the German national narrative.

The theme of the search for a home is constant in the stories presented. The experience of José and Basilio, who arrive with high expectations, is dominated by a phase of culture shock (and then reverse culture shock), as they do not experience the phases of adaptation due to the regime change and their premature return home. The period of love between José and Anabella is joyful and uplifting (the honeymoon phase), in the narrative of which the introduction and presentation of the sights and pop culture of the GDR and East Berlin play a prominent role. José and Basilio also try to adapt—mainly through language learning and cultural consumption—but as they have to return to Mozambique, they do not fully assimilate. Anabella's personal drama means that she does everything she can to stay in Germany after the regime change. She assimilates successfully, strives to appear 'Westernised', obtains citizenship, but knows full well that she will have to live in an in-between space with a dual identity all the time. The stories of the characters are interwoven with the political structures of the country of origin and the host country, Mozambique and East Germany, and with everyday life under socialism. Many references to political ideas are interwoven in the graphic novel with posters, stamps, graffiti, books, films, objects and buildings that allow for a contemporary representation of the decade before the fall of communism, and a sense of East Berlin. The ideas and values associated with the objects and cultural elements presented, solidarity, community, friendship, the fight against oppression, multiculturalism, are little or not at all present in the everyday lives of the characters. The narrators' stories are more about the experience of exploitation, segregation, exclusion and—especially after

the regime change—racism, and the symbolic references in the visual world (boots, bald figures, bomber jackets, arm candy, racist graffiti) are in line with this. Although both countries, the GDR and Mozambique, are socialist countries, there is a huge difference between the two cultures, which prevents the characters from overcoming the cultural shock and reaching the stage of adaptation.

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