In the 1990s, several films were produced that challenged whiteness as a historical norm in German society that excludes black Germans from ‘Germanness’. Two of them, Dörrie’s *Keiner liebt mich* and Sanoussi-Bliss’ *Zurück auf los*, show opposing yet equally utopian impulses in their attempts to escape this dominance of whiteness. While they resort to radically different representations of intersecting racial, sexual and ethnic otherness, both films show the recalcitrance of white discourse when the attempt is made to narrate Germany as it is today, namely a multicultural society at the turn of the century.

Dörrie’s *Keiner liebt mich* (1994)¹ and Pierre Sanoussi-Bliss’ *Zurück auf los* (1999)² can be viewed as milestones in the millennial decade of post-unification German film dealing with black, male gays. The touchstone for both of these beautifully crafted and interesting films is the actor- director-screenwriter Pierre Sanoussi-Bliss, an African-German gay man from the East, who plays an African-German gay Easterner in both films. Structurally, the films have quite a bit in common. They are big-city films; Dörrie’s takes place in Cologne, Sanoussi-Bliss’ in Berlin. They are both dark comedies with hilarious and sad moments. The gay character in each lives in the shadow of terminal sickness or Aids and so faces possible death. Both films

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¹ *Keiner liebt mich*. Directed by Doris Dörrie. Germany 1994. *Keiner liebt mich* was, relatively speaking, a box-office hit, the second most popular German film after *Der bewegte Mann* by Sönke Wortmann, also winning silver to the latter film’s gold for the best German film in 1994. It had a run in art houses in San Francisco, Chicago, New York and Toronto, and is also known under its English title, *Nobody Loves Me.*

² *Zurück auf los*. Directed by Pierre Sanoussi-Bliss. Germany 1999. *Zurück auf los* premiered at the 2000 Berlinale. The next year it was distributed by Pro-Fun Verleih, which specializes in gay film and literatures. *Zurück auf los* is now available in German as a PAL cassette and DVD with English subtitles presumably for British and international audiences.
champion the primacy of friendship rather than romantic love in overcoming alienation, which is part of each film’s happy end. Despite the similarities, it is clear that radically different portrayals of otherness have been constructed by Dörrie and Sanoussi-Bliss.

It was in Keiner liebt mich that Sanoussi-Bliss made his movie debut in a substantial but supporting role as the African German clairvoyant Orfeo who befriends white German Fanny Fink, the lead character played by Maria Schrader. After Keiner liebt mich, Sanoussi-Bliss appeared in various supporting roles, e.g., in Dörrie’s Bin ich schön? (1998), and in Alles wird gut (1998) by Angela Maccarone and Fatima El-Tayeb. He is most well-known, however, as the black side-kick detective Axel Richter on ZDF’s Krimi-series Der Alte. Despite this fame, a leading film role remained elusive. He sees himself as a successful actor who should be able to break through racial type-casting: “Bisher haben die Besetzungsbüros in mir in erster Linie einen schwarzen, und erst in zweiter Linie einen guten Schauspieler gesehen”.³ For this reason, he wrote the screenplay for Zurück auf los with himself in mind for the leading role. The original intention was for Dörrie to direct and she reportedly was enthusiastic to do so, but there were no financial backers forthcoming. Finally, ZDF took it on as part of Das kleine Fernsehspiel, but insisted on a Nachwuchsregisseur. As a result, Dörrie’s directing role was scaled back to a cameo appearance as a kindly dentist, and Sanoussi-Bliss took on the task of directing as well as acting in the main role as Sam, the black, gay, amateur singer of East German popular songs.⁴

Keiner liebt mich is based loosely on figures from Dörrie’s Für immer und ewig. Eine Art Reigen (1991)⁵ and tells the story of Fanny Fink, a lone-some airport security screener, who lives in an older, run-down high rise apartment building on the outskirts of Cologne. Nearing thirty, she has not yet found anything or anyone to make her glad she is alive. She is taking the New-Wave route to achieving some depth in her life by participating in a course on ‘conscious-dying’, including fashioning and sleeping in a coffin. Her skeleton earrings and death’s head jewelry plus her devotion to the color black mark her as a trend follower. However, many of the other occupants of the apartment building appear even more eccentric than Fanny, who

⁴ Jan Keith: Der Assistent.