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Gramling, David  
Ploschnitzki, Patrick

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# Letting the System Completely Absorb Me Would Be So Much Easier:

An Interview with the Novelist-Activist SchwarzRund

Interview by David Gramling

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Translated by Patrick Ploschnitzki

SchwarzRund is a Black Dominican queer femme feminist, active in intersectional education, Black German publishing and spoken word, empowerment around Fatness, Blackness, Queerness, and allyship, and critical media research. In this interview, SchwarzRund speaks about the German publishing world, the role of Black queer presses, the importance of translation and multilingualism in Black German literature, and her experiences in academia at a predominantly white institution, the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. These observations are often threaded through the lens of her 2016 novel *Biskaya*, its three main characters Tue, Matthew, and Dwayne, and the various responses to the novel in Germany. SchwarzRund's novel *Biskaya: An Afropolitan Berlin-Novel* debuted to critical acclaim with zaglossus verlag in 2016. As the novel revolves around various forms of artistic production—music, visual art, poetry, etc.—SchwarzRund's reflections on the novel are also always reflections on the German arts and publishing world in some important way. The interview took place in September 2019, and there was so much laughter throughout that we had to edit most of it out to save space.

The German-language original of this interview appears in William Collins Donahue & Martin Kagel's essay collection, *Die große Mischkalkulation. Institutions, Social Import, and Market Forces in the German Literary Field*. Fink, 2020.

**DAVID GRAMLING:** What are your overall impressions of the Germanophone literary publishing world over recent years?

**SCHWARZRUND:** I have seen a shift recently: For the first time in a while, small presses are seeing a growing interest in their work. In the poetry slam world, a handful of presses are developing new formats to accommodate newly-evolved reader standards. Lyric poetry had been all but dead on the book market. With the sudden huge demand for poetry slam work, the traditional format had to adapt to this pop-cultural phenomenon, resulting in exciting new formats. But these came with yet another reproduction of exclusions: Who (doesn't) get published? From a Black queer perspective, it's difficult. There are just a handful of barely surviving queer presses in Germany: We have Edition Assemblage, zaglossus, and formerly w\_orten & meer. A few presses on the Left try to play their part in opening up the topic too. But with those, you run into the usual issues: Who manages them? Who decides, and what do they eventually publish? There is more Black literature on the German market today, but it targets a white audience, because publications need to attract many readers. The result is a facilitation of knowledge—which I

don't want to brush aside—but it doesn't change anything about what's already available. Black people still don't have any stories that imagine them as an audience—to put in interventionist language, from a theater studies perspective. That's the crux: Presses need to consider what sells. Even if they set out to introduce a Black perspective: white readers are simply the majority. Before a genre can become a festival category, or prizes and stipends are awarded, there must be a critical mass—it's all connected. Consequently, there are no funding structures. I wouldn't even single out and blame the presses. It's a catch-22: Presses can't apply for printing subsidies—there's no funding whatsoever. There's only very slow, phlegmatic progress, *because* agencies are not in the hands of an individual person. There are no clear-cut solutions. Announcing an annual book prize in a category that only saw two publications over the last twenty years doesn't work either. When I talk to young authors, I can't get their hopes up if they're working on a book project that doesn't a) primarily address a white audience, b) explicitly talk about antiracism, or c) present an exotic biography. There's no enemy to fight—it's challenging simply because it's a challenge.

**DG:** That being said, who do you write for, and who do you not write for? How does that affect your style as a writer, and what do you emphasize?

**SR:** At first, I only wrote for myself—or so I thought. I never reflected on my own writing. The first texts I published as SchwarzRund were very explanatory. I don't regret that. I know for a fact that these texts have consequences today. Black people can also make use of explanatory texts: Not because they are learning anything new, but because they can just hand over something they've explained countless times—instead of having to explain it yet again. It can truly be a tool.

The more time I spent in theater—most prominently with Simone Dede Ayivi, a Black theater maker—the more I started to reflect on what I personally watch and read. Noah Sow's *Deutschland Schwarz Weiß* [Germany Black and White] was incredibly important to me when it came out. But that was just one book. I'm not going to read all the other books. I don't see the point: They're not addressed to me. I write for a Black queer audience, but those aren't the only people that might read me. White people also, those who spend a lot of time on Black literature, have a great interest in books that explicitly *do not* address white people. Those books always follow the same structure. I keep saying that racism is boring. May Ayim put it this way: “White stress, Black nerves.” The repetition of isms is so exhausting. From a literary perspective, it's such a boring story to tell. Certainly, racism and Blackness are themes in my writing. I don't write about white people who can just ignore this fact, from their position of privilege. I write for myself, and for people experiencing discrimination more than I do, for instance, because they're not light-skinned.

I need for my novel to get old. It isn't yet, but hopefully soon. The linguistic intervention that I've made, and the way I treat narration—white people are mostly irrelevant here—needs to become simply everyday practice, as measured against how many white people there are in the world versus how many others there are. It's not even about politics exactly. It's about the absurd distribution in what it is we read. If there were an extremely rare tree, and every conceivable book mentioned it, I would hope that someone would finally ask: “Why is that?” There's simply no rhyme or reason to it. That's my motivation to write for a Black audience, without making it less accessible for white people. However, I defy the notion that white people must always be able to understand. That's a colonial

perspective about knowledge, about learning, and how these things work, and I refuse to pursue it any longer; at least not in my art. I didn't understand a lot of things about German when I was a kid. I would ask questions or do my own research when I was older. For all those who migrate, never fully understanding everything about a language is a very basic fact. Wanting to live in a world that always explains everything, in which everything is perfectly prepared for you, is a completely absurd standard. Simply extracting myself from this—not a big step in and of itself—turns my literature into something that's considered radical, when it's really nothing of the sort for most of the world's population.

**DG:** Especially in literature and art, not-understanding is an essential part of the perception process too.

**SR:** But just for white literature! White poets get to perform, and that's it. Every week, I receive two or three requests to read my poetry—and then also to allow the audience to comment and ask their questions. At an art exhibit, they'd never allow people after an hour to correct the image with a sharpie! Whether my knowledge *may* be permitted to be art is always much more debatable than for white writers. Each time, at every single event, I have to plead for them to let me read without a discussion afterwards, even with my novel. White people must always be given the chance to reframe, for better or for worse. Art made by white men doesn't have to be understood. If that's not you, everyone *has to* be able to understand. And 'everyone' really means one very specific group.

**DG:** With your novel *Biskaya: An Afropolitan Berlin-Novel*, you take part in a discourse of Afropolitanism that has been heavily debated in several countries, communities, and publications for at least twenty years. What is the contribution you want to make to this international discussion with your novel? What do you want to do with this idea?

**SR:** It was an honest title. That response seems to disappoint people the most. They ask why I don't give a detailed explanation of the criticism of Afropolitanism. Of course, I know the answer. All I can say is, yes that's correct: Sure, the term once was a positive affirmation, followed by an absolutely justified criticism of classism. Today, we know that the term is important generally, but also in my case for narrating my characters whose lives are in the city. However, I exclude certain perspectives: Black children growing up in Brandenburg, or people who grew up in foster families in the Rhine area. That discourse is absent in my novel. I wouldn't be comfortable describing it because of how distant from my own perspective it is. *Biskaya*'s protagonist Tue is a musician. She makes a good living: She can make artistic decisions without actively having to search for work—my interpretation of Afropolitanism exactly. She thinks about her light-skinnedness: When she shaves her hair, people don't categorize her as Black as much anymore, which feels both good and bad for her. Today, Afropolitanism is a very honest term for specifically urban problems. However, Tue is not a blue-collar worker barely getting by. All I do is use the term genuinely. Apparently, that makes a lot of people angry. I think that's really funny. My background is in gender studies, and I always use words as they're currently defined. I have no emotional connection to their past or potential future. For me, the word "Afropolitan" meant and, three years later, still means "Let's tell a story about Black people in the city". You could even call it "Afroeuropianism": a European perspective on Blackness, with a ring of class privilege, perfectly applies to Tue and Matthew. For Dwayne, however, it's unacceptable.

**DG:** I was less thinking of the critiques around Taiye Selasi's 2005 essay "Bye-Bye Babar" generally, but rather the contribution that you make with the novel itself. How did you want to reimagine that term?

**SR:** Everyone in the novel comes from the fictional island Biskaya. They are either well-educated or make a good living. Showing that there is still a significant wage discrepancy, even in this close-knit perspective among friends, was essential to me. Dwayne's femininity, the xenophobia, the criticism of his overall behavior that he experiences, the cultural codes that are unavailable to him—Afropolitanism doesn't address any of those aspects.

Luckily, today, Blackness is thought of in layers, like *light-skinned* and *dark-skinned*. I wish there were more awareness of culture within Blackness. I'm light-skinned, yet I don't understand many German codes. Maybe I can mimic them—but I didn't grow up with them. Others, who are the same shade as me (or darker) and grew up in an entirely German family may be better at that. I tell that story through Dwayne. Movements and actions entirely natural to him are interpreted as aggressive—that's how Black people's masculinity is seen. In contrast, Tue lives quite comfortably in her world because she's not confronted with having to represent Black masculinity. These are important perspectives to me. Of course, they are all queer-inflected: I have no idea about the hetero-cis world. My perspective is always queer.

**DG:** Considering the use of English in the German text, the design of the novel is multilingual and multimodal. Is that a critical feature for you?

**SR:** It's impossible to avoid from an Afro-German perspective. It comes down to German cultural memory. Not just the wars, but also the history preceding them, i.e., colonialism. There is a very explicit history of the murder of Black bodies, committed by German (i.e., Prussian) agents. We entirely lack descriptive language for that history, because cultural memory disregards us. English is integral to our resistance language, be it a single word or our communication in general. It's our main language: We learn it in school. It's easily adaptable from a U.S.-American context or other anglophone countries on the African continent. Regardless of age and other linguistic preferences, English is highly present in our community. English is universally understood by most. I can express things that simply don't exist (or that are very explicitly occupied) in German, knowing they'll be understood. There's almost no discourse about Black peoples' endurance of very explicit consequences during the Nazi period. I'd have to use the word 'Rasse' to talk about that. Many Jewish communities are perfectly right in rejecting that term. The English term 'race' is much more shaped by Black perspectives. The forgetting of Black suffering in Germany is so strong that I can't even use certain words, because people simply don't associate them with it—and I have to resort to English. Also, much of what it means to be Black comes from the U.S. (Tue reflects on that too). It's a very dogmatic cultural market that expands far and wide. At its center, Black, Afro, and Latinx cultures are crucial.

**DG:** Does that multilingualism disrupt the German literary world in any way? When you propose a text where multilingualism plays a critical role, do you run into challenges? I feel like the German literary world has become more monolingual over the last ten years: Big names in publishing shy away from multiple-language texts because of their presumed (un)translatability.

**SR:** Here's just one example: I have published repeatedly on "femme" and "femmephobia". Yes, it's a French term. But it mainly originated in the U.S. lesbian scene, from where the queer scene brought it to Germany. For one particular article, someone asked me to explain why 'femme' isn't tied *to* a gender, but rather can *be* a gender or a state: why I think of it as an operative term to describe a form of discrimination. In the editing process, I kept rejecting changes made to the article, because some form of gender reappeared with each draft. The linguistic independence of this term was such a disruption! The editors often used 'language' as their main argument: that the word isn't accessible or couldn't be understood by everyone. That's why the article was explaining it! Everything in German is grammatically gendered, and a single pronoun has the power to covertly create cis-sexism. Eventually, they published it in a non-cis-sexist way that didn't use femininity, female pronouns, articles, etc.— but in a series on "*Andere Weiblichkeiten*" [Other Femininities]. And so it was all in vain!

Sometimes, I find words that uphold queerness or a Black perspective, but then I struggle to define them. English is extremely helpful, with its non-gendered grammatical structures, and pronouns like 'they' that are common and available. Words often reveal how deep-seated isms are. The most popular criticism of gender-fluid language is its alleged interference with readability. That's exactly what it needs to do, and to foster change from there. A language of resistance that doesn't bother anybody lacks momentum, as the term already suggests: resistance. It will always bother publishers. But if nobody takes offense, it's not resistance language—and I didn't do my job right. Which is not to say that it wasn't still exhausting anyway.

To return to the question about modality, though, I engage in *Biskaya* with song lyrics and newspaper articles. In these 'thought moments,' I work with first- and third-person perspective. I didn't want the novel to be a first-person narrative. Narrativizing a Black perspective is difficult enough without singularization and dogmatism. I also wanted to add an aspect of neurodiversity; the struggle with your thoughts and constant need to compare and align these thoughts with reality: a dissociation on its broadest spectrum, which correlates with Tue's art. We see her thoughts against the right margin, next to the main text. It slowly slides into the main body, and her thoughts become song lyrics—my way to express that dissociation is that it isn't bad, or ill, *per se*. We all do it. Art is created by the moment, as we shift away from our prevailing perception. We allow the situation to have more meaning than it has, and art happens. Tue's job requires lyrics, but I included them also because the musical genre *Hamburger Schule* [Hamburg School] was extremely formative for me. I love German so much, and it's at its most beautiful when it's sad. Sadness works so very well in German. I mean that. This is my personal love letter to the language—but *Hamburger Schule* takes it to an absurd degree. Tue first remains in this poetic, lyrical form (*Hamburger Schule* lyrics read like poetry) and then tries to find ways to push it into a Black perspective. *Hamburger Schule* is one of the whitest and most masculine genres out there. That's why I wanted to create Tue.

**DG:** In *Biskaya*, you call it 'guy-heavy' [*typenlastig*].

**SR:** And that's an understatement. It's nothing but guys. As soon as non-guys make that music, it's called "singer / songwriter music" or "indie-pop" and is pushed out. That's why saying "Here's Tue, and this is what she does!" mattered to me, at least in this novel. I didn't realize how disruptive that can be until I read

the reviews. For *Biskaya*, I dreamt up an entire fictional island and a different EU-structure: no complaints. But Tues's music couldn't *possibly* be *Hamburger Schule*! That was too much fantasy. An island is fine, but a *woman* playing *Hamburger Schule*? Outrageous!

To my delight, the momentum of resistance clearly worked. I added the musical component to show that you can indeed tell it from that perspective. The first song "Neue Nähe" [New Closeness] is the epitome of *Hamburger Schule*. Music drives the plot forward. I mention Ahmed's character, for example, as a chronological anchor—but the lyrics explain his story and its effect on Tue; how this entanglement of German Black history, beginning with the exploitation of art, embodies a conflict for Tue today. I tell the story in both the main text and in the song lyrics. The lyrics aren't just add-ons, but an integral part of the plot. Newspaper articles, the third genre I insert, allowed me to portray my dislike for journalism: not just the major publications, whose coverage about the situation on Biskaya and the revolutionary conditions there clearly shows how powerfully the media oppress Black people and Black resistance struggles. The article in the fictional *Brandenburg Gate*—you know, that fictional queer magazine that is in no way whatsoever reminiscent of any real queer magazine like *Siegessäule*—also shows that, from a Black queer perspective, white gay cis-men are almost as powerful as white hetero cis-men. I understand the systemic differences, but there's a vast distance in between. One critical moment is when Tue changes the trajectory of her art and breaks up her band. I struggled with how to narrate this from her perspective. While she acts on impulse, it took Tue a long time to arrive to this point. We know it's not an easy decision for her. It is based on an instinct for survival. However, from an external perspective, she ruins the concert. Narrating this critical moment for Tue from the perspective of a queer magazine article that complains about how her hair looks is my attempt to narrate from a white perspective.

**DG:** To what extent, and why, does being—or not being—translated matter to you? And how does that relate to Black queer feminist movement more broadly?

**SR:** English isn't most people's first language, but it's widespread and can mediate in more countries than others. Writing in German immediately denies access. Many who are interested in my book can't read it. And it's not a fun language to learn! Just so you can read a novel? That's asking a lot. The other question is: How do perspectives matter in a global context? U.S.-American Black perspectives are extremely over-represented from a Black diasporic and Black German perspective, and in my case, from a Black Latina perspective. Blackness exists globally, in diverse biographies and struggles, but also in art, for example, and there is a lack of this awareness. I know plenty about Black life in the U.S., but people are surprised that there is Black organizing or Black art here. We have so much great German rap. Take Amewu: what an unbelievable poetic force! I made references to Black music history in Germany in the novel to address this. I mention "Fremd im eigenen Land" [Foreign in my own Country] and artist collectives such as Adriano, Brothers Keepers, and Sisters Keepers to demonstrate that this isn't a fad, but an entire history. Preserving this history as part of cultural memory is almost impossible because we're such a minority. We need the willingness and desire for preservation from outside Black communities because we don't own entire neighborhoods or libraries. We have a total of two Black libraries in all of Germany: Each One Teach One (EOTO) and the Anton Wilhelm

Amo Library. We don't have knowledge communities; we have knowledge individuals. They volunteer for twenty years, and their work vanishes after that. An English translation of my book allows someone to find it and start doing their own research, which introduces potential financial support and something as simple as booking requests being made directly to Black communities. It's also a matter of preserving Black German knowledge. I'm so grateful when there's research on us. It shows us how and where we're relevant.

Black Germanness really means Black German women's history. Women have always been the driving forces, particularly queer women and queer people: the founders of ADEFRA - *Schwarze Frauen in Deutschland*, how ISD came into being (*Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland*) [Initiative of Black People in Germany], or the most relevant books: Those are feminist voices. We don't have a 'Black movement that includes a few feminists.' It's a feminist Black movement including a few men (who aren't exactly feminists). One fascinating aspect of Black German history is that it's still relatively easy to explicitly name these facts. Not always, but it's obvious. Highlighting that it wasn't in fact a cis-man who wrote the first Black queer novel in German (that I know of) is a feminist effort. My writing is not about cis-women. It's about femmes and femmeness, and how these navigate our world. I do so, not to feed my ego, but to represent my motivations. Ironically, we're constantly representing *something*. WoMANtís RANDom published *Rubberband Families* without thinking much about it. Now we realize that it's the first children's book written from a Black trans family perspective. That's why being translated matters, and why *Rubberband Families* is bilingual: for the sake of preserving it.

**DG:** Is translation something that smaller presses, managed from a Black perspective, tend to discuss explicitly? Some authors' agents don't appear to be interested in translation.

**SR:** From what I understand, the problem isn't indifference. The U.S. market demands explicitly that the agency be located in the U.S. An author must first be accepted by a U.S. agency that finances the translation. Publishing an English-language book in Germany is also very difficult: We already have plenty of English literature. There's not much interest here in translating into English because people here know English quite well. In turn, the U.S. market doesn't care at all about reaching out for foreign literature. Looking at the movie industry and musicals—except for *Cabaret*, but that's the only one I can think of!—we see the same effect. There are hardly any European musicals on tour in the U.S. The country is a monolithic force in cultural export, but not exactly well-positioned in import. German-speaking agencies know they barely stand a chance, and U.S. agencies rarely look across the border: There's no overlap. It's not necessarily lack of interest. Readers tend to be ahead of the book industry—it doesn't even deny that. There are plenty of obstacles, considering that the industry can syphon from what's already available. We need a mediator to take European literatures of migration and start soliciting U.S. agencies.

**DG:** As a scholar and researcher yourself, how do you understand the relationship between academia and publishing? How could the solidarity between them be improved? How do you experience this as an academic *and* a writer?

**SR:** Maybe I'm sugarcoating the U.S. situation somewhat, but contemporary literature can be an exam topic there, much more regularly. It's a matter of capacity.



I'm a cultural studies scholar, focusing on gender studies and fields of potential intervention. We lack the appropriate tools to solve problems from an interventionist perspective. At my university, essays are rarely allowed as a form of assessment. In Germany, we have *Hausarbeiten*: the least sexy version conceivable of any academic text. No matter how bad a topic is, *Hausarbeiten* always make it worse. These papers strip a text of its structure and then try to force one back upon it, using countless titles and subchapters with a thesis, antithesis, etc. It's awful!

I write tons of academic papers. If they were to let me write these as essays or articles, I'd have material I could sell. I try to convince as many professors as possible to let me do that. But for many, that's not even an option. You can't sell your *Hausarbeiten* either, which leads to a growing discrepancy. The academy thinks of its writing as more valuable, which is complete nonsense. Knowledge isn't created via a format, but via content and scientific practice—and also not by virtue of an extremely detailed structure. A sentence that positions the reader in the text would be so much more helpful!

This all is extremely problematic for the book industry. You wouldn't believe some of the incredible texts we create in the workshops for Students of Color! But reformatting them into something readable takes forever. I would love to publish my BA thesis on Black queer music videos as a form of intervention. Even though the university mostly let me keep my own format, the text isn't publishable. A shame, because I obviously know how to write books! I could've written it in that format instead. When I handed it in to my advisor, the department head, she praised its quality and readability—which was the problem: It had to sound more academic. I tried to argue against this classist idea of knowledge: I didn't make any mistakes, grammatical, stylistic, or otherwise. Accessibility alone, providing a glossary, was worth criticizing. That glossary, however, was exactly what allowed me to give talks on the piece.

It's extremely difficult to work in this in-between condition. It is constant additional work. Letting the system completely absorb me would be so much easier. Sure, we could vilify academics in their ivory tower, but no one can work double-time over three or four years of education. There's a reason why it has taken me so long to earn my degree. Not to mention how classism excludes students in Germany to begin with: Out of a hundred students, forty have fewer class privileges. One of them gets far enough to earn the doctoral degree. The educational system here filters so much out: Asking BA and MA students to always focus on classism only amplifies it—people even drop out because of that alone. Usually, I'm the bearer of bad news when I tell Black students: "I know it sucks, but please keep going. You can write readable texts later."

**DG:** Is this normative pressure from academics somehow intended to be supportive, with future employment opportunities in mind? Or is it just a sort of autogenesis?

**SR:** The question itself already illustrates the absurdity. The academy shouldn't just prepare students for the academy. Yet, that's exactly what it does. They say you can't sell certain things in academia. So what? Almost none of us end up there. Working in the book industry is much more realistic at the moment. If only I could take journalism classes or write essays! A Bachelor's degree is officially equal to learning a vocation today: In the same vein, not all chefs complete their full training. They can't all cook at a five-star-restaurant level, but many chefs work in

cafeterias and need to focus on speed instead. It's completely absurd that a company that instructs—the university—wants to produce nothing but instructors. No company works like that. That's where that intense ivory tower classism pressure arises. The discourse often projects the accusation onto allegedly classist students. Of course they are! Otherwise, the government won't fund them, and they can't make a living as they work towards their degree. Criticism needs to focus on structure.

**DG:** How do you connect your two identities as researcher / empowerment workshop instructor with your writing / authorship?

**SR:** I try to take advantage of my university. Humboldt Universität, to this day, stores Black people's heads obtained during genocides committed by Germany, refusing to return them. I'm in a place that is very, very explicitly not made for me. My way of dealing with this is hacking: Which resources can I extract and use in the workshop setting? I put in a great deal of knowledge and work in a transdisciplinary way, in order to inhabit this position and to experience it: What is it like to be a Black person in musicology, or in biology? I also hack by using that knowledge in my literature. I redirect my academic research so I can also use it for my upcoming projects. I never pick a suggested topic. I bend them—which is inevitable as a Black scholar anyway, or else I could only work on white topics. It's more work every time, but I try to monetize that work. That can be difficult to grasp for some. A Black person earning less cannot be a critique of capitalism, if it depends on Black work remaining unremunerated. That's a surprisingly difficult thought for white opponents of capitalism. My participatory hacking within academia allows me to make money off of it, instead of just paying for it myself. Not in some abstract future, holding some opaque Master's degree, but asking: How can I monetize and benefit from what I am doing at this very moment?

I've built a moral compass that works as a counterweight to grade inflation, performance pressure, etc. Everybody works that way: We need achievements. A recurring observation in my workshops is that people's incredible determination is held against them: When they only do research on Black topics, the university disapproves. When they give in to the system and have a good career—which I don't judge—they receive criticism for not taking enough of a stance. When they're accomplished, they're called not critical enough of capitalism. A Black person wanting to accomplish something cannot win morally. Knowing that allowed me to grow from a person who had panic attacks in class into one who, today, takes awful classes with a relatively relaxed attitude—because I set different goals for myself. I often clash with faculty, but I try to see it as a connective moment. How can I reflect the interventionist methods I use with workshop attendees who have entirely different experiences? How can I learn to appreciate this and not feel like I'm the only one who gets it? I would be an awful instructor otherwise! You need to be able to take a hit: That's how learning happens. That's how I create complex Black characters. That's why I managed to create three characters in *Biskaya* who handle their Blackness in very different ways—for which I received criticism. People said they couldn't tell which one is right, and I said: Exactly! There's no right way. Each of these characters couldn't have chosen another's path. Tue would've never survived in white structures as long as Matthew did: She would've gone nuts! Matthew could never have expressed a wrong opinion in front of an audience. They're not interchangeable. The strongest Black narratives I can find in books and television are when I notice a Black

character that's so, so different from me, but remains a well-developed character. We can bond over certain moments, but I could never be you. That's when I'm very grateful for the many different areas I work in; because I can't lose myself in my narrow world view. And I even get paid for it sometimes!

**DG:** Would you like to say anything about your next book?

**SR:** No, I'm sorry, that's still a secret. I don't dare say it out loud yet.

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