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# Theatres of Colonialism

Theatricality, Coloniality, and Performance in the  
German Empire, 1884-1914

by

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for the degree of  
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Fig. 1: View from the Independent Museum onto the equestrian statue and the monument of the young African couple. Source: private photograph, Lisa Skwirblies.

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## Declaration of Originality

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where it states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

*L. Skwirblies*

Warwick, September 28, 2017

## Dissertation Abstract

This dissertation investigates the nexus between theatre and colonialism in the German empire between 1884 and 1914. It introduces the concept of colonial theatricality, through which it explores to what extent theatre and colonialism have been productive of each other's orders, knowledge formations, and truth claims. This dissertation thus looks at the empire through its cultural manifestations and its 'representational machinery', specifically the theatre. It provides an understanding of the German colonial empire that goes beyond its territorial, administrative and military strategies. In order to do so, the dissertation discusses a broad set of performances that the German empire brought forth at the turn of the century: popular theatre performances that mediated the colonial project to a domestic audience, amateur theatre societies that staged 'German culture' in the colonies, colonial ceremonies that included repertoires of the settler as well as of the indigenous population, court-hearings of African individuals residing in Germany claiming their rights, and a petition from the former German colony Kamerun charging the German government with crimes against humanity. Beyond the appearance of the colonial project as a topical issue on stage, this dissertation argues for a deeper-seated interdependence between theatre and colonialism, one that can be detected in the dynamics of 'seeing' and 'showing'. Through the concept of colonial theatricality as a particular mode of perception and representation akin to both the theatre and the colonial enterprise, this dissertation suggests a new framework for looking at the entangled histories of metropole and colony in focusing on the empire's ordering truth, its formations, effects, and ambivalences.

## Introduction

The doors of the re-constructed *Hohenzollern* castle, once home of the German emperor and still a symbol of German imperialism, are scheduled to re-open in the heart of Berlin in 2019. It is a project, that has since its beginning been vociferously protested, not only for its revisionist gesture of reconstructing a symbol of monarchy and imperial power in the capital of the Federal Republic today, but mostly for the plans concerning the castle's interior: behind its Prussian façade, the castle will host the so-called *Humboldt Forum*, an homage to the brothers Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, in which Berlin's ethnographic collection encompassing up to 500.000 objects will be housed.<sup>1</sup> The collection and its objects are presented by the curators of the *Humboldt Forum* as evidence of early global trade-relations and intercultural exchange and thus of a proud history of German imperialism. Many critical voices, however, have countered this image by pointing out that the collection largely originated from colonial expansionism and exploitation, and thus consists mainly of stolen goods and traces of Germany's violent and genocidal involvement in European expansionism.

The public discussions about the *Humboldt Forum* have thus brought a long repressed part of German history back into the public debate: between 1884 and 1914, Germany controlled a colonial empire of roughly one million square miles and about twelve million inhabitants with dominions in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.<sup>2</sup> The German empire held three African colonies *Deutsch-Südwest Afrika* ('German

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<sup>1</sup> André Schmitz, secretary of culture of the city Berlin, in answer to a request from the Green Party, June 28, 2013, "Kleine Anfrage".

<sup>2</sup> States today which were either wholly or partly under German control, include Namibia, Tanzania, Togo, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Rwanda, Burundi, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Nauru, China, the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, the Federate States of Micronesia, and Western Samoa (Hamann 14).

South-West Africa' today Namibia and parts of Botswana), *Deutsch-Ost Afrika* ('German East Africa' today parts of Tanzania, Burundi, and Rwanda), and *Deutsch-Westafrika* ('German West Africa' today parts of Cameroon, Nigeria, and Togo). From these only German East Africa and German South-West Africa were conceived as settler colonies. German West Africa, as well as the colonies in Papua New Guinea, West Samoa, and the German colony *Kiautschou* (Jiaozhou) at the coast of China, were designed as trading and military posts and never attracted a larger German civil population. With the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the First World War the German colonies became League of Nations mandates and later divided between the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, and Japan.

Despite its comparatively short period of actual colonial rule the German colonial empire had a long lasting impact on the societies which it colonised and applied a particular violent and even genocidal warfare. In particular, postcolonial theorists have over the past two decades increasingly countered the image of the German colonial empire as marginal and without repercussions (Dhawan and Varela 2015). Namibian historian Memory Biwa has in this regard voiced the criticism that "German colonisation and genocide in Namibia are often presented as forgotten history, yet these are some of the most commemorated historical processes in Namibia by various communities" (7). Scholarship today also increasingly emphasises the presence and pervasiveness of the colonial enterprise with regard to its impact on the imperial society of Germany and the formation of a national German identity at the end of the nineteenth century. This manifests especially in the so called 'cultural turn'<sup>3</sup> within the historiographical scholarship on German colonialism. These works argue that the colonial empire did not only manifest in

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<sup>3</sup> For the most recent and most relevant scholarship on the cultural and popular renderings of German colonialism in the field of historiography see: Eley and Naranch 2014, Bowersox 2013, Short 2012, Ciarlo 2011, Langbehn 2010, Brehl 2007, Van der Heyden and Zeller 2002, Honold and Simons 2002, Cooper and Stoler 1997, Thode-Arora 1989.

military strategies and administrative labour, but needs to be understood in its cultural formations and in its epistemologies as well. Historian Ciraj Rassool (2015) argues in this regard: “Empire can (...) be understood productively – beyond its territorial, spatial and geopolitical conventions – as the primary epistemology of modernity expressed through its ‘representational machines’ and institutions” (Rassool 653). Other scholars have argued similarly and described turn-of-the-century Germany through its “thriving culture of colonial engagement” (Ciarlo 39) that testifies to the fact that “the conquest of the colonies went hand in hand with the colonisation of the visual and conceptual world in the ‘motherland’” (Zeller 80). Historian Jeff Bowersox (2013) even argues for a German “mass colonial culture” at the time (8), and Geoff Eley (2014) posits that,

from the propaganda of the Colonial Society and the Navy League, through the literary and visual landscape of newspapers, magazines, pulp literature, postcards, schoolbooks, and all the new paraphernalia of advertising and mass marketing, to the public spectacles of museums, Völkerschauen, films, slide shows, exhibits, and congresses, the public sphere of the late Kaiserreich was saturated with the citations of colonialism overseas. (Eley 20)

Interestingly, in Eley’s list, as in most of the scholarly work on German colonialism’s cultural manifestations, one major aspect of the ‘representational machinery’ is missing: the theatre. This has been criticised by theatre historian Christopher Balme, who points out in his book *Pacific Performances* (2007) that evidence of colonialism is usually “almost exclusively textual, only occasionally iconographic and almost never performative” (Balme 96). Balme argues that this is particularly problematic by pointing out that colonialism “acted on bodies more directly than it did on texts, and bodies responded to these impositions more often in performance than they did in writing” (Balme 96). A focus on primarily textual

sources thus runs the risk of excluding knowledges that are embodied, and materialise in performance, gesture, orature, dance, and movement. It also runs the risk of perpetuating the idea that conflates ‘reliable’ sources with the notion of the ‘document’, a perspective that has since long affected the writing of Africa’s histories, as theatre scholar Yvette Hutchison argues (*Introduction* xii).

From within the field of theatre and performance studies this dissertation shows that the German empire brought forth a rich set of performances both on and off the theatre stage. Popular theatres represented the latest news from the colonial project on their metropolitan stages and added either to the acceptance of the colonial enterprise or fuelled articulations of anti-colonial critique. Amateur plays written for war-associations and naval societies offered scripts of skits and farces with colonial content that could be easily staged on official occasions. The annual celebrations of the Emperor’s birthday in the German colonies produced a mixed repertoire of performances by the local population and the settlers that was repeated each year and in each colony in a similar way, performing the image of imperial unity. Ethnographic exhibitions, like the German *Völkerschauen*, panoptica, and freak-shows displayed objects and peoples from ‘overseas’ in the imperial metropolises while capitalising on an imperial desire for the exotic and the new. In other words, the German empire made good use of its ‘representational machinery’ of which theatre and its order of ‘watching’ and ‘showing’ was an important and integral part. I argue in this dissertation that a distinctive theatre and performance perspective offers a fruitful intervention into the existing scholarly discourses on the historiography of German colonialism. It allows for a better understanding of the microphysics of colonial rule, which forces us, according to Stoler, “to rethink what we think we know about the arenas of colonialism’s macropolitics” (Stoler, *Carnal* 16). Rather than understanding ‘empire’ only through its military, economic, and

political structures, an investigation of its performative practices and cultural archives can thus help to understand empire in its epistemologies, in its social practices, discourses, and ways of knowing. While these epistemes may not represent the ‘common sense’ of the German imperial society at large, they can give us an indication of the truth claims and the techniques of meaning making through which the German colonial empire attempted to justify and maintain its power. I therefore understand theatre and performance in its larger meaning, encompassing not only stage performances but also cultural performances, like colonial ceremonies, court-hearings, or public acts of protest.

Besides filling the apparent blindspots with regard to the theatre in the scholarship on the cultural history of German colonialism, this dissertation also intervenes in the field of theatre historiography and offers a new framework for the historiographical scholarship of German theatre. Whereas an increasing number of studies on the history of nineteenth century German theatre have focused on the relation between theatre and the process of nation-building, few of these studies take into account that Germany became not only a nation in the second half of the nineteenth-century (1871), but a colonising nation as well (1884). With regard to the insight that German history did not “unfold solely within the boundaries of the nation state”, as historian Sebastian Conrad (2010) posits, this dissertation asks how far turn-of-the-century German theatre had been productive of colonialism’s order, knowledge formations, and truth claims. In drawing on Ann McClintock (1995) argument that “imperialism and the intervention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity” (5), this dissertation considers the colonial project of the German empire not as external to the formation of German national identity and to its cultural and theatrical ‘modernity’, but rather constitutive of it. Central to this

dissertation is the argument that ‘modernity’<sup>4</sup> and ‘coloniality’ have to be considered as two sides of the same coin. In other words, the dissertation engages with German theatre history in a new way by interconnecting theatre and performance studies with questions from post-colonial theory and cultural studies. It also aims at contributing to current transnational approaches within theatre historiographical scholarship by reintroducing questions of colonial hegemony and colonial legacies to the latter and thus challenge apolitical celebrations of mobility and flow. I therefore not only ask with this dissertation to what extent theatre and performance have been productive of colonialism’s knowledge-formation, order, and truth claims, but also investigate the impact that the German colonial project had on the society of the imperialists.

The choice of case studies engaged in this dissertation has been based on genre rather than on geographical location. However, I made the decision to limit the geographical scope of this dissertation to examples from Germany’s African colonies, and here to a particular focus on case studies from Namibia and Cameroon. This specific focus is partly due to practical considerations with regards to available and accessible source material as well as due to content related considerations with regard to already existing scholarship on the relation between theatre and colonialism. For instance, for the context of the German colonies in the Pacific (Samoa and New Guinea with adjacent islands) the nexus of theatre and performance has already been apprehensively analysed by Balme in *Pacific Performances* (2007). No similar comprehensive study exists for the nexus of theatre and colonialism in the context of Germany’s former African colonies and their relation to the metropole yet and this dissertation aims at filling this gap in scholarship. The strong focus on Namibia in this dissertation is due to the fact German South-West Africa was the

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<sup>4</sup> I will discuss both concepts, modernity and coloniality, in more depth later in this introduction and refer especially to the concept ‘modernity’ here as culturally and historically constructed rather than reproducing the idea of one modernity that originated in Europe.

most prominent settler colony in the empire and thus generated most of the interest in the metropole for the colonial project at large, which materialised in multiple cultural and artistic references and representations. A research-visit to Namibia, moreover, allowed me to consult the colonial archive on site and introduced me to rich source material on the colonialist's amateur theatre societies in former German South-West Africa, as discussed in the third chapter. The similar rich archival material on the Akwa case discussed in the second chapter allowed to focus a whole chapter on the anti-colonial struggles in the former colony Cameroon.

The strong focus of this dissertation on references and examples that focus on the impact that the colonial project had on the metropole is partly due to my own limitations in terms of language skills and academic education but also based on the conviction that this is still an under researched field. This, however, leaves me with an unresolved discrepancy between the large amount of textual evidence from the imperial archive, and thus the large number of voices from the metropole, and the comparatively small number of indigenous voices from the colonies. As I will explain in more depth later in this introduction, I try throughout this dissertation to acknowledge this discrepancy and wherever possible challenge a European framework by foregrounding the African perspective. In focussing on the impact that the colonial project had on the metropole and the imperialists I propose a new methodological framework that highlights the interdependences and dynamics between metropole and colony rather than thinking the colonial project as a 'oneway street', or as having taken place only 'overseas'. I hope to contribute new insights to the extent to which the German empire, its civil societies, legal systems, and modes of representation have been influenced by the colonial project and to show that the German colonial empire and especially its orders and truth claims were less stable and all-encompassing as its discourse wants us to believe.

The scope of this dissertation, as described above, is in this regard also based on the conviction that in order to achieve deeper seated epistemological shifts in the ways that the colonial past is commemorated, redressed, and discussed today, one needs to also critically revisit the imperialist legacies of some of the contemporary modes of representation and patterns of perception in the metropole. In this endeavour I am standing on the shoulders of multiple, relentless activists, who have been fighting what is often called Germany's 'colonial amnesia' and have been lobbying for an inclusion of colonial history into the larger discourses of German national history and commemoration. In the early 1980s, for instance, Afro-German<sup>5</sup> women started to research their own history, and with that laid the foundation for a critical history of the presence of black people and People of Color in Germany.<sup>6</sup> Their studies have shown, amongst many other things, that the presence of black people and People of Color in the German variety theatres and film industry can be directly linked to the history of colonialism and migration, but also that an African diaspora can be traced back in the German speaking countries long before the consolidation of the German empire. More recently, the redress of the effects of Germany's colonial history has won a renewed momentum with the official recognition by the German government of the genocide on the people of the Herero committed by German colonial soldiers in the former colony South-West Africa in 1904. That this official recognition of the extermination of up to eighty percent of the Herero population was finally released by the German government is due to the relentless activism and lobbying of Herero activist groups in Germany and the grass-roots work of initiatives like *Africa Avenir* and *Initiative Schwarzer Menschen in*

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<sup>5</sup> This is a term by which the community of Germans with African heritage describe themselves. Another self-description is People of Color (PoC). For a critical discussion of the term Afro-German see Oguntoye 1992 and 1997. For a critical discussion of the term People of Color in the German context see Nghi Ha 2016 and 2009.

<sup>6</sup> See Ayim 1992, Oguntoye et.al. 1992, Oguntoye 1997, Arndt et.al. 2005.

*Deutschland* [‘Initiative of Black People in Germany’]. Despite the fact that the acknowledgement did not encompass an official apology and that the different Herero communities are still waiting for an actual restitution, it gave visibility to the violent and genocidal character of Germany’s colonial past and provoked a larger discussion on the colonial legacies and neo-colonial renderings of public institutions like museums and ethnographic collections, as well as the structural exclusion of Afro-Germans and People of Color from representative functions in German cultural and political institutions. Humbled by the longstanding activism of the aforementioned initiatives, as well as by the personal initiative of many individuals that might go unnoticed, this dissertation hopes to offer, a small contribution to the ongoing struggles of the present of redressing Germany’s colonial past.

To summarise, at the centre of this dissertation is the inquiry as to how far theatre and colonialism in the German empire were productive for each other, and for the formation of a German imperial self-understanding. Some of the most pivotal research questions are: To what extent was theatre a site of formation of the German colonial empire? To what extent was it a site of resistance and a mode of subversion? How was theatre productive of colonial order, of its knowledge formations and modes of subjectivisation, and how far did it challenge the latter? What were the ways in which the colonial project impacted modes of theatrical representation in the metropole and in the colony? To what extent were certain forms of theatre and performance shaped by colonial encounters or used to navigate and control the latter?

It is important to note here, that throughout this dissertation I do not understand subject positions like ‘black’ and ‘white’, ‘European’ and ‘African’, or ‘bourgeois’ and ‘proletarian’ as stable references but as constructed and transformative. In fact, a major part of the work in this dissertation will be precisely to show how these categories were constructed and transformed, in what kind of

constellations they impacted and informed one another, and how their construction had material consequences for those represented by it. It is similarly important to stress that the concept ‘race’ is not understood as a biological fact but also as a socially constructed category. Neither do I understand theatre (nor colonialism) as a universal category, but as a historically specific and dynamic category. In the following I will therefore sketch out some of the socio-political conditions for the formation of a vivid popular theatre scene in turn-of-century Germany.

One year was decisive for some fundamental changes in the theatrical landscape in nineteenth-century Germany: in 1869 the law for the freedom of trade (*Gewerbefreiheit*) was ratified, which diversified and changed the German theatre scene profoundly. The new law replaced the old system of privileges (*Privilegensystem*) with a more transparent and codified system for the distribution of theatre concessions (Kotte 2013; Fiebach 2015). The old distinction of *Hoftheater* (court theatre)<sup>7</sup> and *Vorstadtbühne* (suburban theatre) was now replaced by the distinction between ‘theatre’ and ‘variety theatre’ (Lazardzig 2015). The difference between these licences was moreover based on a normative distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art, a distinction, that did, for instance, not exist in the theatre-concession-system of the UK at that time. It is a distinction that informs the German theatre-system until today in its state-subsidised economic structure as well as in its aesthetic discourse on *Kunsttheater* (theatre of art) and *Unterhaltungstheater* (theatre of entertainment). Contrary to the bourgeois *Kunsttheater*, this new burgeoning variety-theatre scene showed an especially marked affinity for the colonial project, as

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<sup>7</sup> In the eighteenth century, theatre ensembles formed increasingly around German courts due to financial incentives proposed by individuals of the German court nobility. In this way court theatres emerged with performances that were not only accessible for the staff of the court but also for the more prosperous parts of the German bourgeoisie. Only in 1918/19 were most of the *Hoftheater* remodeled into city- and state-theatres. For more, see Daniel 1995.

I argue in this dissertation. Advertisements of popular theatre repertoires mention ‘colonial burlesques’, ‘colonial pantomimes’, or ‘colonial farces’ at the turn of the century indicating that the addition ‘colonial’ seemed to have promised commercial success in the German empire.

Theatre historian Peter Jelavich describes this ‘affinity’ for colonialism in his book *Berlin Cabaret* (1993) as ‘support’ for colonialism. While this might be true for some specific cases, the different case studies I found in the archives with the topical issue ‘colonialism’ represented the colonial topic in more complex ways than simple propaganda. In many of these performances the colonial project appeared topical and as a means through which socio-political issues in the German empire could be displayed and satirically negotiated, as I show in more depth in the first chapter. Those issues were based on the experience of deep-reaching social transformations that German society had undergone in the second half of the nineteenth-century, like modernisation, urbanisation, and industrialisation, as theatre historian Peter Marx (2008) argues in his book *Ein Theatralisches Zeitalter* (‘A Theatrical Century’). He pivots that the popular theatres were the privileged place for processing these transformations. This was the case, according to P. Marx, because the popular stages created a feeling of belonging precisely *because of* and not *despite* capitalising on the new forms of farce and operetta (P. Marx 204). The colonial project thus appeared in these repertoires, as I will show in the first chapter, as a means through which these social and cultural transformations could be negotiated without running the danger of being censored. Often, then, the ‘African’ characters and the ‘African’ landscape had to serve as the backdrop against which the political situation in the metropole could be criticised.

That the representation of the colonial project in the imperial metropole was by no means stable, but rather changed over the years and according to the events

‘overseas’, becomes most clear in the wake of the rising number of colonial military conflicts at the beginning of the twentieth century. From 1889 to 1909, historians note 77 military interventions in the colony German East Africa, 101 in Cameroon and 7 in German South-West Africa (Schulte-Varendorff 2007). This high number of military conflict awakened the Germans “from their dreams that the Africans would submit to their fate and would offer no resistance to the increasing loss of their land”, as historian Jürgen Zimmerer has argued (*Genocide in South-West* 42). Next to the representation of the colonial project as a ‘lost paradise’ full of exoticism and sexual innuendos, images of armed colonised people and burning farm-houses circulated in the German public sphere. The depiction of the colonial wars thus went side by side with an ostentatious avoidance of depicting the violence of the colonisers.

Interesting, in this regard, is the argument of historian Tobias Becker (2014), that the popular theatre around 1900 functioned as a hinge between press and entertainment in Germany. He refutes the idea that the beginning of the twentieth century marks the demise of the medium of theatre due to the rise of film and photography. Instead, he argues that at the end of the nineteenth century, theatre developed parallel to the transformation of the press into an ‘international mass press’, into a medium of entertainment that attracted a mass audience throughout all the classes and thus, similar to the press, reached a large range of people (Becker 21). This is shown, for instance, in the colonial pantomime with which Circus Busch opened its new season in Berlin 1904. The pantomime depicted the crucial battle in the war against the Herero in the former colony South-West Africa, and will be discussed in more detail in the first chapter of this dissertation. The fact that the pantomime represented the battle in the metropole only four weeks after the actual battle had taken place in the colony, and the fact that the colonial pantomime played twice daily over two years encompassing up to 4000 spectators, supports the idea

that popular theatres in some cases took on a function similar to the press. In other words, whereas colonial propaganda by institutions such as the German Colonial Society were explicitly political and calculated, commercial entertainment processed the colonial topic without a unified agenda or clear political intention. The popular renderings of colonialism thus allow a different access into understanding how the German domestic audience made sense of the colonial project, an access that the colonial (colonialist) archive cannot offer in the same way. This is an important point that this thesis tries to make, in highlighting the importance and usefulness of popular sources for the research on German imperial history, as well as redeem the usually dismissed history of the popular stages as an intricate part of a larger history of the German theatre.

That these new theatre stages grew as part of an international circuit of popular theatres has been stressed by different scholars (Baumeister 2005; Becker 2014; Fiebach 2015). Becker, for instance, shows, the new popular theatres in the German empire were adapting and adopting play texts and music scores from England and America, as well as importing the latest theatre fashions from Paris and Vienna (3). The famous *Metropol-Theater* in Berlin adopted its annual revues from the Parisian model and Circus Busch's spectacular pantomimes had their antecedents in the early French theatre circuses. Both examples feature prominently in the first chapter of this dissertation. Becker's study scrutinises the development of Germany's 'theatrical modernity' as strongly influenced by other modernities overseas, namely those of America, France, and England (3). Historian David Ciarlo (2011), however, argues in his study on the development of the German advertisement industry, that beyond the orientation towards New York, Paris, Vienna and London, it was "the colonial power and the racial otherness of Africans" that functioned as "touchstones around which sectors of German society could orient their engagement with

modernity” (20). I take Ciarlo’s observation as an invitation to ask a similar question for the development of Germany’s theatrical ‘modernity’ at the time: How did the colonial power and the racial otherness of Africans impact on the burgeoning popular theatre scene in the empire? Is it a coincidence that it was this new theatre scene that showed the highest number of colonial-informed performances and plays, or can we detect a deeper rooted relation between a growing colonial enthusiasm and the popular theatres?

In order to understand the potential impact that the colonies and the colonial project might have had on the formation of the popular theatre scene, we need to understand what the highly diverse scene of variety or popular theatres actually had in common. Theatre historian Jane R. Goodall (2002) suggests that we can understand popular theatres through their “grounds of appeal”, which she defines as “humor, variety, eroticism and surprise” (Goodall 8). For the German context, literature scholar Jonathan Wipplinger (2011) suggests taking a fifth category into consideration as a ground of appeal: ‘race’. He argues in his article “The Racial Ruse: On Blackness and Blackface Comedy in ‘fin-de-siècle’ Germany” that a particular German understanding of ‘blackness’ was formed in and by the new urban entertainment institutions. That these new theatres were defined by laughter and comedy is not accidental, according to Wipplinger. He points to an entry in *Meyer’s Konversations-Lexikon* from 1896, where one finds three different examples for the definition of the term *Komisch* (‘comical’), which show the close relation between a particular German understanding of ‘blackness’ and a German understanding of the comical. The three different examples tell,

of someone who trips, but who had first appeared to be quite secured in his gait; of the laughter of children and the uneducated in experiencing things beyond their

comprehension; and finally of the experience of seeing a black person for the first time. (Wipplinger 463)

Even more revealing is a text by psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin from 1885 *Zur Psychologie des Komischen* ('On the Psychology of the Comical'), which Wipplinger quotes. Here, the lowest form of comedy, the *Anschauungskomik* ('visual comedy') is described with the following example: "The farmer laughs about the negro, whom he sees for the first time; he laughs about the circus rider and the ballerina, impressions to which we have already gotten used to" (cit. in Wipplinger 463, transl. by me). This definition of the comical positions 'blackness' in the urban space and in the realm of urban entertainment. The farmer's laughter at the black man is possible, as Kraepelin seems to argue, because of the display of black people in the metropole's ethnographic exhibitions and 'human zoos', but also because of a growing presence of African and African American performers in the circus and other variety stages. The fact that it is a farmer who laughs about the black man points moreover to a city/countryside divide, which is emphasised by the suggestive 'we' in Kraepelin's definition. The urban 'we' has already become accustomed to blackness, while the rural farmer is not yet accustomed to it. The experience of blackness is thus linked in the definition of the comical to the urban space and to popular culture.

The material and real life consequences of Kraepelin's linkage between blackness and the comical for a black man are revealed in yet another theory of the comical. Psychologist Theodor Lipps, who also uses the example of the farmer seeing a black man for the first time in his text *Komik und Humor* ('Comedy and Humor') from 1898, argues that "the farmer's laughter is the result of a dialectic of worth and worthlessness, of humanity and non-humanity, of 'white' and 'black'" (Wipplinger 464). The combination of black skin and a human body is, according to

Lipps, for children and farmer an unexpected combination, which leads both children and farmer to make the assumption that someone who is both black and human deserves human dignity as all human beings. Contrary to Kraepelin's thesis, however, Lipps suggest that as soon as this impression becomes a custom, the combination of black skin and human body becomes comical because "the farmer's consciousness must now reinterpret black skin as blackface mask, as a superficial coating of blackness over white skin" (Wipplinger 465). Lipps' understanding of blackness as comical and of blackness and humanity as contradictory is clearly based on the assumed fact that whiteness and humanity are synonymous. Wipplinger argues that both examples of the farmer signal how blackness functioned as "racial ruse" in German under which racial identities became "untethered": "[F]or the farmer, if not for Lipps, the question remains as to whether the humanity of the black man is valid or whether he is a phony, a blacked-up white man" (Wipplinger 465). It speaks to the threat of blurry racial boundaries to German identity at the time as well, as to a bourgeois 'we' that is anxious to master the challenges of urban life.

With regard to the depiction of race on the variety stages, Wipplinger's study is thus compatible with P. Marx's aforementioned argument of the unifying character of the popular stages in terms of ethnicity. On the grounds of both studies, I will argue that 'the comical' as a defining feature of popular theatre had less of a subversive function (as it, for example, can have in carnival according to Mikhail Bakhtin's famous thesis<sup>8</sup>) but rather worked affirmatively for a white German audience. The material and life-threatening consequences that this idea of blackness as a 'racial ruse' had for People of Color and people from African countries residing in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century will be discussed in more detail in the second chapter of this dissertation.

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<sup>8</sup> See Bakhtin 1941.

Whereas Wipplinger argues that these popular theatres can be understood as connoting spaces “outside of the traditional parameters of bourgeois cultural consumption” (Wipplinger 458), I suggest that they rather signal the porousness of these traditional parameters at the turn of the century. As Jelavich explains, the umbrella term ‘variety theatre’ or ‘popular theatre’ encompassed different forms of vaudeville halls. While some vaudeville halls were no more than a raised stage in a pub or restaurant, others were large commercial entertainments with the capacity to seat over a thousand spectators. However, most of the vaudeville halls “were neither cheap *Tingeltangel* nor extravagant establishments, but simply regular theatres that hosted variety shows” (Jelavich 21). It was exactly this which worried part of the German bourgeoisie and theatre critics, that by the turn of the century “vaudeville was becoming so popular that it was driving conventional dramatic theatre out of business” (Jelavich 21). While a broad sector of the German middle-class had looked down on these new theatres, by the turn of the century they had been “won over by its popular theatricality”, as Jelavich posits (21). I therefore agree with historian Marline Otte (2006), who argues that the expanding urban and popular culture openly challenged “the boundaries of the bourgeois ideal of *Bildung* (self-formation)” (Otte 6). With the increase of leisure time, more and more Germans sought out live entertainment like theatre and circus for amusement and distraction, and the sites of popular entertainment offered space accessible to “both women and men, working class and middle class, society’s insider and outsider” (Otte 13).

However, *Bildung* and colonial entertainment were not mutually exclusive at this time. This is shown in the many examples of the growing number of ethnographic exhibitions, and the so-called *Völkerschauen*, the most celebrated form in late nineteenth century Germany (Thode-Arora 1989). These shows were popular all over Europe and were run by businessmen like the famous Carl Hagenbeck in

Hamburg. Although an explicit connection between the colonies and the *Völkerschauen* was not typical – Hagenbeck produced only three shows with peoples from German colonies<sup>9</sup> - the shows played an important part in the ‘codification’ of the colonial project.<sup>10</sup> *Völkerschauen* and the popular theatre partook in a vivid exchange with each other. The exhibitions were certainly influenced in their dramaturgy and scenography by existing theatre conventions and techniques. Likewise, the popular theatres adapted their repertoires to the exotic sensibility and spectatorial pleasure that the *Völkerschauen* had stirred in the metropolitan audience of the time. They are a pertinent example of “how closely colonialism, entertainment, and edification could be intertwined” as historian John Philip Short (2012) shows in his book *Magic Lantern Empire* (90). Hence, the popular colonial performances debunk the idea that the colonial project was embedded in a very particular discourse, which is in scholarship commonly understood as the discourse of colonial bourgeois enthusiasts insisting on a “univocal, controlled, expert discourse” (Short 17). While Short admits that the colonial discourse of the nineteenth century indeed originated “in the public sphere of bourgeois associational and institutional life”, it was from the 1890s onwards increasingly refracted by a burgeoning mass culture and popular entertainment (17).

Those ephemeral and popular forms of colonial knowledge and colonial representation were often met by a bourgeois discourse of ‘colonial enlightenment’, as Short argues, which aimed at educating ‘the masses’ about colonialism and, by that, controlling the ways in which the colonial enterprise was represented and mediated in the metropole (19). As I will argue especially in the first and third

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<sup>9</sup> Those were the Duala-exhibition from Cameroon (1886) and two exhibitions with peoples from Samoa (1889 and 1910), see Short (88).

<sup>10</sup> Although there are no definite numbers, Rainer Lotz indicates in his article *The Black Troubadours* (1990) that Hagenbeck’s Singhalese exhibition in Berlin attracted 60.000 visitors “on a single Sunday” in 1885 and an exhibition of the Oglala-Sioux in Hamburg in 1910 had 1,100,000 visitors (Lotz 255). For a more general discussion of the *Völkerschauen* see Thode-Arora 1989.

chapter of this dissertation, this discourse of ‘colonial enlightenment’ shares a lot of similarities with the discourse of eighteenth century theatre reformers. The image of the ‘ideal German settler’, propagated by colonial officials and bourgeois colonial enthusiasts, echoes many features of the image of the ‘ideal spectator’ as formulated by Enlightenment theatre reformers.

What I want to show through this comparison is that the nexus of theatre and colonialism does not only materialise in the representation of the colonial project on stage, but that in some cases their discourses and disciplining practices intertwined off stage. More than a site of representation, the theatre had to offer to the colonial project its order of perception, techniques of disciplining the body, and a spatial logic of distance and proximity between those bodies which watch and those bodies which perform. In other words, beyond the fact that the popular theatres in turn-of-the-century Germany successfully mediated and represented the colonial enterprise, and were thus productive of colonial knowledge formation and processes of meaning making, I argue that the interdependence of theatre and colonialism can also be found on a deeper-seated level, in the dynamics of ‘showing’ and ‘seeing’, which is akin to the logic of both theatricality and coloniality. I will refer to this dynamic in this dissertation as ‘colonial theatricality’.

Theatricality, as has often been mentioned, is a term that is not easily definable. Theatre historians Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait open their edited collection *Theatricality* (2003) with the insight: “One thing, but perhaps only one, is obvious: the idea of theatricality has achieved an extraordinary range of meanings, making it everything from an act to an attitude, a style to a semiotic system, a medium to a message” (1). What most theatre scholars, however, agree on today is that theatricality is a historically specific category and must be studied differently

according to each age and culture: “Just as theatre changes, so theatricality changes” (Davis and Postlewait 27). Another important paradigm in the scholarship of theatricality has been the emphasis on the role of the spectator, or rather on processes of perception. The study of sociologist Elizabeth Burns (1972) has in this sense been ground-breaking. Burns opened up the term theatricality from its narrow reference to theatre as an art institution to phenomena of everyday life. She posits that theatricality needs to be understood not as a quality inherent to things or people, but as a mode of perception, which renders things, people, and places theatrical.

This idea of theatricality as a mode of perception has been picked up by many scholars afterwards. Theatre scholar Josette Féral, for instance, in her special edition of the journal *SubStance* (2002) attests to a certain doubleness to theatricality, that manifests in the “‘play of ambivalence’ that relates performances to perceiver” (cit. in Davis and Postlewait 27). This relational character of theatricality manifests as “a *process* that has to do with a ‘gaze’ that postulates and creates a distinct, virtual space belonging to the other, from which friction can emerge” (cit. in Davis and Postlewait 28). In Féral’s definition, theatricality thus results from the spectator’s act of recognition and has a distance-enabling effect in that it allows the spectator to create “an ‘other’ space, no longer subject to the laws of the quotidian, and in his (sic!) space, he inscribes what he observes, perceiving it as belonging to a space where he has no place except as external observer” (Féral 105).

This mode of perception, of rendering something theatrical in the act of perceiving, has also been referred to as ‘enframing’. Around whom or what we actually place the ‘frame of theatrical apprehension’, as Balme calls it, is determined by a combination of “aesthetic conventions and discursive practices” (*Pacific* 5). The epistemological consequences that such modes of ‘framing’ can have for those finding themselves inside of the frame (or outside of it) has been scrutinised in

political and critical theories. With regard to claims for redistribution and justice, Nancy Fraser (2005) has stressed the political economy of the frame. She argues that the idea of the frame in the grammar of justice renders visible “that no claim for justice can avoid presupposing some notion of representation, implicit or explicit, insofar as none can avoid assuming a frame” (Fraser 78). All claims of recognition and redistribution thus, according to Fraser, rely inherently on representation.

Judith Butler discusses in her book *Frames of War* (2009) the figure of the frame also in its political impact, but chooses a rather ontological angle. She argues that frames (in the form of discursive as well as visual phenomena) work to differentiate the lives we can apprehend from those we cannot. Certain kinds of lives will appear in the field of perceptual representation as more precarious and more ‘grievable’ when lost than others. This “differential power at work” distinguishes “between those subjects who will be eligible for recognition from those who will not”, as Butler argues (138). We can thus, according to Butler, not refer to life outside of the frame. Rather, life is produced through and by these epistemological frames. This becomes most obvious when looking at theatricality in relation to colonialism.

The phenomenon of colonial theatricality has been most famously described by Edward Said in his seminal study *Orientalism* (1978). Here, Said describes the epistemological consequences of colonial theatricality for the concept of ‘the Orient’:

The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. (Said 63)

In pointing out the intimate relation between theatrical representation and colonialism, Said shows that the idea of ‘the Orient’ relies on a mode of representation akin to the theatre. Theatre functions here as a metaphor, as a means to emphasise the constructedness of an imaginary region called ‘the Orient’. The spectator is in this comparison ‘the West’, who through aesthetic conventions and discursive practices renders ‘the East’ into a stable and fixed image for her own pleasure or interest. Balme has pointed out that Said’s conception of theatricality is both metaphorical and metonymical (*Pacific* 96). The metaphorical use of theatre references echoes the old trope of the *teatrum mundi*, in the sense that of ‘all the East is a stage’. The metonymical use of theatre references can be found in Said’s description of the figures that stand in for the whole of the East.

In its principle of ‘pars pro toto’ and in its “penchant to circumscribe and contain”, metonymy is a discursive strategy symptomatic of colonial discourse, as Balme argues (*Pacific* 97). Metonymical theatricality stages cultures, countries, or ethnic groups “by a finite set or mostly recurrent props, costumes, and corporeal signs”, (Balme, *Pacific* 97-98). This allows a limited and recognisable repertoire to evolve, through which other cultures can be represented. In colonial modes of display and representation, like the so called *Völkerschauen*, for instance, the display of ‘exotic people’ had a clear metonymic function. The display of an ‘African village’ and staged re-creations of cultural performances, such as cooking, making fire, nursing a baby, as well as dances and rituals, functioned as ‘stand-ins’ for that culture as a whole. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has argued in her book *Destination Culture* (1998):

Semiotically, live displays make the status of the performer problematic, for people become signs of themselves. We experience a representation, even when the representers are themselves. Self-representation is representation nonetheless.

Whether the representation essentializes (...) or totalizes (...), the ethnographic fragment returns with all the problems of capturing, interfering, constituting, and presenting the whole through parts. (55)

Live displays, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett further argues, often disguise their representational character and capitalise on “the effect of authenticity, or realness” (55). Theatricality and authenticity were thus not mutually exclusive but rather often working hand in hand in colonial discourse and modes of representation.<sup>11</sup> As Davis and Postlewait argue, the distinction “between the natural (or the real) and the theatrical (or the artificial)” has a long history in the discourse of aesthetics, and “almost invariably carries a moral as well as an aesthetic judgment, with the idea of the natural serving, of course, as the positive pole in the equation” (Davis and Postlewait 17).

I argue in this dissertation, that this distinction served the differentiation of bodies along the lines of ‘race’ in the German metropole at the turn of the century (Chapter Two). I base this argument on the figure of the ‘black imposter’, which appeared as a discursive strategy at the turn-of-the-century Germany and links blackness to modes of acting and masquerade, signalling references of anti-theatricalism. Contrary to a colonial discourse that marked the subject positions of the indigenous populations in the colony as ‘native’ or ‘people of nature’ (*Naturvölker*), the discourse of the ‘black imposter’ frames blackness as the opposite of natural, namely as fake and as close to characteristics of the theatre. Whereas in the context of the colony, the category ‘of nature’ was linked to blackness and connoted a lower position in the racial hierarchy of colonial order, Africans and People of Colour in the German metropole found themselves literally and

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<sup>11</sup> While natural acting styles had taken over the theatre stages in the nineteenth century, its principles clearly exceeded the realm of the stage and can be understood as “an organizing typology for understanding the self and society in far broader terms”, as historian Lynn Voskuil (2004) has argued (22).

metaphorically related to the sphere of the theatrical, either as entertainers on stage or framed as fake, duplicitous and insincere by an imperialist discourse linking an anti-theatrical rhetoric to blackness.

References to the theatre in accounts of colonial encounters,<sup>12</sup> may it be in the colony or in the metropole, point thus to something more than merely an innocent rhetorical trope. As Balme posits, they rather need to be read as “symptoms of deeper-seated, fundamental categories of perception that can be best embraced by the term ‘theatricality’” (*Pacific* 1).<sup>13</sup> In this regard, colonial theatricality can be understood as a historically particular mode of perception relating to a dynamic relation between colony and metropole. The following newspaper article, which appeared on November 15<sup>th</sup> 1905 in *Der Tag* reporting about the war in the colony German South-West Africa gives a pertinent example of what I mean by this mode of perception:

The drama took place on the dark stage of the *Sandfeld* desert. But when the rains came, when the stage lightened up and our troops arrived at the borders of

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<sup>12</sup> Interesting to note is that the aforementioned lack of performative or theatrical case studies in the scholarship of colonial cultural history is met with a pervasive usage of theatre metaphors. Historian Geoff Eley (2014) speaks of Germany’s “colonial theatres” in his description of the colonial territories, historian Birthe Kundrus (2003) compares the formation of the settler community in the colony South-West Africa to Friedrich Schiller’s concept of theatre as a moral-ethical institution, and Achille Mbembe (2001) formulates his doubts about the end of colonialism in the age of the ‘post-colony’ as follows: “have we really entered another period, or do we find the same theater, the same mimetic acting, with different actors and spectators, but with the same convulsion and the same insult?” (Mbembe 237).

<sup>13</sup> This is not only the case for written accounts of colonial encounters, but can also be found in philosophical or scientific text in the 16th and 17th century, as theatre historian Helmar Schramm argued (2005). Here the word *theatrum* was employed to describe places in which the act of observing was particularly heightened, as, for instance, the term *theatrum anatomicum* shows. Theatre, with its constitutive elements, like the mask, the costume, roleplay and especially the relation between stage and audience, functioned thus as a distance-enabling model of orientation and observation, as Schramm argues (Schramm 50). The rather wide scope of the metaphorical field of the theatre was, however, reduced in the 18th century to the realm of theatre as an art form and an institution. It is in eighteenth century aesthetic theories and philosophy that a shift took place “from the aural to the visual, and from the level of production (normative poetics) to reception (theories of sense and sensibility)” (Balme, *Pacific* 4).

*Betschuanaland*, the gruesome image of a large army that had died of thirst unfolded before their eyes.<sup>14</sup>

The ‘drama’ that the article refers to is in fact the genocide on the Herero population, which I will discuss in more depth in the first chapter of this dissertation. In the Namibian desert, German troops had rounded up the largest part of the Herero, and poisoned or sealed the water-sources. Those who did not make it over the border into the British ‘protectorates’ died of thirst or exhaustion.

The reference to the stage in this example functions as a *theatrum*, a place of heightened visibility. But the metaphor of the stage also implies a particular order of perception in which the observers, which are in this case also the perpetrators of the genocide, retain a particular distance from the ‘drama’ that unfolds ‘in front of their eyes’. The distance evoked in this witness-account between the observer and the event echoes Féral’s description of the ‘ambivalence’ of theatricality as allowing the spectator to create a distance to the event perceived. In this example, this distance suggests that the observers are not implicated in the event, that the ‘drama’ of the genocide unfolds without their wrong doing, without the actual act of warfare, killing, and thus responsibility. It presents the death of the Herero in the desert more like a natural catastrophe than as a military operation. The actual violence of that event remains unrepresented and invisible, and so are the observers cum perpetrators.

That this is in fact a recurrent narrative strategy in colonial discourse and colonial literature has been described by Marie-Louise Pratt in her book *Imperial Eyes* (2007). She coined this invisible imperial observer position as the ‘anti-conquest’ narrative and reveals the power structure that lies behind this distance-

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<sup>14</sup>The German original reads as follows: “Das Drama spielte sich auf der dunklen Bühne des Sandfeldes ab. Aber als die Regenzeit kam, als sich die Bühne allmählich erhellte und unsere Patrouillen bis zur Grenze des Betschuanalandes vorstießen, da enthüllte sich ihrem Auge das grauenhafte Bild verdursteter Heereszüge” (cit. in Brehl 215). As literary scholar Medardus Brehl (2007) has poignantly argued, the discrepancy of the reception then and now might have to do with the fact that the genocide was committed on a people whose culture was not build on writing but on oral culture. Hence their genocidal history remained for the longest time literally *unwritten* (Brehl 11).

enabling effect of theatricality: the privileged position of watching while remaining unseen. Other modes of framing the war, that I will discuss in the first chapter, show similarly that the ways in which the colonial war against the Nama and Herero was represented on the metropolitan stage was neither arbitrary nor merely motivic, but was compatible with, if not productive of, larger colonial discourses deeming the lives of colonial subjects as ‘lose-able’ and ‘destructible’.

What I want to argue through the concept of colonial theatricality is thus that as a mode of perception theatricality does not only provide a particular mode of order and orientation, but provides a mode of order and orientation that seems to some extent to be akin to and supportive of the operations of colonial discourse and colonial knowledge formations. This has, for instance, in similar ways been argued by historian Timothy Mitchell in his book *Colonizing Egypt* (1988). Here Mitchell shows that a particular order of rendering things observable was not only an essential part of the imperial imagination, but was in fact built into the colonies in the wake of colonialism. While Mitchell does not use the term theatricality - he employs the model of the world-exhibition – he argues, nevertheless, for a similar order of perception akin to the one discussed above. Beyond the actual space of the world exhibition, posits Mitchell, Western modernity ordered up everything “so as to represent” (Mitchell 13). Department stores, zoos, museums, gardens, and Alpine platforms testify to this seemingly all-encompassing order at the end of the nineteenth century. More importantly, Mitchell shows that the practices of colonial politics in colonial Egypt were based on similar strategies of rendering things up to be watched. In other words, colonial hegemony relied on techniques of representation, of “ordering everything up so as to reveal a pre-existent plan, a political authority, a ‘meaning’, a truth” (Mitchell 178). This sort of framework would not only be brought to the colony by colonialism, but it would be built in. It

would re-order the territory which was to be occupied in such a way that it appeared as something object-like, as something that could not only be described but also be mastered, that could be made legible and by that available to political and economic calculations. The consolidation of colonial hegemony relies thus not only on imagery of Orientalism but on a larger machinery of representation, laying out the meaning of the colonial order.

Mitchell's findings are inspiring for this dissertation, because they show that colonial authority resided not only in military strategies, but in the effects of an ordering truth. He shows that the construction of a material order in the colony (infrastructure, military, administration, segregation policies) corresponded with a conceptual and moral order, which posed as if it had already always been there and allowed colonial authority thus to preside without being necessarily visible. That theatricality as a mode of perception and representation designates a particular mode of rendering up the world, akin to the processes of colonial order and meaning making, is one of the main arguments of this dissertation. While I hope my approach to the broad and often slippery notion of theatricality has become more clear, I want to unpack in the following what I understand by 'colonialism' and especially under the notion of 'coloniality', which I suggest can function as a corresponding term to my understanding of theatricality as a mode of perception. Here, coloniality is understood as a particular mode of control and order performed by European imperial enterprises over other countries and peoples.

'Coloniality' is a term coined by the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (2007) as a critique of the Eurocentric conception of 'modernity'. Coloniality, in Quijano's understanding, needs to be thought of as the other side of modernity, and hence as

constitutive of modernity. Modernity,<sup>15</sup> in other words, does not exist without its ‘darker’ side coloniality.

Quijano’s concept of modernity/coloniality has been developed further by Madina Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo (2008). The two decolonial theorists define coloniality as a ‘colonial matrix of power’ (Mignolo and Tlostanova 109). Whereas imperialism and colonialism refer to “specific sociohistorical configurations (i.e., the Spanish and British Empire’s colonies in the Americas and Asia)”, the colonial matrix of power refers to a “specific kind of imperial/colonial relations that emerged in the Atlantic world in the sixteenth century and brought imperialism and capitalism together” (Mignolo and Tlostanova 109). In other words, Mignolo and Tlostanova suggest making a distinction between “imperialism/colonialism as singular, historical processes on the one hand, and the rhetoric of modernity/logic of coloniality on the other hand” (114). In paraphrasing Anthony Giddens’s definition of modernity through its ‘colonial’ side, Mignolo and Tlostanova write the following:

‘Coloniality’ refers to the modes of control of social life and economic and political organizations that emerged in the European management of the colonies in the American and the Caribbean from about the beginning of the sixteenth century onwards and that subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence. (118)

The idea of coloniality is helpful because it also allows me to point out that as a logic it precedes the actual historical process of colonialism. If coloniality is the other side of modernity, so it is of postmodernity, or altermodernity. What becomes clear in this rephrasing of Giddens’s definition of modernity is the “‘missing’ half in current definitions of ‘modernity’” (Mignolo and Tlostanova 118). Once understood as two

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<sup>15</sup> Modernity is here understood by Mignolo and Tlostanova as a particular Eurocentred modernity, whose historical foundation lies “in the sixteenth century, the ‘discovery’ of America and the European Renaissance, or in the European Enlightenment and the French Revolution, modernity has been explicitly and implicitly linked with Western Christendom, secularization, Western types of imperialism (...), and capitalist economy” (113).

sides of the same coin, it becomes impossible to write about modernity without acknowledging colonality and thus referring to the respective colonialisms.

This double-sided coin also forces one to question the rhetoric of modernity with its ideas of salvation, newness, progress, and development in the light of colonality. Especially with regard to Enlightenment ideals of humanity and justice, critically investigating to whom the supposedly universal label ‘human’ was in fact applied shows the ambivalences inherent in Enlightenment ideals and the different standards of ‘humanity’ that were applied in the colonies and for colonised people. Caribbean-French poet and politician Aimé Césaire has brought the Janus-face of the Enlightenment ideals and their impact on the colonised societies in his pamphlet *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950) and in reference to Walter Benjamin’s ‘angel of history’<sup>16</sup> to the point:

I hear the storm. They talk about progress, about ‘achievements’, diseases cured, improved standards of living. *I* am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary *possibilities* wiped out. (Césaire 42-43)

What Césaire’s description of the ‘storm of progress’ points out is that the imperial control over land, economy, and labour went hand in hand with control over knowledge and subjectivities. In particular, the classification of human beings into different standards of humans, developed in the framework of race theories, became a powerful tool of imperial rule as it rendered some people inferior to others. This took place through strategies like attributing, stereotyping, biologising, which the

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<sup>16</sup> For comparison, the passage in Benjamin’s “On the Concept of History” reads as follows: “But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has caught up in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is *this* storm” (Benjamin 393).

group in power applied to the group that it aimed at subjugating. Or, as Mignolo and Tlostanova describe it:

In order to exploit, it is necessary to dominate, and in order to dominate, it is necessary to build discourses and belief systems that produce the imperial image as the locus of the right and unavoidable march of history and the colonies as the locus of the erroneous, the inferior, the weak, the barbarians, the primitive, and so on.  
(110)

Modern imperial discourse, as well as imperial expansionist politics, thus depended as much on the construction of “colonial difference”, a difference that was constructed on the logic of ‘racial’ configurations of human beings, as on the idea of an inevitable unfolding of historical development (Mignolo and Tlostanova 110).

Race theories and articulations of racism flourished under colonialism and functioned not only as a justification to rule over the colonised societies but also as a legitimisation for their distinction. I will discuss the impact that certain discussions on race and the ‘natural’ unfolding of history had for the legitimisation of the genocide of the Herero in the first chapter. As sociologist Ulrike Hamann (2016) argues, whereas some theoreticians used the concept of ‘race’ already in 1884, it only entered the common usage of the German civil society after 1900 (18). Hamann also argues for an understanding of racism as a relational phenomenon. This allows me to also pay attention to the resistance against forms of racism and racialised forms of representation and subjectivisation (Hamann 22). As I will show in the second chapter, in this way one can highlight the productivity of race theories and racist articulations on subject positions and the function these articulations fulfil with regard to hegemonic structures. Once the function of these racisms is identified, a critical analysis of the conditions in which such articulations are possible in the first place can be undertaken, and the danger that these articulations pose for the people it

addresses can be identified more clearly. I therefore show in the second chapter both the discursive and ideological conditions under which the presence of individuals from Africa living in Germany was discussed in the German public sphere, as well as the rejection of the racialised attributions and the resistance against racialised forms of subjectivisation from the side of the African individuals. I build on the extensive research on the development and manifestation of race theories and forms of racism in the German empire by scholars like Pascal Grosse (2000), Fatima El-Tayeb (2001), and Ulrike Hamann (2016).

Next to the construction of a ‘colonial difference’ with its techniques of categorising, inferiorising and racialising the colonised, the empire also depended on an ‘imperial difference’, in the sense that it was competing with other empires. Imperial hegemony and imperial discourses of difference thus need to be carefully distinguished from colonial discourses and the construction of ‘colonial difference’. The same counts for the idea of the nation and the nation-state in relation to imperial and colonial issues. This counts especially for the German context, as here the formation of the nation-state (1871) and the formation as a colonising empire (1884) lay only a decade apart from each other. Mark Leven (2005) argues in his book *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State* that the German empire functions as an example of a nation-state driven empire and argues that those empires were, “markedly novel and innovative in that it was not even founded on a conception of empire so much as a purely technological advantage which enabled nation-states a global reach with which to found new markets, resources, and investments for their metropolitan centers” (220). Leven’s description of empire and nation-state as not mutually exclusive but rather as informing each other allows me to stress the impact that the colonial project and the colonies had on German society and the formation of a national identity. This becomes, for instance, apparent through a colonial discourse

on space and *Lebensraum* (living space), which framed the colonial project as the solution for inner German problems.<sup>17</sup> It is in this regard that the perception of the ‘hostile’<sup>18</sup> African environment and the difficult conditions of going about one’s daily colonial business were framed as supporting the formation of a ‘true’ German identity. The comment of a settler by the name Philates Kuhn (1907) hits this nationalist nail on its head in that he describes South-West Africa as “bad enough that Germans living here can stay Germans”.<sup>19</sup> Thus, not only was ‘Africa’ produced by a colonial discourse but also a ‘Germany’.

Race and gender stood in this formation of a ‘Germany’ in an interdependent<sup>20</sup> relation towards each other. Settler colonies like South-West Africa became, for instance, the hope for solving the gender ‘imbalances’ in the German empire as they showed a clear ‘shortage’ of women (white women, that is) and Germany had apparently a so called ‘female surplus’ at the beginning of the twentieth century as historian Birthe Kundrus (2003) has argued (78). Initiatives by

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<sup>17</sup> The idea that the German colonial project was actually agreed upon by Bismarck as a political strategy to solve inner German tension has been a popular thesis by historians in the 1960s. The most famous representative of the ‘social explanation’ of German colonialism is here the thesis of historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler *Bismarck und der Imperialismus* [‘Bismarck and Imperialism’] (1966), in which he argues that the colonial project appealed to Bismarck mainly for domestic reasons. According to Wehler, Bismarck - openly against the idea of Germany entering the European colonial project - hoped that the enthusiasm for German colonial dominions would distract German citizens from domestic socio-political problems.

<sup>18</sup> Contrary to the ‘Pacific as Paradise’ epithet that Balme describes in *Pacific Performances* (2007), the African colonies were often described in the diaries of settlers and or in witness-accounts of new arriving soldiers through a deep-felt expression of disappointment. The words of the young soldier Liebig are symptomatic for this disillusionment: “Desert, desert, and all I had thought about were palm-trees and a jungle, full of tropical fruits.” Diary M. Liebig, *Humoristische Erinnerungen aus Südwest Afrika als Kolonial Truppler 1893* (‘Humoristic memories from South-West Africa as colonial soldier 1893’), National Archives of Namibia, Private Accessions File A.005. Translation by me.

<sup>19</sup> “Das Land ist schlecht genug, dass die Deutschen darin deutsch bleiben können” – Aus Kuhn, Philates. *Ein Ritt ins Sandfeld von Südwestafrika*. In: *Deutsch-Südwestafrika – Kriegs- und Friedensbilder. Selbsterlebnisse geschildert von Frau Margarethe von Eckenbrecher, Frau Helene von Falkenhausen, Stabsarzt Dr. Kuhn, Oberleutnant Stuhlmann, Leipzig 1907.*

<sup>20</sup> ‘Interdependency’ and ‘intersectionality’ are terms coined in the field of Gender Studies and point to the entanglement of power structures. It means, for instance, that the gendering of a subject depends on where this subject is positioned in a racialised hierarchy. The term ‘intersectionality’ goes back to Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991). The term ‘interdependency’ has mostly been developed by critical race and feminist theories in the US in the 1980s like Audre Lorde 1984, Angela Davis 1981, Chandra Talpade Mohanty et al. 1991, bell hooks [1981] 2015.

the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft (DKG)* - the German Colonial Society - of sending young single (white German) women to the colonies, also served the colonial ideology of 'racial purity' and the prevention of the feared 'degeneration' of the German settlers in Africa (see Chapter Three). In the logic of racial hierarchies, the presence of white German women was supposed to prevent male German settlers from engaging in sexual relationships with indigenous women and was thus thought of as a stabilising parameter in terms of race relations and a guarantor of 'racial purity'. White women were thus sent to the colonies as bearers of 'racial hygiene' and "boundary markers of empire", as Ann McClintock (1995) has poignantly argued (23). However, as Kundrus convincingly shows, the *colonial* women's question<sup>21</sup> intersected also with emancipative quests in the wake of the burgeoning women's rights movement in the German empire (equal civil rights, political participation). Through their active involvement in the imperial project and in the 'intimate sites' of colonialism, those German women emigrating to the colonies could partly gain a greater freedom with regard to a bourgeois ideal of femininity and often emphasised women's right for political participation beyond the colonial framework. They could and would do so, however, on the backs of the colonised men and women.

In other words, discourses and practices of 'colonial difference' and 'imperial difference' were highly productive of the formation of a German national identity as well as on a particular image and idea of Africa in that time, an image that was supportive of the colonial enterprise and helped in legitimising and maintaining the colonial project. They were, however, also troubled and refuted, and the aforementioned examples point to lines of conflict and contact that crossed through

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<sup>21</sup> See for further discussions on the involvement of German women in the colonial enterprise: Mamozai 1982, Wildenthal 2001, Bechhaus-Gerst et al. 2009. Also see for other European empires: Callaway 1987, Chaudhuri and Strobel 1992; Yuval-Davis 1997, Clancy-Smith and Gouda 1998.

colonial and metropolitan spheres and situations sketching the image of what postcolonial theorists called an “entangled history” (Randeria 2002). The model of entanglement debunks ideas of original or pure cultures. Rather, as Shalini Randeria has argued, it offers a model for historiography that is sensitive to the interweaving patterns between cultures. Randeria stresses through the concept of entanglement that there is no European modernity and non-European variations of that modernity, but that the task of every historian is to pivot multilateral historic configuration instead (see Kusser 36).

This has similarly been argued by political theorist Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provincializing Europe* (2000), in that he argues that not only the history of the world needs to be written from a post-colonial perspective, but the history of Europe as well. In a post-colonial historiography ‘Europe’ is not the point of departure but the result of this history, a ‘hyper real frame of reference’ which was not only established by European actors but by the agents from around the world (Chakrabarty 45). This approach is meant to forestall the writing of the “history of the victors” (Benjamin 394) and destabilises the image of Europe as a point of reference or point of origin.

One study that has been inspiring for the historiographical approach of this dissertation is the book *Cities of the Dead* (1996) by theatre historian Joseph Roach. With his ‘genealogy of performance’, Roach has conceptualised a historiographical approach that encompasses such a combination of perceptual and corporeal dimensions. He explores performative practices as ‘restored behaviors’, and thus as sources that challenge the archive of merely textual sources. He argues for an inclusion of performative practices, like orature, gestures, and movement into our toolboxes of conventional hermeneutical analyses. In drawing on Foucault’s concept of the ‘genealogy of knowledge’, Roach defines his ‘genealogy of performance’ as a

way to “resist histories that attribute purity of origin to any performance” and explores a wide range of phenomena such as funeral rituals, carnival traditions and theatre plays around the Atlantic instead (Roach 286). What genealogists take into account instead of the search for an origin, is, according to Roach, “the give and take of joint transmissions, posted in the past, arriving in the present, delivered by living messengers, speaking in tongues not entirely their own” (Roach 286). Performances and the body, as part of their materialisation, are the sites of such transmissions. A genealogy of performance, as Roach stresses, attends to the interactions between bodies, to the “reciprocal reflections they make on one another’s surface” (Roach 25). His approach is particularly inspiring for this dissertation because of its explicit historiographical framework that encompasses a large number of highly disparate and diverse performance practices and allows for an analysis of both verbal, visual, and corporeal elements.

The field of performance studies, as it originated in North America in the 1960s, has broadened our conception of ‘theatre’ beyond the realm of an institutionalised art form. Through conceptualising the notion of performance as ‘restored behavior’ (Schechner [1988], 2003), much performance studies scholarship has since then stressed that performance is not just an aesthetic category but a mode or practice through which social meanings and truths are produced and reproduced. The concept of performance has clearly been helpful for the emphasis on the breaches and ambivalences within colonial discourse. Performance studies, with its ideas of the performativity of everyday life and the transformative power of cultural performances has been crucial for challenging essentialist conceptions of culture and identity and has thus helped to reveal the constructed nature of identity categories such as class, race, sexuality, and gender. ‘Performance’ can thus help us to describe how social norms are embodied and enacted, as Judith Butler described it in her

seminal article “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (1988). Her claim that when we enact the codes of society according to the hegemonic definition of the latter we are “dramatizing, and reproducing a historical situation”, is insofar significant, as Hutchison argues, in that “it sets gender as a performative, a socially constructed set of behaviours, beyond biological predetermination” (*South African* 18). Hutchison’s argument that this concept is “equally applicable to race” (18) is of importance for this dissertation, in that it allows me to not only look at the representation of race in theatre performances but to determine with the help of the concept of performance the constructedness of race in the German empire. In this regard, the concept of performance and performativity will play a particularly important role in this dissertation when I discuss identity categories and their formation, as well as when it comes to techniques of subjectivisation. Cultural performances are, in this regard, to be understood as more than mere acts of making something visible or rendering something up as if it was on a stage. Rather, as scholars of performance studies, gender studies, and postcolonial studies have argued, they constitute our social reality. Cultural performance features in this dissertation, for instance, in the form of a court hearing or in the form of a colonial ceremony. To a certain extent, both phenomena show affinity with practices of staging and representation, but do take place outside of the realm of the institutionalised theatre and highlight the productivity of performance in processes of subjectivisation (the court hearing) or in the formation of national identity (the colonial ceremonies).

Another field of study, with a similar intent, emerged around the same time in the East of Germany: theatricality studies (Boenisch 2015). Less of an anthropologically inclined approach to theatre than an explicitly historiographical one, the German school of theatricality studies focused on theatricality as a tool to

analyse power structures. Similar to Roach's approach of a 'genealogy of performance', theatre historian Rudolf Münz developed the concept of the 'theatricality nexus' (*Theatralitätsgefüge*). While Münz's 'theatricality nexus' and Roach's 'genealogy of performance' show a lot of similarities, they differ in one important element. Münz modeled his definition of theatricality on the notion of the Greek prefix *thea* and the Greek verb *theorein*, both pointing to the dual activity of 'gazing' and 'showing'. Münz made it very clear, as theatre scholar Peter Boenisch argues, that in insisting on "the indispensable complementary relation between performing and spectating, announced by the cultural process of *thea*, he considered theatricality (sic!) as 'a relation, not behavior'" (Boenisch 37).

Underlying this concept of theatricality nexus is the idea of a specific order of 'seeing' and 'showing' (theatricality) that can be detected for particular periods and geo-political spaces. Theatricality is, in this understanding, similar to the idea of performance, to be found amongst those elements that constitutes society (Kotte 128). In other words, this specific order of seeing and showing (theatricality) cannot be revealed by focusing only on the institutionalised theatre, as Münz argues. Rather, other realms of theatre need to be incorporated into the analytical framework of the theatre historian as well. Münz suggested four different realms of theatre that make up the theatricality nexus: 1) the hegemonic idea of theatre as an art institution of a particular time, for instance the bourgeois theatre of the nineteenth century Germany with its particular discourses, theatre architecture and acting techniques, 2) marginalised forms of theatre of a particular time and space, for instance, popular forms of Western performance traditions, like the *commedia dell'arte*, but also the variety theatres at the turn of the century, 3) cultural performances outside of the institutionalised theatre realm (official ceremonies, public executions, liturgies etc.),

and 4) theatre prohibitions and acts of censorship, as a ‘negative history’ of theatre (Kotte 128).

Münz’s approach understands itself explicitly as a tool to analyse power-structures, in that it opens up the narrow idea of ‘theatre’ to include the theatre of everyday life and marginalised popular performance traditions, as well as theatre prohibitions and acts of censorship into the hegemonic discourse of theatre history. His theatricality nexus also seeks to reveal the latent interrelationship between cultural performances of power (i.e. ceremonies, public executions) and other forms of theatre, and thus becomes particularly interesting for the framework of this dissertation. Similar to Mitchell’s approach, Münz’s model marks concrete relations of showing and watching outside of the theatre realm and localises them in relation to theatre as an art form in a larger ‘theatricality nexus’ (*Theatralitätsgefüge*). Through this interrelationship of the different manifestations of theatricality in diverse social, political, and cultural spheres, the idea of a theatricality nexus allows one to argue for the central position that theatre, i.e. theatricality, held in the German society, its identity formations and techniques of power.

I draw in my understanding of the concept of ‘power’ mainly on the analytical work of Michel Foucault (1975-1976), who understands power as relational, but as an asymmetrical relation. Power as a relation is thus to be understood as a temporary relation of power that is changeable from the sides that constitute it. It can take new shapes and constitute new subjects within this fluctuating relation. This is an important understanding as it allows me to understand the resistance against the colonial regime and the mechanism of colonial rule in one and the same framework and in their dynamics. Rather than thinking of power only as institutionalised power (as in laws and regulations or as a monopoly of the state), I

am interested in its technologies through which, for instance, individuals are made into subjects, or through which a certain order is established or questioned.

Münz's idea of a 'theatricality nexus' was conceptualised as a tool to reveal the historical conditions under which certain power structures could operate. It echoes Foucault's notions of the *dispositif*, which he defines as a "net" that connects all the elements of a discourse, namely all that which is at a particular time and in a particular society 'sayable' and 'thinkable'. Understanding the 'theatricality-coloniality nexus' as a *dispositif*, allows me to look at very diverse and disparate phenomena in the same frame work, like theatrical metaphors in written accounts of colonial encounters (as mentioned before), next to an example of a colonial pantomime in Berlin, a colonial ceremony in South-West Africa, and the defence speech of a Kamerunian prince in Hamburg. These phenomena would not be found in this constellation in the official colonial archives.

In attending to forms of anti-colonial resistance or forms of cohabitation between colonisers and colonised, the image of a stable and undefeatable colonial order with its Manichean divide of coloniser and colonised often appears less stable and more complex, ambivalent and even precarious than colonial discourses would have us believe (Hamann 2016; Stoler 2002). Acts of resistance against the colonial hegemony in the form of petitions, claims, and self-representations of the colonised populations subverted imperialist agendas and hegemonic forms of representation. Relationships between colonisers and colonised challenged a colonial order based on ideas of 'racial purity', and even impacted the legislation in the metropole with regard to concepts of citizenship. In other words, colonial encounters were marked by negotiations, claims, and challenges of an allegedly stable colonial order. They reveal the ambivalences and complexities of the colonial situation and make visible its breaches and weaknesses. As sociologist Ulrike Hamann suggests in her study on

the precariousness of the German colonial order (2016),<sup>22</sup> if we include both the colonial discourse of the imperialists as well the practices of anti-colonial resistance, we get a more complex and ambivalent image of colonial order and colonial hegemony, one that also shows that relations of power were not written in stone but were, in fact, highly variable.

This constitutive power of performance pivots, for instance, in the concept of mimicry, which postcolonial critic Homi K. Bhabha understands not only as the strategies of colonial power and knowledge-formations, but also the possibilities of resisting and transforming these power structures. In *The Location of Culture* (2011), Bhabha reads colonial mimicry as a performative technique or even as performance that does not assimilate cultural differences but keeps them alive as such, as differences. Bhabha's idea, and with him many other postcolonial scholars especially from the Subaltern Studies Group, have argued that a simple reconstruction of the 'truth' outside of the colonial discourse is not possible. Rather, they highlight the gaps in colonial discourse and carve out the ambivalences, desires, and anxieties within colonial discourse. Postcolonial scholars like Anne McClintock (1995), Robert C. Young (2005), and Ann Laura Stoler (2002; 2009) have developed in their works a reading practice that helps to reveal both the regularities in colonial discourse as well as its irregularities, and have contributed to new ways of doing colonial discourse analysis and critical historiography.

One major methodological challenge of this dissertation, and maybe of every historiographical endeavour, has been the task to stay critical of the hegemonic archives I have consulted while still drawing in my analyses on the documents they are housing. That archives are not neutral but maintain deep connection between

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<sup>22</sup> Sociologist Ulrike Hamann argues in her analysis of articulations of racism during the time of the German empire, for instance, through the emphasis on forms of resistance that the German colonial order was anything but stable, but rather quite precarious, see Hamann 2016.

knowledge and power is largely acknowledged in historiographical scholarship today (Sekula 2003; Derrida 1998; de Certeau 1975). Jacques Derrida has shown in his book *Archive Fever* (1998) how deep the practice of archiving is bound to questions of power, through pointing out the archive's etymological link to 'commandment' and 'commencement'. The archive poses not only as the place of all beginnings (commencement) but is also guarded by the 'archons', those citizens with the power to make the laws (commandment), and "the hermeneutic right and competence" (Derrida 2). This describes the double-function of the institutionalised archive quite well: the archive is not only a storage space of documents which allegedly 'protects' its documents, but in that gesture of 'protecting' also lies the power over how people and nations relate to the past, how people imagine they know what they know, and which institutions validate the knowledge. In other words, the archive does not just affect what is archived, but affects the ways in which we relate to the past as well as to the future. It is in this sense that every historian is also partly an *archon* of her time, and I understand the potential danger of my own undertaking to appeal to the silent authority of the archive.

I therefore understand the archive of the colonial government (*Reichskolonialamt*) as well as the Police- and Censorship Archive, from which I drew a large number of my sources, following Derrida, as places of power. In their make-up, they are a product of imperial ideology and of a hegemonic belief-system defining who and what should be part of *the* history, in the sense of a grand narrative, of the German empire. For instance, in the colonial archive, which is today located as part of the Federal archives in Berlin, one finds documents of acts of resistance besides the usual administrative files. However, the colonial archive only encompasses those acts of anti-colonial resistance that directly targeted the colonial government and excludes less visible or less obvious strategies of resistance. It is

thus only partly helpful as a source for accessing knowledge of the colonial past, as it documents this history only from a very particular, hegemonic, perspective. As Gayatri Spivak ([1999], 2010) has critically pointed out, the intentions behind actions and events initiated by subalterns remain invisible for a hegemonic historiography, due to the archive's function of conserving the past from a particular perspective and in a particular way (Hamann 56).

In this regard, it is important to acknowledge the gaps and silences in the archive of the German colonial government. In order to do so while still being able to draw on the archive for pointing out the productivity of colonial power structures in the German empire, I have followed two methodological approaches. One of the approaches is based on Walter Benjamin's famous dictum, that "[t]here is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" and that because of this we historians need "to brush history against the grain" (Benjamin 392). Reading against the grain of the files and documents of the imperial archive allows to question the truth-claims speaking from these sources. The other approach seems almost opposite to Benjamin's but follows the same incentive. Ann Laura Stoler proposes in her book *Along the Archival Grain* (2010), to read the documents of imperial archives as the title already suggests not against but along the grain. By doing so, as she argues, one is able to highlight the grain of the colonial administrators itself. This, as her study shows, reveals the epistemic uncertainties and anxieties of the empire's administrators, rather than reproducing the image of imperialist certitude and confidence. Her study paints the picture of an empire full of ambivalences and contradictions, and her approach allows one to highlight the productive power in the constitution of new subjects and new forms of categorisation of the archive itself. In drawing on both Benjamin and Stoler, my approach is thus to

show both the productivity of imperial rule and order as well as its ambivalences and breaches.

Another methodological paradox of this dissertation lies in the fact that its object of enquiry is theatre and performance and yet it relies to a large extent on the documentations of theatre and performances in form of texts. While the definition of performance as that which “cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representation”, as it has most famously been formulated by Peggy Phelan (here cited in Taylor 5), has for a long time held a political promise in the field of performance studies, more recent scholarship has highlighted the pitfalls of associating performance with disappearance (Lepecki 2010, Schneider 2012, Taylor 2003, Roach 1996). Most prominently in this debate on performance and the archive are the voices of performance scholars Rebecca Schneider (2011) and Diana Taylor (2003). Schneider argues in her book *Performing Remains*, that performance events are never fully ephemeral – they do always remain to a certain degree (Schneider 2011). Rather than emphasising performance’s difference to the archive due to its embodiment and elusiveness, Schneider argues that performance bears the aptitude to “challenge the archival logic”, which is traditionally based on storing documents and keeping them under ‘house-arrest’, as Derrida has formulated it. In drawing on Derrida’s definition of the archive as a place of power, Schneider thus argues that performance scholars should not focus on the question of how performance can be documented in order to fit into the archive, but on ways of challenging the *archontic* logic as such, the logic that produces performance as its ‘ephemeral Other’ in the first place. As documents and objects make up the common content of the archive, ephemera such as performance are excluded from it. Hence, Schneider argues, that if we consider “performance as ‘of disappearance” we “limit ourselves to an understanding of performance

predetermined by a cultural habituation to the patrilineal, West-identified (arguably white-cultural) logic of the Archive” (Schneider, *Perform, Repeat, Record* 138). Celebrating performance’s allegedly ontological ephemerality is thus rather a trap feeding the archontic logic of documentability.

Diana Taylor similarly challenges the equation of performance with disappearance in her book *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003), by reminding her readers that cultural memory relies to a large extent on the usage of allegedly elusive performances. The ephemeral character of performance is in this case not an obstruction of the practice of remembering, but its foundation. Taylor thus argues that performance constitutes an episteme whose means of knowledge-production, -preservation and -transmission is very different to that of the (Western) institutionalised archive. Performance offers an embodied commemoration of the past and is discussed by Taylor in its potential for conjuring or preserving memories that might disappear “if only archival knowledge is valorized and granted permanence” (Taylor 193). The attempt to rescue or revalorise memories that do not apply to the hegemonic power of the archive is therefore also a revelation of the power/knowledge, in which the archive, as a Western institution, is always already situated. Taylor attempts in her book to disclose the ways in which the institutionalised Western archive constitutes and transmits social knowledge, and how this differs from the ways the ‘repertoire’, her suggested alternative to the archive, does it. She suggests, that instead of privileging texts and narratives, one should pay attention to scenarios as meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments and behaviours. The scenario defies performance’s disappearance and rather testifies to its remain and return. Scenarios, like, for instance, ‘the first encounter’, return in texts, depictions, and narratives, and cultural performances. The concept of the repertoire, of which these kinds of scenarios are part, sets in Taylor’s

work the plane against which a common understanding of the Western institutionalised archive can be thought. Performance functions in this understanding as a different kind of storage and transmitting system, as the non-archival system of transfer, and as “a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge” (Taylor 8). In introducing the term ‘repertoire’, Taylor offers thus an important alternative to the conventional and institutional understanding of the archive and by that also a challenge to the *archontic* logic, as Schneider has formulated it.

But also within the institutionalised Western archive there are obstacles, ruptures, and inconsistencies that challenge the idea of an all-encompassing, powerful colonial administration and discourse. Rather than only looking for ‘alternatives’ to the archive, I revisited ‘the’ archive to challenge its archontic logic with its own means. One strategy to do so was to challenge the sources from the official government-led archives with sources from private collections. I consulted, for instance, besides the Federal and State archives in Berlin and Hamburg, where most of the documents from the colonial government (*Reichskolonialamt*) are stored, also the private circus collection of Mr. and Mrs. Winkler in Berlin. The Winklers are not only self-made archivists that store an impressive collection of circus books, leaflets and posters in their own living room, but are former circus artists themselves. Hence, while skimming through the archival material from the turn of the century at the Winkler dining-table, I listened to Mr. Winkler’s stories and anecdotes from a more recent circus history, recollections from his own experiences as a circus artist, and benefitted from his explanations of terminologies in the sources I consulted that would have otherwise stayed omitted to me. Instead of focussing my archival research either only on the official archive of the colonial government or only on the major theatre archives and see what cultural representations of the colonial empire I find in either one of them, I put the different archives and private collections in

dialogue with each other. One of the methodological points that this dissertation is trying to make is that there is no existing archival collection that can be visited in order to understand the nexus of theatre and colonialism in the German empire. Rather this archive comes into being through painstaking research bringing sources from different archival and non-archival collections together.

While I found, for instance, some of the theatre case studies in the archive of the colonial government (*Reichskolonialamt*), I found many examples of cultural representations of the colonial project in the theatre archives and collections. However, most of the theatre case studies discussed in this dissertation come from yet another place of power: the former Police- and Censorship archive, which is today stored in the state archive in Berlin (*Landesarchiv*). Due to the fact that popular theatre rarely ends up in print, historians of German popular theatre have to rely to a large degree on the censorship-files of the police. As theatre historian Jan Lazardzig (2015) has pointed out, one consequence of the fact that the surveillance of theatres was delegated to the police in nineteenth-century Germany was the creation of “what are likely the most extensive literary archives for theatre in the German-speaking world” in Berlin and Vienna (Lazardzig, “Performing” 124). Those archives present not only “a systematic documentation of the dramatic and performance history of the nineteenth century, but further demonstrate what the ruling powers in each case understood as ‘theatre’” (Lazardzig, “Performing” 124). Until 1918 every theatre director needed to hand in two scripts of every piece or couplet that one wanted to put on stage in Berlin. One script was to be kept by the censorship department and the other one was returned to the theatre with suggestions for changing certain lines or acts. Other plays and couplets I found either through their suggestive titles (topical) in library catalogues, via newspaper articles or advertisements, and amongst the estates of particular people having either been

associated with colonial politics (settlers, military, missionaries) or with the theatre (agents, actors, composers) as, for instance, in the historical theatre collection *Walter Unruh* at the Free University of Berlin.

Particularly interesting about German theatre censorship is the involvement of the police. The censorship department would not just censor the scripts that were handed in, but also send a police agent to almost every general rehearsal. Those agents would check whether those censored parts would not reappear in the performance, for example in gestures or other non-verbal communication that could insinuate some of the censored content and action. Those files are valuable documents as they show what exactly was under close scrutiny of the censorship department, and in that sense also what was deemed as destabilising a hegemonic order and what not. Moreover, the handwritten notes of the individual police officers in the margins of the censorship files show the processes of decision making, the doubts and uncertainties as part of an apparatus that presented itself as decisive and assertive. It is thus not only the access to colonial history which is guarded by the *archons* of imperial history, but also the access to a history of theatre. The fact that today we only have access to some forms of stage performance because they underwent state control and censorship is remarkable, and points quite obviously to the deep connection between power, knowledge, and the archive.

This also shows that even if one does not confine theatre to dramatic literature, one is confronted in the historiographical research with the overwhelming dominance of textual evidence. As Mark Fleishmann has critically argued, “the linking of theatre to dramatic literature was a political process designed to enforce a particular dynamic of power vis-à-vis other less literary and more physical forms of theatrical practices” (13). As I will show in Chapter Three, the bourgeois and enlightened ‘reform’ of the German theatre at the end of the eighteenth century was

based on exactly that point, of defining theatre as based on a text and on ‘cleaning’ the stage of any kind of improvisation and impromptu play (Lazardzig 2015). As Fleishmann further posits, it was this “dominant literary part of that [European theatre, LS] tradition” that was imported “into Africa as part of the colonial project (...) side-lining the existent African practices of a non-literary theatre that were most diverse in their practices and accommodations” (13). It is important to note that this problematic discrepancy between textual evidence and non-literary evidence also reflects back in this dissertation. During the archival research, I was confronted with the overwhelmingly large number of imperial files and censorship file in the colonial and police archive and the comparably minimal number of historical sources representing indigenous voices from the German colonies. Even if sources quote voices from those people subjected to colonial rule, it is important to keep in mind that those voices are often still mediated. The petition of the Duala, which I discuss in the second chapter, is one of the few documents in the German archives, in which the historical experience of the colonial project is represented from the view point of the colonised. While most of the chapters rely thus in their source material on an exclusively European perspective, I tried where possible to include African perspectives or challenge the imperial sources with contemporary postcolonial scholarship. I drew, for instance, on the impressive works of scholars like Namibian historian Memory Biwa (2012), whose oral history research on the Nama-German War offered an important counterpoint to the overwhelmingly Europe-based historiography on this war, which often focuses solely on the fate of the Herero while excluding the history of the Nama people from their frameworks. Also, the work of the German ethnographer Larissa Förster (2010), whose critical and sensitive ethnographic research on the ways in which the Herero today commemorate the genocide from 1904 has been a great addition to my research in the archives.

Before I provide a chapter outline of this dissertation I want to point out that my own position as a German researcher educated in a European university system and funded by a European institution is clearly formed by what Walter Mignolo called the “geopolitics of knowledge” (2002). While critically engaging with the history of the German colonial enterprise, I am myself implicated in it and in its neo-colonial formations in ways that informed my own criticality, methodological approaches and research foci. This is said to emphasise the fact that also our loci of enunciation are politically charged and never neutral or innocent.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I discuss the representation of the colonial war in South-West Africa and the first German genocide (1904) on the popular stages in Berlin at the time. I focus in this chapter on two case studies particularly: the colonial pantomime *Deutsch Süd-West Afrika* (‘German South-West Africa’) by *Circus Busch* staged in September 1904 and the scene *In Südwestafrika* (‘In South-West Africa’) as part of the annual revues of the *Metropol-Theater* in Berlin in 1907. In my discussion of the two case studies, I analyse the theatrical framing strategies they applied and the impact that these might have had for a contemporary perception of the war and its implicated subjects. Moreover, in discussing the way in which the two performances positioned themselves in relation to the colonial discourses in the German public spheres outside of the theatre or circus arena, I show that the German metropole did not consist of one homogeneous and unified colonial discourse, but rather consisted of multiple and sometimes competing colonial discourses. I, moreover, show in this chapter how deeply ideas of extermination were rooted in the discourses and knowledge patterns of the young German empire, and that these discourses were to a large extent compatible with the modes of representation displayed by the two theatre case studies.

In the second chapter I explore the interplay of law, race, and citizenship in the dynamics of the making and the unmaking of colonial subject positions. I do so through the specific case of the so called ‘Akwa Affair’, a conglomerate of different trials and claim rights between the former German colony Kamerun and the German metropole. Pivotal in this chapter are the concepts of mimicry, duplicity, and imposterism, which are discussed in their function and articulation as both, a powerful tool of colonial authority as well as a tool of resistance. I offer in this chapter an in-depth discussion of the dual system of the colonial law in relation to the imperial law at the time, and the different consequences that these two types of jurisdiction had for the conception of German citizenship in the colonies and in the metropole. That this conception of German citizenship was based on the principle of blood gives important insights into the conditions under which the presence of African people residing in Germany were perceived and to which laws they were submitted, as the different court files of the ‘Akwa Affair’ show. The main issue in this chapter pivots thus around the question of how legal and cultural mechanisms were productive on the different bodies of the German colonial empire and how they compelled the empire’s subjects to embody and perform recognizable legal, racial, and ‘manageable’ identities. Through a critical analysis of racialized subject formations and the resistance against them and with the help of the concept of performance, I also highlight in this chapter the intimate entanglements between a particularly German understanding of blackness and a discourse of anti-theatricality at the time. A last section of this chapter discusses the representation of the ‘Akwa Affair’ on stage and shows the compatibility between discourses on imposterism and blackness in the court-room and by the press with a theatrical repertoire of stereotyping black people. The modes of resistance around which this chapter pivots

highlight the legal paradoxes of metropolitan and colonial law which simultaneously included and excluded the African body within the national body politic.

The third chapter focuses on the idea of colonial order and the ways in which it was maintained as well as challenged by means of theatre and performance. I argue in this chapter that the socio-spatial set up of the theatre and its order, which I understand as manifesting in the division of bodies in space, epitomizes a tension akin to the colonial order manifesting in the practices of spatial segregation in the colony. Here, in the theatre and in other performative events, the division of bodies in time and space could be rehearsed and displayed in the colonial context. This relation between theatrical order and colonial order also manifests in the concepts of *Ruhe* and *Ordnung*, which feature both prominently in the discourses of eighteenth century theatre reformers on the ‘ideal spectator’ and in the discourses of the colonial police on the ‘ideal settler’. This relation manifests, for instance, in the establishment of amateur theatre societies by the German settler community in the colony South-West Africa, which I discuss in their role of producing the idea of a ‘German culture’ and a ‘German cultural identity’. That the order of the theatre also bore the potential for challenging the colonial order, for encouraging contact and intermingling and thus for inducing imperial anxieties of disorder and chaos becomes most clear in the discussion of colonial ceremonies, in which the settlers and the indigenous community performed next to each other and for each other. A last section of this chapter discusses the presence of migrant workers from the Cape Colony in South-West Africa and how these workers and their cultural repertoires challenged the German colonial order in terms of its racial hierarchies and spatial segregation policies.

My focus in the last chapter lies on contemporary modes of representing, remembering, and redressing the colonial past in the theatrical public sphere of

Germany today. In discussing the promises and pitfalls of theatre's role in the historical remembering of Germany's colonial past, I focus especially on the construction and negotiation of the position of the spectator. Through the example of performances from the independent scene in Berlin, I show how a critical theatrical engagement with the colonial past is undertaken by including a reflection on the theatre's own modes of production and the politics of representation today, whether by building mixed ensembles or in challenging the presumption of a homogenous white audience. In the so called 'blackface controversy' and in the wake of protesting not only a racist practice of representation from the past but also the exclusivity of the German theatre industry in the present, a counter public-sphere emerged within Germany's theatrical public sphere, as I argue. This counter public-sphere was also predominant in the protests against the performance installation *Exhibit B* by South African theatre maker Brett Bailey, which was shown in Berlin in 2012. In this chapter, I will offer an analysis of *Exhibit B* with regard to its dramaturgy of eliciting the affect shame in its spectators, and discuss the shortcomings of this shame-induced audience position in terms of the self-reconciliation it offers for a white audience and in terms of its reproduction of a victim-perpetrator binary. I introduce here the figure of the implicated subject to counter the victim-perpetrator binary and argue that the question of implication can offer a critical negotiation of the colonial past as an entangled history and an ethical positioning, from which demands for justice and redress can be formulated.

## Chapter One

### Frames of Colonial War – The First German Genocide on the Popular Stages

In 1904, circus director Paula Busch noted in her diary, that the “Herero from the *Waterberg* were indispensable in Berlin”.<sup>23</sup> This comment rings from today’s standpoint as highly cynical. Whereas Busch refers to the great success of her circus pantomime on the war in South-West Africa in September 1904 and thus to the fact that the representation of the Herero was indispensable for a business-minded theatre director at the time, the genocidal colonial politics of the German military had proven that the Herero had been in fact highly ‘dispensable’ in Berlin, and more broadly in the German empire. In 1904 thousands of Herero people had been left to die in the desert of what is today Namibia, or were later killed by the cruel conditions in the German concentration-camps in the former colony South-West Africa.

While the colonial war and the genocide only recently gained renewed attention in the German public sphere, it was a highly popular subject of representation at the time, as Paula Busch’s diary entry suggests. Newspaper announcements and posters with titles such as *From Berlin O. to the Herero* (Winter Theatre, 1904), *Black Hell* (Belle-Alliance Theatre, 1904) or *Kasperl as Herero* (1909)<sup>24</sup> reveal that Paula Busch was not the only theatre entrepreneur who thought so. More popular performances than acknowledged so far by theatre historians can

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<sup>23</sup> It says in the original German version: „In Berlin hatte während jenes Winters ein Managenschauspiel aus den Kolonien derart eminenten Erfolg, dass es immer wieder prolongiert werden musste (...). Die Hereros vom Waterberg, die Elefanten vom Ngami-See, das Schutztruppen-Detachement, die Farmer vom Hamakari waren also in Berlin unabkömmlich” (Busch 59).

<sup>24</sup> The German original titles are *Von Berlin O. bis zu den Hereros; Schwarze Hölle; Kasperl als Herero*.

be found in 1904, and after that represented the violent events overseas in one way or another. Busch's remark can thus be read as symptomatic of the affinity that many of the popular stages had for the colonial enterprise at large, and for the specific modes in which many of the popular theatres in Berlin at the time engaged with its violent manifestations.

In this chapter, I focus specifically on the representations of the colonial war and of the first German genocide in South-West Africa on the popular stages in Berlin. I will explore the particular theatrical strategies which were employed, and discuss some of the possible epistemological consequences that these framing strategies might have had for the perception of the war, the Herero and for a conception of German national identity. I focus, therefore, on two case-studies in more depth. These are the aforementioned colonial pantomime *Deutsch Süd-West Afrika* ('German South-West Africa'), which was staged in 1904 in Berlin's famous *Circus Busch* right at the beginning of the war, and a scene from the annual revue of the similar famous and also Berlin-based *Metropol-Theater*, which was called *In Südwestafrika* ('In South-West Africa') and was staged in 1907 and thus at the end of the war. The two case studies thus build a convenient time-frame through which the development in the reception and representation of the war, the genocide, and the Herero can be explored. Moreover, I argue in this chapter that these popular performances were neither merely a tool of propaganda nor simply innocent entertainment, but that the knowledge produced and disseminated in and by these popular performances was compatible with larger discourses on extermination and colonialism at the time.

Historians have highlighted how 'saturated' the imperial metropole Berlin was with citations of the colonial project and have emphasised the role played by the

expanding mass media at the end of the nineteenth century in the production and transmission of colonial knowledge in Germany, as I discussed it in the introduction. Knowledge from the colonies was transmitted from the colony to the metropole through new visual media like panorama, diorama, photography, and film, and represented the overseas empire to a domestic imperial audience. As historian John P. Short (2012) posits, “the new and distant colonial empire commands all available technologies of representation and information to become intelligible to the metropolitan public” (2). The popular theatres did their own part in fuelling colonialism’s ‘representational machine’.

Drawing on Peter Marx’s (2008) observation that the popular theatres with their emphasis on laughter and the comical were a privileged place for processing the deep-reaching social transformations that had hit German society in the wake of industrialization, urbanization, and modernization, I argue in this chapter, that these stages not only performed the function of community-building in the frame of the nation-state but also within the colonizing empire Germany. They functioned thus not only affirmative in the sense of class, but also in the sense of ‘race’ and gender. In extending Peter Marx’s findings beyond their national focus to include the colonial project, I argue that to a large extent the colonial subject appeared in these repertoires as a means through which the aforementioned social and cultural transformations could be negotiated. The colonial subject functioned thus often as a disguise or diversion of a satirical critique that was, in fact, targeting ‘inner German’ issues. I therefore argue that these popular colonial performances were not simply confining themselves to colonial propaganda, or only catering to its audience desire for exotic exuberance. Rather, they need to be understood in their affinity to reporting, commentary, and satire beyond their role of providing diversion and entertainment. But also, as I will argue in this chapter, in their affinity to a bourgeois

discourse on education and enlightenment. Through the representation of the colonial project we can thus detect not only a change in the representations of the *sujet* (colonialism, colonial war), but also a change in the medium (theatre) and its discourses. Before I start unpacking the colonial pantomime of Circus Busch and its representation of the colonial war, I want to give some more general examples of how the popular theatres used the colonial project to negotiate the uprooting experiences of modernisation, urbanisation and industrialisation.

The feeling of an acceleration of everyday life and the experience of an increasingly globalised world was often negotiated through the idea of ‘overseas’. Some plays placed the colonies, for instance, in spitting distance from the metropole, letting their (white) characters travel between Germany and Africa without any difficulty and in seemingly no time. Titles like *Bei uns da drüben* (‘At our place over there’)<sup>25</sup>, *Besuch in den Kolonien* (‘A Visit to the Colonies’)<sup>26</sup>, *Unsere Kolonien* (‘Our Colonies’)<sup>27</sup>, or *Von Berlin O. bis zu den Herero* (‘From Berlin East to the Herero’)<sup>28</sup> suggest a close proximity between colony and metropole, not only geographically, but also emotionally, as the possessive pronoun ‘our/ours’ suggest.

The farce *Unsere Kolonien* (1914), for instance, uses the idea of an ‘overseas empire’ and the colonial rhetoric of the ‘white man’s burden’ to mock the foreign policy of the German parliament and the bourgeois colonial enthusiasts who support it. In featuring a poor pensioner who sees it as his duty to leave Germany and ‘civilise’ the ‘Africans’, the farce reveals the ambivalence of the possessive pronoun ‘ours’, and points through the complete inadequacy of its protagonists to take on an official position in colonial politics to the class differences within the German

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<sup>25</sup> Farce from 1908, premiere in Frankfurt also in 1908, text and music by Max Reimann and Otto Schwarz, LA Berlin file 030-05-02 4111.

<sup>26</sup> Costume drama from 1891, found in the archival collection of the Free University of Berlin.

<sup>27</sup> Farce from 1914, found in the archival collection of the Free University of Berlin.

<sup>28</sup> Romantic costume drama by G. Albert from 1904.

empire. But the farce, which is symptomatic of other colonial performances as well, deploys its satirical potential by trading on racist imagery and paternalistic depictions of Africa for the sake of a satirical comment on metropolitan issues. This double-bind of critically pointing out issues ‘at home’ by repeating or producing stereotypes of ‘the other’ can be found in other plays and performances representing a colonial *sujet* as well.

The farce *Nach Afrika, Nach Kamerun* (‘Towards Africa, Towards Kamerun’)<sup>29</sup> from 1905, on the other hand, does not use the colonial project to comment on domestic issues, but straightforwardly frames the colonial project as a solution for the ‘inner problems’ of the German empire. It is a very peculiar example, because it derived from an adaption of another play called *Ein Böhm in Amerika* (‘A Bohemian in America’) by the Austrian playwright and journalist Bruno Zappert (1845-1892). In his original play Zappert depicted the large emigration wave from Germany to America in the middle of the nineteenth century, long before the idea of a settler community in Africa was circulating within the German public sphere. The adaptation of Zappert’s play simply replaced America with Africa to tell the story of emigration in the wake of colonialism. The simplicity of the replacement can be detected in the censor’s manuscript of the play, in which the word America is crossed out by hand on some pages of the play, and replaced with the word Africa. In one part the author even forgot to replace ‘the Indians’ with ‘the Cannibals’. Besides this peculiar history of adaptation, the farce displays a range of characters about to emigrate to Africa for different reasons: the Jewish couple Aron and Sarah Mandelblüh emigrate to Africa in the hope of expanding their possibilities of making

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<sup>29</sup> *Nach Afrika Nach Kamerun! – Grosse Burlesque Ausstattungs-Pantomime in 6 Bildern* (‘Towards Afrika, Towards Kamerun’ – Grande burlesque-scenographic-pantomime in 6 images), 1905, music and text by Gothow Grünecke and Julius Einödshofer, performed in the *Walhalla Theater* Berlin. LA Berlin, file 030-05-02 3455.

money; Pickenbach, a father of six daughters, emigrates to the colonies, because he cannot find a husband for his daughters back in Germany and had heard of a surplus of men in the colonies; Maria, a poor artist, is leaving Germany because there are no jobs for singers ‘these days’ in overcrowded metropolises like Berlin. Here, the African characters, represented as cannibals, have to serve as the background against which the ‘magnitude’ and the ‘hopelessness’ of the social situation of the German emigrants can be represented: the logic of the farce is that if Pickenbach even considers giving his daughters to ‘cannibals’ the situation ‘back home’ must be pretty bad. The domestic issue of urbanisation and overpopulation is here addressed against the backdrop of racist depictions of Africans as cannibals and Africa as ‘the last option’ or ‘better than nothing’.

As the case of *Nach Afrika, Nach Kamerun* has shown, the colonies are represented as a place where the antithesis of empire and nation-state is resolved, because it is here that a German collective can form ‘organically’ and not imposed by state policy. When the German nation was born in 1871, it lacked a unifying idea that would bind the people to the young nation (P. Marx 2008). This idea would soon become the idea of the *Volk*. In one of the numerous ‘Cameroon-plays’<sup>30</sup>, for example, it is again a pensioner who is the protagonist of the piece. The pensioner is introduced as being originally from Saxonia and finds himself in the company of a Jewish merchant, with whom he forms a kingdom in Cameroon in outspoken opposition to the Prussian bureaucracy at home<sup>31</sup>. In the end, the Prussian navy reveals this kingdom as a ‘farce’ and takes the pensioner and the merchant by force back home into the German empire.

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<sup>30</sup> *Bliemchen in Kamerun – Schwank in einem Akt* (‘Bliemchen in Kamerun – Farce in one Act’), 1887, by R. Heinze, Op. 80.

<sup>31</sup> “Bliemchen in Kamerun” [Bliemchen in Cameroon]. Posse in one Act [1887]. Text and Music by R. Heinze. Textbook found in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin.

I read this seemingly innocent little skit as echoing the popular colonial rhetoric at the time that the formation of an ethnic community happens in the colony more ‘authentically’, because it takes place in distinction to a hostile environment. Settlers thus form a community, according to this logic, because they need to stick together (represented by the highly different personifications of the Saxonian pensioner and the Jewish merchant). It is against this background that one also needs to read the many expressions of disappointment about the lack of exoticism of the colony South-West Africa in settler’s biographies and letters. Contrary to the ‘Pacific as Paradise’ epithet that Balme describes in *Pacific Performances* (2007), the settler’s accounts of South-West Africa paint the picture of an arid and uninviting landscape. The words of the young soldier Liebig are symptomatic for this perception: “Desert, desert, and all I had expected were palm-trees and jungle full of tropical fruit.”<sup>32</sup> The disappointments over the landscape met with descriptions of the effort and struggle it took to go about one’s daily business in the colony. A closer look at these descriptions reveals a discourse of pride about living, or rather surviving, in these difficult conditions. This pride is deeply entwined with ideas of national formation, as the comment of the settler Philates Kuhn (1907) shows. He argues that South-West Africa “is bad enough that Germans living here can stay Germans”<sup>33</sup>, in doing so, hitting the nationalist nail on its head. This struggle of existence, which marked the ‘true’ German strength, was emphasised by the conditions of the war. Thus, a colonial war presents itself here not as an aberration of the necessary development of history, but rather as a heightened experience of the

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<sup>32</sup> M. Liebig. *Humoristische Erinnerungen aus Südwest Afrika als Kolonial Truppler 1893* (‘Humoristic memories from South-West Africa as a colonial soldier 1893’), Diary, National Archives of Namibia, Private Accessions, File A.005, transl. by me.

<sup>33</sup> Kuhn, Philates. “Ein Ritt ins Sandfeld von Südwestafrika.” *Deutsch-Südwestafrika – Kriegs- und Friedensbilder. Selbsterlebnisse geschildert von Frau Margarethe von Eckenbrecher, Frau Helene von Falkenhausen, Stabsarzt Dr. Kuhn, Oberleutnant Stuhlmann*, Leipzig 1907.

struggle for existence, and racist ideas forestalled the ‘inevitable’ result of this struggle.

For the representation of the colonial project at large, the war in the colony South-West Africa was a turning point. It arguably awakened the Germans “from their dreams that the Africans would submit to their fate and would offer no resistance to the increasing loss of their land” (Zimmerer, *Genocide in South-West* 42). Idyllic representations of the colonies as a “re-found paradise” (Belgum 152) or “a *locus amoenus* with heightened appeal to the senses” (Balme, *Pacific* 10), that were prevalent in the press in the years before the war mostly as a response to the alienation of modern life, were made redundant by the outbreak of the war. So was any kind of imagery of the ‘noble savage’, or the colonised as a submissive subject of the German crown. This was most likely due to the increased distribution of witness-accounts, photographs, and ‘moving’ images from the battle-scene in the metropolitan public spheres.

Historians note seven military interventions in German South-West Africa, 77 in German East Africa and 101 Cameroon between 1889 and 1909 alone (Schulte-Varendorff 2007). These high numbers of military conflicts within only two decades of colonial occupation “symbolise[s] both the hubris and the utter failure of the German colonial project. What was supposed to prove to the world the superior colonizing skills of Germans fell to pieces within the first 20 years of Germany’s colonial adventure”, as historian Jürgen Zimmerer argues (*Colonial Genocide* 325). In Berlin, the war in the colony South-West Africa materialised in, what we would call today, a ‘multi-media-event’ (Ciarlo 2011; Brehl 2007). The press vividly reported on the tumultuous events overseas, memoirs and diaries of settlers and soldiers offered first-person-accounts of the war, and trade cards and postcards

depicting the battle and burning farmhouses circulated in the public sphere of the German empire. Entertainment personality and entrepreneur Carl Hagenbeck showed his support for the war by sending 2000 camels to South-West Africa<sup>34</sup>, and images of battle scenes, of dying Herero, and of the German colonial soldier, “with the iconic Southwestern hat and rifle” appeared across a range of products in the years leading up to the First World War (Ciarlo 271). In other words, the public sphere of the empire was saturated with citations and representations of the war overseas. Also, the popular theatres were not shy of entering the frenzy around the colonial war. In one way or another, many of them included in stories or anecdotes from the colony South-West, the battlefield, and especially the Herero into their repertoires.

The war that was the topic of many of these performances lasted from 1904-1908<sup>35</sup> and led to the extermination of about 80% of the Herero population. It is today referred to in scholarly discourse as ‘the first German genocide’ (Zimmerer, *War* 50). The war of 1904-1908, also often referred to as the Namibian War or the Herero-German War, “encompassed a series of military confrontations between a range of African polities and colonial powers”, as historian Reinhart Kössler posits (15). However, it is important to note that in the mediation of the war in the metropole it is especially the war against the Herero that was turned into the initial and defining event in the colonies, as literature scholar Medardus Brehl has rightly pointed out (102). The war against the Nama, which started in 1905 and lasted significantly longer, did not receive the same attention. This exclusive framing of the colonial war has been criticised by Namibian historian Memory Biwa, who warns

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<sup>34</sup> Carl Hagenbeck. *Von Tieren und Menschen* [On Animals and People]. 1909.

<sup>35</sup> Jürgen Zimmerer points out that “Germany unilaterally declared the end of the war on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1907. But captivity continued still until January 1908, when it was brought to a close in the celebration of the Kaiser’s birthday and the last Herero and Nama were released. In the meantime a tight system of control had been set up (...) All Africans had to carry pass-badges and were entered in ‘native registers’. They had no freedom of movement and it was forbidden for more than ten families to reside together. They were forced to work on European premises (...) there was no alternative for them to sell their labour to the white colonial masters” (Zimmerer, *Colonial Genocide* 328).

that the ignorance towards earlier massacres and the involvement of other ethnic groups in the resistance against the German colonisers has epistemological consequences for these communities and their histories until today (11). As I am interested in the representation of the war on the stages of the metropole, in which only the Herero were represented, I will, despite the short-comings, refer in this chapter mainly to the war between the German military and the Herero.

The war culminated in 1904 in genocidal action by the German colonial military (Kössler 15). After the inconclusive battle on August 11, 1904, at Ohamakari, which is in German often referenced as *Waterberg*, those Herero that survived fled eastwards and into the waterless *sandveld* desert. Here the German troops had sealed or poisoned many of the water holes in the desert and had erected a 250-kilometer barrier line from north-west to south-east, “with the expressed intention of driving the remaining Herero to an agonising death”, as genocide historian Mark Leven posits (235). Whereas recent oral sources testify to a tenacious resistance of the Herero also in the desert, as the study of ethnographer Larissa Förster has shown (2010), it is undisputed amongst historians today that thousands of Herero died of thirst and exhaustion in the desert, or through the executions by the German military. Those who nevertheless survived the desert were incarcerated into concentration camps and forced to heavy labour.<sup>36</sup> Nearly 15,000 Herero were incarcerated in these camps in 1906, which means that “the tribe had collapsed to considerably less than one-quarter of its pre-revolt numbers” (Leven 236). After the apparent defeat of the Herero in 1904, large groups of the Nama took up their arms against the German military in early October, 1904, which “was the beginning of a much more extended campaign, since the Nama employed guerrilla tactics and skilfully used their knowledge of terrain and environment” (Kössler 16).

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<sup>36</sup> The British had already used concentration camps to intern the Boers during the Second Boer War.

Without going deeper into the developments of the different wars (Herero and Nama), it is important to note that the wars involved strong anti-colonial resistance and that the “German military strategy and action to put down this resistance was genocidal”, as Kössler pivots (16). The genocidal character of the war is today often discussed based on the infamous extermination order (*Vernichtungsbefehl*) of General Lothar von Trotha, which reads as follows:

The Herero are no longer German subjects. They have murdered and stolen, have cut off the ears and noses and other body parts from wounded soldiers, and in cowardice no longer want to fight. ...[T]he Herero people must leave the country. If the people does not do that, then I will force it to with the Groot Rohr [big cannon]. Within the German border every Herero, armed or not, with cattle or without, will be shot, I will not take up any more women or children, will drive them back to their people or let them be shot at. (cit. in Zimmerer, *Colonial Genocide* 327)

An official report written by von Trotha, that he had sent to the army chief of staff only two days later, underlines the genocidal intent of his warfare even stronger:

The crucial question for me was how to bring the war against the Herero [Nation] to a close (...). As I see it, the nation must be destroyed as such ... I ordered the warriors ... to be court-martialled and hanged and all women and children who sought shelter here to be driven back into the sandveld [the Kalahari Desert] ... To accept women and children who are for the most part sick, poses a grave risk to the force, and to feed them is out of the question. For this reason, I deem it wiser for the entire nation to perish ... This uprising is and remains the beginning of a racial struggle ... (cit. in Anderson 1162).

The last statement shows that the Germans clearly believed themselves to be fighting a ‘race war’ in South-West Africa. Von Trotha was influenced “by his vision of an ongoing race war, which would end only with the complete destruction of either the ‘white’ or the ‘black’ race” (Zimmerer, *Colonial Genocide* 326). However, as

Zimmerer warns, the genocidal intent cannot be merely reduced to von Trotha's order. Rather, it needs to be stressed that the political circles in Berlin supported von Trotha's policy in principle,<sup>37</sup> and "approved his 'intention to annihilate or expel the entire nation', since, as von Schlieffen, the General Chief of Staff, wrote, the 'race war, once commenced, can only be ended by the annihilation or the complete enslavement of one party'" (Zimmerer, *Colonial Genocide* 327).

Rather than focusing only on the persona of von Trotha and running the risk of interpreting the genocidal events as the "aberrant behaviour of autonomous – even rogue – commanders who were off the government's leash, not to say completely out of control" (Levene 264), I argue that references to extermination in relation to the colonies and its inhabitants go further back than von Trotha's *Vernichtungsbefehl*. They are, as I want to claim in this chapter, much deeper rooted in the knowledge patterns of the young German empire than the mere focus on military policies could have accounted for. Knowledge formations on ideas of extermination can, for example, be found in the popular discourse on the struggle for *Lebensraum* ('living space') in turn-of-the-century Germany. Its most prominent advocate was Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), a German zoologist and geographer, who introduced the writings of Charles Darwin to a German public at the end of the nineteenth century. Especially the idea of space, or more precisely that of the aforementioned *Lebensraum*, was an important factor in the introduction of Darwin's ideas to a German context. In line with Darwinian theory, Ratzel argued that human

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<sup>37</sup> Two months after von Trotha's extermination order had been issued, "a form of counter-policy" (Levene 235) was issued by Wilhelm II. in Berlin, aiming rather at incarceration than extermination with regard to the Herero. This nevertheless did not prevent Wilhelm II. from opening the new German parliament (*Reichstag*) in 1907 with words of praise for von Trotha. He said in his speech: "The Fatherland owes its thanks to the brave men who have upheld the glory of the German military in a difficult struggle of many years against a wily, tenacious opponent" (cit. in Krieger 62). Only a few German politicians opposed the colonial warfare outspokenly, such as August Bebel from the Social Democratic Party (Anderson 1161).

populations were “shaped by the relationship to *Lebensraum* and the struggle for it” (Smith 54). Colonization played a key role in the extension of *Lebensraum* for Ratzel. Hence, the notion of the *Lebensraum*, most often associated with Nazi politics and its plans of expanding ‘eastwards’, was developed and applied in the colonies long before the Second World War, as historian Dirk Moses reminds us (172). In Ratzel’s opinion, colonization needed to go hand in hand with the establishment of agriculture: “only if conquests were accompanied by the establishment of direct farming by the conquerors would true colonization occur” (Smith 54). This suggests a form of colonialism that is based on settlement. It also echoes the popular trope of ‘the empty land’. Once a territory had been ‘discovered’ by explorers, merchants, or colonial adventurers, the land needed to be proclaimed as ‘empty’ in order to justify its occupation. The idea that ‘true’ colonization needed to be followed by the establishment of an agricultural infrastructure suggests thus that Western settlement and agriculture would render the ‘vast’ territory into something meaningful. The resistance of the ‘natives’, on the other hand, as for example in a colonial war, revealed the fictiveness of the ‘empty country’ metaphor. As this metaphor did not hold anymore, other strategies of justification needed to be invented.

The idea of *Lebensraum* as settlement also brings the colonial and the national project together. It shows that empire and nation-state correlate rather than form an anti-thesis. Settlers in the colonies, especially if they were to invest in an agricultural infrastructure, “would contribute to the German economy and preserve for Germany the virtue of pre-industrial culture”, as Woodruff Smith reads Ratzel’s emphasis on agriculture (65)<sup>38</sup>. Contrary to the swift adaption of *Nach Afrika, Nach*

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<sup>38</sup> The same counts for the English context, where, for example, James Anthony Froude wished to “retain the colonies because he thought it possible to reproduce in them a simpler state of society and a nobler way of life than were possible in industrial England” (Arendt 181).

*Kamerun* from the American emigration context to the African emigration context, Smith's comment shows that emigration to the colonies was perceived as significantly different than, for example, emigration to America at the time. This is so, because those emigrating to the colonies would stay part of the German nation-state and would contribute to its flourishing. As Short has argued "[t]he dream of white colonial settlement as a solution to the massive nineteenth-century German *Auswanderung* – as a means of keeping Germans from becoming American – has been since the 1840s the most popular aspect of German colonial ideology" (26). Historian W.D. Smith concludes, that "[e]migrationist colonialism appeared to reconcile faith in emigration with popular nationalism" (65).

Ratzel, a determined emigrationist, was not only convinced that "Germany's social well-being depended upon the movement of her people to larger settlement colonies" (Smith 66), but also that the search for *Lebensraum*, when applied to human population, determines "that the 'lesser' races, by which he meant, for instance, native American and African people, would have to make way for 'stronger' European, more specifically, 'Aryan' ones" (Levene 188)<sup>39</sup>. It is here, in the idea of space, that race and social Darwinism form a toxic nexus. Ideas of extermination were thus circulating the colonial and imperial discourses in Germany long before the term 'genocide' was coined. It is against this background that I want to discuss the colonial pantomime and its representation of the colonial war and its extermination strategies.

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<sup>39</sup> Ratzel also contemplates in his book on the idea of extermination. He ponders on the question whether "the allegedly more febrile races in this supposed global struggle would simply die out on contact with their more vigorous and dynamic contenders, or would have to be physically driven out, or even exterminated" (cit. in Levene 188).

## Circus Busch's colonial pantomime *South-West Africa* (1904)

The circus was, without a doubt, one of the important mass media that had the power to visualize the German empire by 1900. As Marline Otte argues, “the appearance of circuses as mass media in Germany must be read as one of the most colourful signs that Germany had entered the modern age, in which technology, the rationalisation of minds and bodies, and speed and precision were all held in high esteem” (Otte 31).

It was especially the genre of the circus *pantomime* that distinguished the circus around 1900. Paula Busch, daughter of circus director Paul Busch and later circus director herself, described the pantomime as “a great picture-book of the *Volk*” (Busch 65). The circus pantomime was introduced to German popular entertainment after the French model and through circus impresario Ernst Jacob Renz. Until the 1870s German circus repertoires would mainly stage equestrian and equilibristic acts in a dramaturgy of loosely connected acts (*Nummern dramaturgie*). The pantomime, however, became popular through the repertoire of Circus Busch at the turn of the century, and is thus a specific genre that historian Gerhard Eberstaller describes as an adaptation of a historical, political or literary topic embedded in a “fantastical-bombastic” staging (cit. in Kirschnick 92). Circus pantomimes often included a large number of circus personnel (up to 600 artists), spectacular stage technique, and extravagant scenery, like waterfalls, fountains or mass-scenes. The pantomimes combined elements of the German *Operette*<sup>40</sup> with that of the music hall revue, and emphasised the visual, the physical, and the performative over the spoken word. The emphasis on the body and the immediacy of a physical language were important elements of the pantomime that differentiated the repertoire of the circus from that of

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<sup>40</sup> The genre ‘operetta’ varies in its different culture contexts within Europe. It is said to have grown out of the French *opéra comique* in the middle of the nineteenth century and connotes a short and entertaining musical piece. Operettas were highly popular in turn-of-the-century Germany, which often included elements of the cabaret, the farce or the burlesque.

the so called *Kunsttheater*, which was mostly text based. However, the circus pantomime did not develop in opposition to the theatre. Rather, popular theatres and circus stood in a mutually dependent exchange and competition with each other. The pantomime is an indication of the dramatization of the circus, just as the specific dramaturgy of loosely connected acts of the music hall can be seen as inspired by the circus. The disappearance of the circus pantomimes after the First World War can be read as an adjustment by the circus to the aesthetic norms of the bourgeois variety theatre at the time.

The pantomime *German South-West Africa*<sup>41</sup>, with which Circus Busch opened its new season in Berlin 1904, represented the crucial battle between the Herero and the German military, which had led to the extermination of the Herero people. It is noteworthy that the battle had taken place only four weeks prior to the premiere. The proximity of the pantomime's premiere to the events in the colony raises the question to what extent the war was already 'coded' in the German public at the time, and to what extent the pantomime helped to codify it<sup>42</sup>. The question thus is, what kind of knowledge did the pantomime help to produce about the war? How did it allow its imperial audience to 'make sense' of the belligerent events overseas? How much 'colonial knowledge' did the domestic audience bring with it to the circus?

Although it is impossible to fully reconstruct either the reception or the full staging, one can assume that the circus pantomime reached deep into the metropolitan public sphere. The circus could encompass up to 4000 spectators and

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<sup>41</sup> I will refer from to the pantomime from here on in the English translation of the German title.

<sup>42</sup> Another question is how 'codified' the staging of colonial war scenes itself was at the time. For comparison, British circus groups all over Europe had already established the norm of staging colonial adventures and occupations in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See here for example, Astely's 'Burmese War' from 1825 or the staging of the Indian Mutiny in London by British circuses immediately after its brutal suppression in 1857. Kusnezow similarly shows the important role that the French circus pantomime played for the 'Napoleon cult' at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through staging so called historical military *mimodrame*, military- and battle-scenes glorifying the French army (see Kusnezow 57). The early colonial panoramas in Germany also often showed war scenes.

often played its pantomimes twice a day. Unlike the colonial literature, which attracted rather a small interest-group, the circus pantomime reached a much larger and much more diverse audience, especially in terms of class<sup>43</sup>. From Paula Busch's memoirs, we know that the pantomime played long into the next season and was even shown in the children's programme in 1905. While the circus usually toured its Berlin programme in spring to Vienna and Hamburg, the colonial pantomime remained in Berlin in 1905, and an older repertoire was re-staged in Vienna that year. All of this points to the fact that the representation of the Herero and the war were a great commercial success for the circus. Why the colonial pantomime was not shown in either Vienna or Hamburg, however, remains unclear.

Thanks to private collectors, the programme booklet<sup>44</sup> of the pantomime with a full description of the plot of the pantomime has survived, and allows for some careful assumptions about the action in 'on stage' and the "social experience of attending the circus" (Arrighi 612). Although the technical effort undertaken for this pantomime cannot be fully reconstructed today, one can assume that the pantomime was staged in a highly spectacular way. Beyond the specular/ocular dimension, it was popular theatre's physicality, sensuality and bodily energy that were pivotal for a shift in theatrical taste, and thus increasingly attracted the German middle class, at the end of the nineteenth century, as theatre historian Peter Jelavich argues (28).

In her discussion of the pantomime, cultural historian Sylke Kirschnick points out that Circus Busch, and especially its pantomimes, had been famous for their latest stage technique (Kirschnick 2002). The programme booklet paints a picture of a performance full of horses, military formations, drums, trumpets, fire,

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<sup>43</sup> Kusnezow argues that the circus repertoire evolved from balancing the tastes of the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie as well as the working class. In its early days, this was a mix of equestrian numbers and acts from the fairs (Kusnezow 18).

<sup>44</sup> The programme booklet of the pantomime I found in the private circus collection of the family Winkler in Berlin.

stage-battles, most likely explosives, slap-stick numbers, and nationalistic songs. This line up is very much in agreement with the aforementioned scholarly and contemporary characterisations of the circus pantomime.

The programme mentions that the first scene is set in an area at the *Waterberg* in former South-West Africa. Centre stage and on top of a hill stands a farmhouse, which is owned by the Bavarian farmer Erdman and his wife Luise. An old Herero woman arrives at the scene accompanied by a young Bavarian boy called Michael, who turns out to be Luise's brother and who has just arrived 'to Africa'. Both work for the German colonial military. The happy reunion of the siblings does not last long, as the soldiers are called into battle with the Herero. Here, the programme booklet mentions the arrival of a troop from the German navy, which (seemingly unmotivated) performs a navy ballet (*Marine Ballett*), while the circus ring is filled with drum rolls and the blaring of trumpets. The navy ballet is then followed by a military equestrian parade. While waiting for the Herero to attack, the German soldiers sing a "German song" in a "German manner" and evoke "feelings of *Heimat*". When the 'attack' finally takes place and the Herero enter the farmhouse, Luise is fighting alone on the battle scene, because her brother and her husband are wounded and unable to fight. The German colonial soldiers come to her rescue and the 'machine-gun-division' opens fire against the Herero. In the light of the burning farmhouse and the defeat of the Herero, the German flag is hoisted, a patriotic marching song is sung, and the soldiers together with Luise, Erdman, and Michael leave the circus ring whilst still singing. On their way out, they encounter a German scientific expedition, which is introduced as having explored new land in the north-east of the country and is accompanied by an "Ovambo Negro" with a herd of

elephants<sup>45</sup>. These stir great ‘entertainment’ and ‘laughter’ in the group and the booklet ends with pointing out their ‘general happiness’.

In representing a battle in the colonies, which had fostered considerable attention by the press, the pantomime needed to employ new aesthetic and artistic forms. It could not apply the usual amount of fantastic and romantic elements that characterised other pantomimes and even other battle scenes. It is thus little wonder that Constanze Busch, mother of Paula Busch and author of many of the circus pantomimes, stressed that the scenery and costumes, the depiction and representation of ‘the foreign people’ and landscapes, needed to be as ‘real’ as possible (cit. in Rath 92). In its quest for authenticity, the circus pantomime had to adopt a pseudo-documentary element without losing its spectacular character. Historical data and ‘facts’ that made up the programme booklet underlined such a documentary function, as did the faithful depiction of the characters on stage.

While there is no evidence of who played the role of the Herero, whether black actors were employed at all or whether this scene was staged in blackface, the artistic choice of representing the Herero as fighting with guns is noteworthy. The depiction of African people fighting with fire arms was new at the time, at least in the theatrical sphere. As David Ciarlo has argued, two main motifs of Africans in the aftermath of the war were prevalent: “as rebellious savages, drawn to look as murderous as possible, or as vanquished foes in ethnographic-style photographs of the enchained” (271). Postcards and trading cards circulated “images of savage

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<sup>45</sup> The scientific expedition on the search for new ‘frontiers’, that appears in the very last moment of the pantomime, is not unimportant. It was common for colonial narratives to legitimize conquest “by lending a scientific aura to those quests” (Shohat 45). The fact that the scientific expedition is accompanied by an individual from the *Ovambo* people is noteworthy, insofar as the *Ovambo*, demographically and politically a dominant group in former Southwest Africa, did not participate in the colonial war. They remained ‘loyal’ to the German colonizers (see Zimmerer, *Colonial Genocide* 338). The pantomime thus releases its audience with an image of the future, in which the Herero are defeated and the rest of the people of South-West Africa, here embodied in the Ovambo shepherd, have submitted to German rule.

warriors about to burn farmhouses and rape virtuous German women” (Ciarlo 280). In the years after the war, the burning farmhouse, so prominently displayed in the pantomime, became a travelling trope indicating exactly this conception of the colonial war, as one of defence from the side of the colonisers. It was a popular icon on post- and trading-cards, and reappears in plays about the war written years later.

While the Herero were armed with modern rifles in the war in South-West Africa, much of the mass culture at the time depicted the Herero attacking with spears, “a symbolic referent to the potential danger posed by the African native” (Ciarlo 281). The circus was thus faced with the dilemma that the representation of the war needed to be “sensational enough to attract but not so horrific as to repel” (Ciarlo 271). The other dilemma was that for a spectacular battle and for a dramaturgy that would hold its audience captive, the Herero needed to be represented as a strong enemy – or the pantomime would be over within five minutes. Here, the circus helped itself with a framing strategy that could circumvent this dilemma. The programme booklet featured a short but meticulous introduction. It offered a very factual description of the history of the Herero as a tribe, whose main income was based on cattle holding. The introduction also mentioned the firearms and the ‘fact’ that these had been given to the Herero by the Germans long before the war. The booklet argued that it was the Germans who had “light-mindedly” educated the Herero in how to use the firearms properly. This paints a picture of the Herero as ‘betrayers’, who have used the ‘light-minded’ (and this probably implies ‘good-hearted’) nature of the German colonisers and have now turned their own weapons against them. It also solves the theatrical dilemma of staging the enemy as a strong enemy in the circus ring, by emphasising that the strength of the enemy is only due to the strength of the German firearms they are using. Moreover, it offers a

representation of the war in which the Germans are not given a choice but to defend themselves against the ‘rebellious’ Herero.

Levene posits that when faced with an insurrection in the colonies, “the racist prop underpinning it was as good as useless” (265). When faced with the resilient resistance of the Herero, “racial characterisation of the Herero as people without the martial spirit with which to mount an effective rebellion” did no longer hold (Levene 255). The military strength and resilience of the Herero refuted the reasoning of a ‘black race’ weaker and inferior to a ‘white race’, upon which the German empire had been justifying its presence in South-West Africa in the first place. The framing strategy of the introduction, posing as ‘scientific’ information, allowed the circus to stage the Herero as strong enemies without risking that the German imperial power would lose its colonialist face. But it also allowed for something else to take place beyond issues of aesthetics. As I will argue in the following section, the allegedly scientific framing and the rhetoric of authenticity positioned Circus Busch in close proximity to a bourgeois discourse on ‘colonial enlightenment’, and thus further away from popular forms of colonial entertainment that merely catered to amusement and not to education. In other words, the particular framing of the pantomime catered to the desire of a bourgeois audience – dedicated to enlightenment thought – to educate the masses.

I will call this desire here ‘colonial enlightenment’, a term borrowed from historian John P. Short, which he developed in his book *Magic Lantern Empire* (2012). According to Short, the rhetoric of colonial enlightenment evolved from “countervailing discourses of socialist critique and bourgeois colonialism” (Short 3). It assumes that “[t]he working classes, and the broader masses of ordinary Germans in general, ostensibly required proper instruction to understand the German role in a world defined by resource extraction, commodity and labour flows, exchange and

competition on a new, global scale” (Short 3). The idea of colonial enlightenment was especially popular in the years of the colonial war. The fierce battles in the colonies and the political struggle ‘at home’ renewed “the emphasis on colonial science, expertise, and education”, as Short posits (153). The stronger the critique of the warfare in the colonies and its financial consequences got, “the more knowledge was rushed into the breach” (Short 153).

In its close proximity to the battle in South-West Africa and its authenticating elements, the pantomime can be read as part of this revitalisation of colonial enlightenment. Constanze Busch, who was the author of many of the Circus Busch’s pantomimes, described the role of the circus pantomime as the following: “Next to entertainment and sensationalism people want to satisfy their thirst for knowledge. The more stultifying work they have to perform during the day, the more they want to nurture their souls with new impressions and knowledge”<sup>46</sup>. She understood the role of the circus pantomime in one line with the emerging popular libraries<sup>47</sup>, workers-education-societies, and debating-clubs around 1900.

In its aim of fusing entertainment and education, Circus Busch’s colonial pantomime can thus be read as an attempt of bridging a bourgeois colonial discourse with that of the popular. This claim of holding an educative function next to its entertaining one was not unusual for a circus like Busch at the time. Many of the new visual media, like ethnographic exhibitions, panoptica, or the circus – all of them commercial enterprises - claimed the role of transmitting and mediating knowledge, next to their amusement value. Mirroring the bourgeois colonial discourse, but belonging to the sphere of mass entertainment, the pantomime is thus indicative that

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<sup>46</sup> The German original reads as follows: “Aktuell sein, lieber Freund! Unser Publikum will grosse oder kleine Weltgeschichte im Zirkus erleben! Und neben dem Amüsement und der Sensationslust wollen die Leute auch ihren Wissensdurst befriedigen!“, cit. in Busch 65, transl. by me.

<sup>47</sup> For comparison, Short shows that by 1906 “the *Volksbibliotheken* [popular libraries, LS] in the forty largest German cities counted between them some 1.4 million readers borrowing 5.4. million books. Around 400,000 of these readers were workers” (Short 115).

colonialism crossed class boundaries as well as confirm them. As Short argues, “[t]he links between class position and knowledge constantly surface in colonial discourse – requiring a history of German colonialism that is at once social and cultural, material and discursive” (152). He shows the anxiety of the bourgeoisie of the lower classes’ sensationalism, of their supposed fascination with cannibalism and fetish priests – “the stuff of dime novels and magic lanterns” (Short 152) On the other hand, the popularity of these forms of colonial discourse proves that other modes of colonial knowledge stubbornly persisted, despite the bourgeoisie’s attempts to tame it through their powerful weapon of ‘colonial enlightenment’. They show that much of the colonial discourse depended on the fusion of knowledge and fantasy, of authenticity and fiction.

What remains to be established is the exact ways in which the colonial pantomime was productive of knowledge formations concerning the war and the genocide. In other words, the question is what the epistemological consequence of the particular framing strategies, the theatricalisation of the colonial war, in this pantomime are for the war and the Herero. As I showed in the introduction, Judith Butler argues in her book *Frames of War* (2009) that frames (in the form of discursive as well as visual phenomena) work to differentiate the lives we can apprehend from those we cannot. Certain kinds of lives will appear in the field of perceptual representation as more precarious and more ‘grievable’ when lost than others. This “differential of power at work” distinguishes “between those subjects who will be eligible for recognition and those who will not” (Butler 138). We can thus, according to Butler, not refer to life outside of the frame. Rather, life is produced through and by these epistemological frames. I argue that the particular mode of representation in the colonial pantomime can be understood as such a framing strategy, and moreover that this framing strategy can be best described by

the notion of theatricality, a 'colonial theatricality'. Underlying this concept of theatricality is the idea that something or someone is rendered theatrical because someone puts the 'frame of theatrical apprehension' around them or it (Balme, *Pacific* 5). While I have discussed this understanding of theatricality in the introduction through examples that lie outside of the theatre understood as an art form or institution, this is obviously a different case with the pantomime. Here, the theatricality is already provided to a large extent by the space and by the expectation of the audience. In a theatre space (to which I include the circus space), the frame through which we perceive the things represented is already a highly theatrical one. This is, however, troubled by the circus pantomime's aforementioned aspiration to be part of the bourgeois colonial discourse with its ideals of colonial enlightenment and 'authenticity'. In other words, the theatricality of the things represented in the pantomime is downplayed by the pantomime itself, in that it claims to present 'authenticity' rather than theatricality. These two concepts seem to be contradictory, but actually played into each other's hands in the colonial discourse and its popular forms of representation. I will discuss in the following the extent to which the representation of the war on the stage (in its colonial theatricality) was compatible with a colonial ideology that deemed the lives of colonial subjects as the opposite of 'indispensable', namely as 'lose-able' and 'destructible'.

First of all, it is important to point out that the reason why the Herero were fighting the Germans in the first place is not once mentioned in either the introduction, or in the performance text. The war of extermination was turned, by the dramaturgy of the colonial pantomime, into a war of defence. This was a conception that held for a long time in the German popular memory, and can even be found in historiographical scholarship that emphasises 'victim resistance' as the main factor for the genocidal potential of the German warfare, and thus implicitly claims that

“the Herero were responsible for the catastrophic unfolding of events themselves” (Zimmerer, *Colonial Genocide* 332). It echoes the description of the genocide in the newspaper *Der Tag*, which I discussed in the introduction in its use of theatrical metaphors. Like in the newspaper, the dramaturgy of the pantomime frames the genocide through an ‘anti-conquest’ narrative, in that it presented the Herero as the attackers, while the German soldiers were observing and even singing (thus posing in the least aggressive mode possible).

While the gravity of the colonial war, i.e. its genocidal character, seems not to be represented in the pantomime, it was however also not *not* thematised. In asking for the epistemological consequences of this performance, the question is thus how this particular thematisation and mode of presentation of the war and the genocide connected to other existing bodies of knowledge at the time. This is important as I do want to show that the motivation for staging colonial violence that had taken place at the time cannot be understood as merely motivic or topical (as a good excuse for spectacular and exotic elements and effects on stage). Whereas I established earlier *what* the audience was most likely seeing, I will now investigate how they might have *made sense* of what they were seeing.

The premise for this investigation is that genocide and acts of collective colonial violence need to be understood as processes rooted within society as a whole. I am therefore interested in the question of how present and prevailing the idea of extermination (as the ultimate form of violence in a colonial war) was in German imperial society at the time. It is also important to ask how socially compatible these constructions of a truth about colonial violence were. In the following, I will scrutinise the idea of extermination at work in different colonial and non-colonial, theatrical and non-theatrical discourses.

In regard to the genocide on the Herero, it has often been argued by apologetic voices that the term ‘genocide’ was coined only in 1945, and thus cannot be applied to the exterminatory warfare of the Germans in South-West Africa. Despite the “ample evidence that the Hereros endured slavery, enforced labor, concentration camps, medical experimentation, destruction of tribal culture and social organizations, and systematic abuse of women and children”, especially legal scholars have argued, according to Rachel Anderson, “that because these acts were not illegal at the time they were perpetrated, Germany has no legal obligation to the Hereros” (1158). Especially from today’s standpoint and the ongoing lawsuits filed by Herero activists against the German government it is therefore crucial to look closer at the ideas of warfare at the time, as well as the discourses about Namibia and its peoples, and ask how the extermination of the Herero might have been legitimised or justified by contemporary voices.

The term genocide was coined by the Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959) and elaborated on in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (1944). Etymologically the term derived from the Greek word *genos* (tribe, race) and the Latin word *cide*. Since its emergence it has been vividly discussed and re-defined by historians, lawyers, activists, and scholars of the rather young field of genocide studies (Stone 2008; Moses and Stone 2007). Thus, there is no one definition of what constitutes a genocide. Lemkin’s book is a conglomerate of different examples of genocide in the past. He used the book to persuade delegates in UN circles to pass a convention banning genocide - and he succeeded. The UN convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide went into effect in December 1951. Its second article defines genocide as the following:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such:

1. Killing members of a group;
2. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
3. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
4. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
5. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

(cit. in Curthoys/Docker 14).

The question of intent and how to measure or prove a genocide remains a controversial issue until today (Stone 2008). Also, the fact that political and cultural genocide did not make it into the UN convention is still disputed. Both of them, however, were strongly present in Lemkin's 1944 definition in *Axis Rule*, "as part of the manifold ways the essential foundations of the life of a group were being destroyed" (Curthoys and Docker 14). Lemkin's own definition and the one manifested in the UN convention are thus not reducible to one another.

The examples in Lemkin's book also include European colonialism, and he provides a definition of genocide that closely entwines genocide and colonisation:

Genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and the colonization of the area by the oppressor's own nationals. (cit. in Curthoys and Docker 11)

Dominik Schaller analysed Lemkin's stance towards the war against the Herero and comes to the conclusion that "there can be no doubt that Lemkin 'regarded his

concept of genocide' as 'perfectly applicable to the events of 1904-1908'" (cit. in Curthoys and Docker 20). Yet, Schaller also points out that Lemkin's explanation of the genocide on the Herero conveys a Eurocentric and rather colonialist view on the belligerent events. He "fell in with a myth that the Herero, unable to reconcile themselves to subjection and loss of independence, chose to kill themselves in a kind of national suicide, with particular blame being attached to the Herero women", as Schaller explains (in Curthoys and Docker 20). More generally said, Lemkin's position towards European colonialism in Africa was one of advocacy rather than rejection and his ideas of African peoples convey some troubling racist undertones.

While the term genocide and its legal implications did not exist at the time of the war against the Herero, rules for "civilised warfare" (Levene 266), however, did. The Hague conventions, setting the framework for a European standard of civilised warfare at the end of the nineteenth century, took place in 1899 and 1907, and thus neatly frame the colonial war in South-West Africa. The European powers ratifying The Hague Conventions, however, made sure that these would not apply to situations where "the adversary turned out to be non-uniformed and, thereby, 'illegitimate'", as Levene explains (266). As the Herero were deemed by the German troops to be guerrilla fighters, the proclaimed civilised warfare did not apply in the context of that specific war. Levene, moreover, points to the hypocrisy of The Hague conventions, in which the leading powers, on the one hand, "proclaimed themselves to be purveyors of a humanitarianism even when it came to warfare, on the other, they unanimously exempted themselves, in total, when it came to the colonial context" (266). In this logic, it was possible for General Lothar von Trotha to retrospectively state that "in his opinion war in Africa couldn't be fought 'according to the laws of the Geneva Convention'" (Zimmerer, *Colonial Genocide* 326).

The logic of the ‘lawlessness’ of fighting in the colonies is based on particular assumptions and perceptions of the enemy’s right to exist, as I want to show in the following. The fact that the rules of civilised warfare did not apply to the battles with colonised peoples is an indicator for an understanding of the colonised not only as ‘uncivilised’, but as less human. This understanding stands in close connection to enlightenment notions of race, rationality, and progress. The reason why the war against the Herero, in comparison to other examples of collective colonial violence, could turn into a war of extermination and genocide needs to be searched for not only in von Trotha’s extermination order, but in ideas and knowledge patterns that allowed for his extermination order to be voiced in the first place. Questions of the formation of a collective German identity as well as European imperialism will thus need to be taken into consideration when looking for discourses that justify a genocidal warfare at the time. In the following section I will investigate lines of argumentation that attempted to justify the ‘exemption’ from civilised warfare for the colonial context and the extermination of a whole people.

In 1900 the former commander of the Southwest *Schutztruppe* [protection troop], Curt von Francois, published a little booklet on *Warfare in Southwest Africa*. It states that because the goal of the ‘natives’ in war is to eliminate their enemy, it must be the *Endziel* [end goal] of the ‘whites’ in a colonial war to also eliminate their enemy (Francois 1900). He not only places the colonial warfare outside of any ratified rules, but justifies the extermination of colonised peoples with their own alleged drive to exterminatory warfare. In this logic, the warfare of the coloniser becomes a kind of ‘self-defence’. It is the particular image of ‘the native’ as not committing to a civilised warfare that informs the warfare of the colonisers. Frantz Fanon (1963) posits on this note that within the colonial world, the colonised are often “declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absences of values,

but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is absolute evil” (cit.in Yancy 8). One just has to consider that the title of a performance in the *Belle-Alliance-Theater* in Berlin described Africa as *The Black Hell* (1904) to understand how prevalent the connection between colonised, blackness, and evilness was. Similar constructions, relating the right to extermination to a particular perception of the colonised, can be found in many of the settler, academic, and literary discourses at the time.

A petition addressed to the Colonial Department in Berlin from newly arrived colonists in Windhoek shows this paradigmatically. Those settlers complain that, “from time immemorial our natives have grown used to laziness, brutality and stupidity ... any white man who has lived among natives finds it almost impossible to regard them as human beings at all in a European sense” (cit. in Levene 240). By “asserting to oneself that the ‘natives’ were less than human” (Levene 239), the expropriation of their land and cattle became a justifiable means in the eyes of the settlers. Paul Rohrbach, head of South-West Africa’s settlement commission after the genocide, gets to the heart of it when he writes in 1907:

For a people, as for an individual, an existence appears to be justified in the degree that it is useful in the progress of a general development. By no argument in the world can it be shown that the preservation of any degree of national independence, national property and political organisation by the races of South West Africa would be of greater or even of equal advantage for the development of mankind in general or the German people. (cit. in Levene 240)

Rohrbach’s account seems to be based on a more general idea of cultural evolutionism, when he argues that an existence is justified to the degree that it contributes to the development of mankind in general. In his example, mankind is obviously understood as white and European. As the peoples of South-West Africa

do not contribute to this general development, according to Rohrbach, their existence is not justified. The consequence of this logic, on the other hand, is that their extermination is very well justified. These ideas of ‘general development’ and ‘contributing to mankind’s development’ do also often appear in colonial literature, as Brehl has argued and it is thus little wonder that they also present themselves in the circus pantomime (Brehl 215).

Whereas the pantomime does not mention the extermination of the Herero as such, it does mention the idea of extermination in relation to the farmhouse. It says in the programme booklet, that if the military does not succeed in driving the Herero out of the farmhouse, the “extermination of the farmhouse will become an unconditional necessity” [*‘dass die Vernichtung des Hauses zur unbedingten Notwendigkeit wird’*]. It is striking that the idea of extermination is presented here as of ‘unconditional necessity’. Seen in the larger context of the colonial war, this sentence uncannily resembles the military strategy of General von Trotha, whose aforementioned extermination order called for the Herero to either leave the land or they will be shot. Similar to von Trotha’s strategy of warfare, the warfare in the pantomime does not allow for prisoners to be taken. The Herero, occupying the farmhouse, need to either be driven out or exterminated with the farmhouse all together. That the Herero were indeed killed by the German military in the pantomime is further insinuated by the description of the machine-guns<sup>48</sup> as ‘murderous’, and by the fact that the farmhouse is burning in the end. The burning farmhouse became a popular trope in the years of the war and long after, appearing especially on post- and trading-cards.

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<sup>48</sup> While the machine-gun is most often associated with the First World War, Dirk Moses reminds us, that it was already used in the colonial wars to “mow down thousands of ‘natives’ in the colonies” (Moses 172). The image of the farmhouse also symbolizes the general popularity of agrarianism among the middle classes at the turn of the century, as Woodruff Smith argues, “because its imagery symbolizes the negation of industrialization and all its works” (Smith 58).

The figure of the fearless female German settler, like Luise, became another trope, at least in many of the colonial popular performances. This figure entered the popular stages (and pages) as a symbol for a concept of Germanness that was increasingly defined by ideas of race, as I argue. This concept of a German national identity along the lines of race also figures in the fact that the pantomime depicts the battle in the colony as bringing together such heterogeneous people as a Bavarian boy, a lieutenant, soldiers, and a farmer's wife. It echoes the aforementioned *topos* of the *Volks*-community that forms best under difficult conditions. The unifying laughter at the end of the performance can, in that regard, be read as an affirmation of a collective identity that was established along ethnic and racial lines. As mentioned earlier in this chapter in my rephrasing of Peter Marx's argument, the popular comical in new theatrical genres like the colonial pantomime often performed a stabilizing role for the bourgeoisie in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and often confirmed hegemonic structures, rather than forming an alternative to them (P. Marx 204). The unification of Luise and Michael, of the farmers and the soldiers, into one ethnic entity, into a *Volk*, was thus not only supposed to take place in the circus ring (in terms of the representation of the collective identity), but was meant to 'spill over' into the circus ring and affect its audience. The sentiments of home [*Heimat*] provided by the songs, the spectacular effects and the unifying laughter in the end can all be considered affective means to awaken, what Hannah Arendt had called in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, "a consciousness of common origin" (165).

That this idea of a common origin was based on the notion of the *Volk*, and thus on ideas of race, will be argued in the following. The figure of the female colonisers soon became a new agent of this new definition of white German colonial society, in the years after the war. The German physician Rudolf Virchow was convinced that "European populations could not reproduce in the tropics" (Smith

66). The foundation of the Women's Colonial Society in 1907 became pivotal for this conundrum of tropical reproduction. The German colonies, and here particularly South-West, were commonly perceived as male-dominated spaces. The agenda of the Women's Colonial Society was to send more German women into the colonies and especially to South-West Africa. Since the turn of the century, women (mainly bourgeois and aristocratic) had lobbied for playing a more important role in the German imperial endeavour. The appearance of Luise in the colonial pantomime of Circus Busch, as early as 1904, forestalls what would become a deliberate wave of female emigration to the colonies in the years after the war. Her presence on the colonial battle-field and the fact that she was 'fighting like the men' can be read as an indicator for this new colonial women's movement.

The plays and performances of the time show many Luises, Hedwigs and Augustes emigrating overseas. These include the wives and fiancées of aristocratic and bourgeois settlers, soldiers, and administrators, as well as working class women, who either travelled to the colony for work, or to find a husband. Another colonial pantomime by Circus Busch *Aus unseren Kolonien* [From our Colonies] stars, for instance, a female missionary called Hedwig, who is, like Luise, depicted as fearless and serving the empire by bringing morality and order to the colony. Skits like *Unsere Kolonien* ('Our colonies') [1914], *Hurra Germania* ('Hurray Germania') [1893] or *Koloniales an Kaisers Geburtstag* ('Colonial matters on the Emperor's birthday') [without date] depict white female housekeepers, who either emigrated already or are about to emigrate to the colonies, and whose counterpart in the plays is often a black servant.

According to the logic of the Women's Colonial Society and in line with an imperial anxiety regarding miscegenation, the presence of white German women in the colony was not only meant to secure reproduction, but also to prevent

reproduction between white men and black women (Wildenthal 2001). It can be said that female colonisers played a dual role, as markers of racial territory and as producers of homeland ideals. Luise's appearance on the imperial stage was thus meant to assure 'racial purity' in the colonies through reproduction, as it was she who was able to 'secure' the future of white German settlers in the colony. The appearance of the white female coloniser also denotes an end of the sexual practices and habits of the early German settlers, and thus a caesura to a first phase of German colonialism, as historian Birthe Kundrus (2003) has convincingly argued. In the war scene, Luise performs a restoring function to the general imperial order by introducing a new (however no less) imperial order. While the burgeoning women's rights movement in the metropole at the time was perceived as a threat to the patriarchal imperial order, Luise's appearance works as rather stabilizing, although renewing, the vulnerable and injured imperial order. In defending the farmhouse and her family from the colonial 'Other' in the pantomime, Luise introduces the domestic sphere to the colonial context as equally important as the militarist occupation for a successful colonisation. If in Ratzel's theory of *Lebensraum* agriculture played a pivotal role, the domestic sphere is here introduced in a similar function for securing the colonial project. The colonial pantomime thus adds the role of domestic space to the function of agriculture (Luise and Erdmann are farmers). In times of a weakened imperialist masculinity, as the pantomime suggests, it is the female connoted domestic sphere and its weapon of 'mass-reproduction' that offer a promise to securing colonial sovereignty.

### *The Metropol-Theater's Revue You've Got To See That (1907)*

While the circus pantomime was celebrated for its colonial theatricality at the beginning of the war, another 'colonial circus' was under public attack for the same

reason at the end of the war. This was “[t]he Colonial Circus in the Election Campaign”, as the socialist *Leipziger Volkszeitung* headlined in 1907:

In order to show the productivity of our colonies, the [colonial] association will doubtless bring in a great menagerie of animals bred there. Several giraffes will dance the national anthem and parrots will recite speeches by Bülow and others. Children of loyal [*reichstreu*] voters may ride zebras spotted in black, white, and red ... At the end of each performance, Dr. Peters and Puttkammer, in original Herero costume, will eat fire and mimic the ‘savage man’, and much better, much truer to life, than real Negroes from the waxworks or the master’s coach-box can do it. ... The national Colonial Circus could even charge a reasonable entry fee and thereby help fill the consumptive cash-box of the bourgeois parties. [Circus impresarios] Busch and Schumann, however, might want to look for new sensations. (cit. in Short 107)

The protagonist of this specific ‘colonial circus’ was the heated discussion over the war budget in the German parliament, that caused new elections in Berlin in 1907. On December 13, 1906, Chancellor von Bülow had dissolved the German parliament, due to the refusal of the Centre Party to sign off on 29 million marks as further financing of the war in South-West Africa (Kundrus 9). The war had by then already cost up to 600 million marks. The political struggle around the financing of the war allowed the nationalist Right to recast the colonial discourse as one of patriotism and loyalty, and to make the elections not about “suffrage, tariff, or tax reform (...) [but] about national honour and loyalty to the nation on the field of empire” (Short 135). The result of the new elections was a landslide for the conservative, pro-colonialism powers and a major loss for the anti-colonial opponents, which diminished the presence of the Social Democratic Party in the German parliament by half.

The struggle over colonial policy was a ‘hot topic’ in the contemporary mass media and offers another telling example of “the growing interpenetration of mass culture and politics” (Short 105). Whereas the circus pantomime had used a careful mixture of strategies from both the bourgeois colonial discourse and the circus’s usual repertoire, the annual revue of the *Metropol-Theater* in Berlin, as I will show in the following section, applied quite outspoken colonial propaganda. But instead of being applauded for performing the proximity of colonial propaganda and popular entertainment, this example rather shows the confusion about the lack of distance between the two.

The *Metropol-Theater* was one of the most popular and most successful theatres in Berlin at the time and its revues came to be considered “the ideal expression of Berlin’s modernity” (Jelavich 166). The annual revues presented in the *Metropol-Theater*, under the directorship of Richard Schulze, were famous beyond the city of Berlin. Between 1903 and 1913, ten revues were staged (mainly written by Julius Freund and composed by Victor Holländer). They parodied current fashions and scandals, reflected on the multifaceted life of Berlin and its modernity, and employed stage-effects and political satire. Formally, they “replicated the fragmented diversity of urban experience” and thematically, “they executed the self-confidence of the Imperial capital”, as Jelavich posits (166). It is thus little wonder that the *Metropol-Theater* was considered to exemplify much of the contemporary discourse on the role of popular theatre. For some critics, the revues could not be political enough; for others, politics did not belong on the *Metropol’s* stage at all. The bourgeois daily paper *Berliner Tageblatt*, for example, describes the *Metropol* revue in the following way: “By laying the finger on social problems and the weakness of distinguished personalities, it is in fact educational in nature. With notably greater means, with her visual and verbal power, she (sic!) continues the

work especially of the satirical press” (cit. in Otte 225). Most often, however, the revues “tended to avoid overt political statements” (Jelavich 154) and lacked a clear standpoint. Instead, they “tended to make fun of all parties” (Jelavich 3). Run as a commercial business, the revue had an interest in staying attractive to a large audience and could not ‘afford’ to take too clear a political side. But it did show a particular affinity for colonialism.

While the colonial pantomime of Circus Busch ended in the unifying laughter of the white settlers and soldiers, and thus with a ‘happy ending’ for the colonisers, the opposite was the case in the revue *You’ve Got To See This*<sup>49</sup> in the *Metropol* in 1907. It is important to understand that the revues consisted of a chain of different scenes, that were referred to as ‘images’. Those images depicted scenes from the recent past (the last year) and passed by the spectator’s eyes in a dramaturgy of loose acts. Visuality and spectatorship were indispensable elements of the revue. Even the title of the revue *You’ve Got To See That* testifies to this emphasis on spectating and to the interpenetration of spectating and empire.

The second image of the *Metropol*’s annual revue in 1907, called *In Südwest Afrika* [‘In South-West Africa’], shows a troop of soldiers close to dying in the desert of South-West Africa<sup>50</sup>. The soldiers and their lieutenant were resting at a dried-out well in the desert, suffering from intense thirst and fever, and are awaiting their death. They are surrounded by the enemy, the Herero, and their last hope is the arrival of a second colonial troop that is supposedly on its way. Here, the script indicates two different versions of an ending. In the first version, the troop that is

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<sup>49</sup> *Das muss man seh’n! Grosse Jahresrevue in 4 Akten und 12 Tableaux* (‘You’ve Got To See This! Big Annual Revue in 4 acts and 12 tableaux’), 1907, Metropol-Theater Berlin. Written by Julius Freund, Music by Victor Holländer. The version of the text I am working with is from the archives of the Free University of Berlin, from the estate of Julius Freund.

<sup>50</sup> I base my analysis on the libretto of the revue, which survived in the private estate of the author Julius Freund and which can be found in the archives of the *Freie Universität* in Berlin.

meant to save the lieutenant and his soldiers arrives just in time at the battle field, and helps defeat the Herero. The scene ends with the song *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* ('Germany, Germany above all'). In the second ending the other troop arrives too late. The lieutenant is shot and dies in the arms of the arriving officers. The last words of the scene are 'too late! too late!'

Before I go on to unpack this scene, I want to mention an important point for the larger context in which the revue took place: by 1907 the war in South-West Africa was already over and Germany had faced new elections at the beginning of the year. Those were accompanied by a huge amount of colonial propaganda, "with rallies, lectures, and the distribution of millions of pamphlets" (Short 53). Unlike the circus pantomime at the beginning of the war, the revue was thus embedded in a considerably larger amount of imagery and eye-witness accounts from the war scene in South-West Africa. Moreover, unlike the pantomime's attempt of bridging its spectacular scenery with a 'scientific' discourse, the revue comments on past social, political, and cultural events in the form of satire or mockery.

While the evidence of the commercial success of the colonial pantomime suggests that the performance hit the taste of its audience, there is no evidence whether the main part of the audience appreciated the *Metropol's* interpretation of the colonial war. As Jacky Bratton has argued in her book *Acts of Supremacy* (1991), we "can point to the ideological dimensions of each theatrical event which we can scrutinise closely enough; but beyond a certain point we cannot be sure of our interpretations of them" (15). Additionally, Jim Davis (2015) has suggested to look at 'performances of spectating'<sup>51</sup> instead, which could indicate what was expected from a particular repertoire and what was not. It could give us an idea of how the

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<sup>51</sup> I quote Jim Davis here from an unpublished paper he held at the Warwick research seminar in December 2015 with the title "Idle Tears, Hollow Laughter and Cultural Containment: English-speaking Performers in India and Australia in the late-nineteenth century".

audience made sense, or was supposed to make sense, of what they saw on stage. In the case of the revue, newspaper articles and reviews are the only pertinent source, and can at least give an idea how the critics perceived the representation of the exterminatory war in South-West Africa.

Contrary to the great success of the circus pantomime, the press was appalled by the revue's representation of the colonial war. A critic from the conservative-liberal newspaper *Vossische Zeitung* objected, that "this is not the task of the Metropol-Theater to depict such events."<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger* testifies that the scene "caused disconcertment" in relation to rest of the revue.<sup>53</sup> And the *Welt am Montag* simply assessed with regard to the scene that "entertainment can be many things".<sup>54</sup> The critique of the socialist newspaper *Vorwärts* is a bit more telling: "What almost never happened in earlier revues, was this time performed extensively: a kind of War-Society-Patriotism, inside hollow, but greatly tarted up, replaced a satirical audacity."<sup>55</sup> The last comment, in particular, gives an idea of the repertoire usually provided by the *Metropol* to its audience, or, rather, the expectations of what this repertoire would be: satirical audacity and not patriotic propaganda, in any form.

One could assume that the disconcertment of the press with the particular depiction of the colonial war has to do with the unusual staging of a "Teutonic masculinity" (Schmidt 110), as it showed the German soldiers as extremely weak and exhausted, which posed an aberration at the time of the stock-character of the

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<sup>52</sup> "Verfehlt war im ersten Akt die Szene, die den Zuschauern die schmach tenden, von den Schwarzen überfallenen und niedergemetzelten Südwestafrikaner vorführte. Es ist nicht die Sache des Metropoltheaters sich mit solchen Vorgängen zu beschäftigen." *Vossische Zeitung*, 15.09.1907, LA Berlin, file 'Metropol Theater' A.Pr.Br.Rep.030-05 Th.714.

<sup>53</sup> "Die Revue beginnt mit einer tragischen Szene in Südwestafrika, die zunächst ein wenig befremdet", *Berliner Lokalanzeiger*, 16.09.1907, LA Berlin, file 'Metropol-Theater'.

<sup>54</sup> "Zum Amüsement gehört mancherlei", *Welt am Montag*, 16.09.1907, LA Berlin, file 'Metropol-Theater'.

<sup>55</sup> *Vorwaerts*, 12.09.1905, LA Berlin, file A.Pr.Br.Rep.030-05 Th.714.

iconic German colonial soldier.<sup>56</sup> I argue, however, that the press' critique points to something else: the unwritten limits of popular theatre's involvement in colonial propaganda. It needs to be understood in the light of a new and heated phase of colonial propaganda. In line with Short's argument that the war in South-West Africa and its impact on the domestic political system showed the interpenetration of popular entertainment with the bourgeois colonial discourse, the quoted voices of the press express their disapproval of exactly this overlapping. Despite their political ideologies, all critics agree that it is not the role of the revue to comment on colonial politics, or at least not in such a way. Whereas the conservative papers refer to a nebulous 'role' of the revue that does not include colonial propaganda, the socialist paper showed its disappointment with the scene because it overrides the usual satirical agency of the revue. All of them indicate that this particular scene performs an aberration of what is usually shown in the *Metropol-Theater*. The reviews show that this scene of the revue stands out, not only from the rest of the revue, but from the *Metropol's* repertoire in general. In contrast to the other 'images' of the revue and of earlier revues this scene is neither satirical nor ironic. It is not making fun of anyone, but rather gives a 'grim' picture of the war and of the consequences for the empire's 'own men'.

Even more important and in line with the argument I made about the popular theatre's staging of the colonial project, the revue uses the battle against the Herero for a critique on the politics at home. Early on in the scene, a young soldier asks his lieutenant how the situation could have gotten so bad. And the lieutenant replies that

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<sup>56</sup> For a deeper analysis of the role German masculinity played in the colonial project see Schmidt (2014). Heike Schmidt points out that colonialists "tended to perceive any suggestion of flaws in Teutonic masculinity as a direct threat to the colonial project" (110). Similar argues Namibian historian Memory Biwa, that German soldiers were usually "not publically shown as being wounded or dead on the battlefield, instead there are series of images of courageous German soldiers on camelback, soldiers rolling machinery across the sand, posing with canons or in pursuit on horseback" (Biwa 82).

the answer to this question ‘lies in Berlin’: “Would the gentlemen have spent only one night – a singular one like this / in our misery and danger / they would be less skimp and thrifty” (underlining in original, transl. LS). The description, ‘the gentlemen’, here of course refers to the politicians in the German parliament (represented in the synecdoche ‘Berlin’), who are accused by the lieutenant for being cheap with regard to the military budget.

The *Metropol* revues were known to ridicule especially the Social Democrats (August Bebel was a popular target in most of the revues). While the description ‘the gentlemen’ could refer to all parties of the German parliament, it is most likely that those addressed are the Social Democrats, as they (together with the Centre Party) had refused to ratify the extra war-budget. Instead of the “bloodthirsty” Herero, it is thus (once more) the Social Democrats, who are put on trial in the *Metropol-Theater*. It is they who are presented as the real enemy of the dying German soldiers in the revue. The rhetoric of Centralist and SPD politicians betraying “German youths struggling against cruel savages under a pitiless sun” was not uncommon for this time, as Short has discussed in great detail (135). As aforementioned, the war and especially the new elections as a direct consequence of it, gave colonial propaganda a new fillip and much of it appealed to “patriotic sentiment, colonial race hatred, and fear of socialism” (Short 135). As historian Tobias Becker (2014) has poignantly argued, the image of the dying soldiers in the *Metropol* revue inverted the situation of the genocide by depicting the German colonial soldiers as ‘thirsty’ and close to dying of thirst in the desert, while it was in fact the Herero, who were deliberately trapped in the desert by Germany colonial troops. This image of ‘defence’, that overwrote the warfare of extermination, flourished in the German public sphere and in its popular memory until today, as the ‘myth’ of a particular peaceful German colonialism.

Representing the war and the alleged necessity of the genocide as a matter of self-defence (of the ‘white race’), places the cause for the war with its victims, the colonised. This dramaturgical strategy echoes what Mary Louise Pratt (1991) has coined as the strategy of “anti-conquest”, which connotes “strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony” (9). The main protagonist of the anti-conquest strategy is, according to Pratt, the “‘seeing-man,’ an admittedly unfriendly label for the white male subject of European landscape discourse – he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess” (Pratt 9). The revue *You’ve Got To See This* of the *Metropol-Theater*, employed this figure as a dramaturgical technique, and therefore reveals its imperialist framing strategy. Instead of a *male* white subject, the seeing-man in the revue was a seeing-woman. It is not any kind of ‘seeing-woman’ that is leading the audience’s attention and eyes through the course of the revue, but *Clio*, the muse of historiography, herself. Usually depicted with pen and paper and as looking away from her onlooker, Clio is mostly associated with text and writing, and barely with visibility or the spectacle (Maurer 2013). The Clio from the *Metropol* revue, however, is indeed a ‘seeing-woman’ in accordance with Pratt’s line of thought. One that is not only looking, but looking through *imperial eyes*, and as it is she who is leading the audience through the performance night, so does the *Metropol* audience. Clio closes the second ‘image’ with the following words: “This was a glance at those zones, where in blood stained traces the fearless battalions are fighting: the pioneers of culture” (transl. LS).<sup>57</sup> And goes on to address the “*Volk*, from any political affiliation and any political party”, to ask, if one can simply neglect the achievements of these ‘Pioneers’, “as if it was only a game” (transl. LS).

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<sup>57</sup> *Das muss man seh'n! Grosse Jahresrevue in 4 Akten und 12 Tableaux* (‘You’ve Got To See This! Big Annual Revue in 4 acts and 12 tableaux’), 1907, Metropol-Theater Berlin.

The fact that it is not any ‘seeing-woman’, but the allegory of history is interesting. It is not a history that is being written, like the usual depiction of Clio would suggest. It is a history that is looked at, observed and witnessed. Clio is not writing history but observing it and giving an account of it, like the genre of the revue itself (from French *revoir*; ‘to see again’). The revue shows how an event like the war in the colony is rendered into an historical event in the first place, how a particular conception of the history of the war is produced. It is the workings of historiography herself, in the figure of the ‘seeing-woman’ Clio, that become the protagonist of this ‘anti-conquest’ mode of presentation. Not yet history, the revue shows its audience the possibilities of how this war, and possibly the German colonial project at large, could go “down in history”: either as a success or as a failure, depending on how successful Clio’s lobbying for the ‘pioneers of culture’ turns out to be.

The harsh critique against the particular framing strategies employed by the *Metropol* revue might indicate that this kind of colonial propaganda, that would have probably gone unnoticed on a leaflet or in an event of the official Colonial Society, was not ‘readable’ in the frame of the *Metropol*’s annual revues. It shows that the audience could not ‘make sense’ of it, not because the content was not ‘legible’, but because the form (colonial propaganda) was not yet codified in the frame of the *Metropol* revue.

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What both examples have shown is that the idea of a “uniform German ‘colonialism’” (Short 17) is misleading, and that colonial knowledge and colonial discourse at the time were marked by diffusion rather than concentration. The colonial performances showed how both the bourgeois colonial discourse and the

field of mass popular entertainment produced and transmitted colonial knowledge about the war that was not contained by the institutionalised forms of bourgeois colonial enlightenment in institutions such as the German Colonial Society, or other state-sanctioned colonial propaganda machinery. But we have to consider a multiplicity of discourses, informing and policing each other. Also within the realm of popular theatre, the mediation of the colonial project and its violence has not been homogeneous, although many topoi and motifs from the war were recurring in the different popular forms of colonial performances, such as the burning farmhouse, the element of defence and a weak German masculinity. The case-studies discussed in this chapter thus refute the idea that commercial success would exclude an engagement with a topic like a colonial war.

The example of Circus Busch has shown that popular entertainment sometimes mirrored the univocal, expert discourse of the colonialist bourgeoisie and intersected it with spectacular, mass culture-appropriate stage effects. At other times, as the example of the *Metropol-Theater* has shown, popular theatre could betray its usual repertoire of politically ambiguous satire by staging clear-cut colonial propaganda. Here, an anxiety about the blurry boundaries of the different colonial epistemes, popular and bourgeois, surfaced in the voices of the critics. As shown, the circus pantomime as well as the revue, applied new elements or changed their conventional theatrical tools. The circus pantomime successfully applied an almost documentary style and played down its romantic and fantastic elements. The revue of the *Metropol-Theater*, on the other hand, was criticized for betraying its usual ambiguous and satirical stance on daily politics, and taking a clear and melodramatic stance in favour of the colonial project instead. In both performances, the colonial experience informed new ways of representing both the Herero (armed with fire-weaponry) and the German colonisers (weak masculinity, strong female figure).

Moreover, the chapter showed that it was the interpenetration of different framing strategies, from bourgeois colonial enlightenment to the popular colonial discourses of the entertainment industry, that did not just represented the war and its genocide, but legitimised it as well.

In the following chapter I will continue with the question of representation with a particular emphasis on the dynamic between representation and self-representation. Through a series of colonial court-cases I will explore the interplay of law, race, and citizenship in the dynamics of the making and the unmaking of colonial subject positions. Pivotal in this chapter will be the concepts of mimicry, duplicity, and imposterism, which I will discuss in terms of their function and articulation as both a powerful tool of colonial authority and a tool of resistance.

## Chapter Two

### The Making and Unmaking of the Colonial Subject -

#### Colonial Jurisdiction, Race, and Performance

In any colonial empire, the law and the court were central spheres in which the relation between coloniser and colonised were negotiated. One important colonial juridical encounter took place at the turn of the century between the former German colony Kamerun and the German empire in the so called ‘Akwa Affair’. The umbrella term ‘Akwa Affair’, coined by one of the many German newspapers reporting about it, encompassed different trials and court cases in Kamerun, as well as in Hamburg and Berlin, that were all concerned with the Kamerunian family, the Akwas. The Akwa family was part of the larger Duala<sup>58</sup> population in the West Coast of Africa, where defined trading zones had developed in the nineteenth century, in the wake of global trade with European merchants, which were reserved for particular families of the Duala (Eckert 1991, Schaper 2012). Duala was at the time a strategically important harbour-city<sup>59</sup>, where European trading-companies and settlers had established themselves amongst the old trading-houses of the indigenous population throughout the nineteenth century. In 1884, a council of established Duala

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<sup>58</sup> The plural form ‘Duala’ is here meant to point out the political coalition of different interest-groups amongst the people from the Duala region. As ethnographer Stefanie Michels (2013) explains, the Duala were (at least since the nineteenth century) organized in so called ‘mamboa’. The translation of ‘mamboa’ comes close to the meaning of ‘house’ in the Western regions of Kamerun, who shared similar social- and trading-structures, according to Michels. The mamboa were no static entities but could dissolve and be built new. At the top of each mboa stood a ‘sango’, which was similar to the structure of the mamboa not a stable position, but one that could be challenged and replaced by a new ‘sango’. This points, according to Michels, to a very complex and highly competitive order among the Duala.

<sup>59</sup> As Ulrike Hamann (2016) posits, the city was founded around 1600 and was back then named ‘Dwal’a’ by its founder Ewale a Mbedi (Hamann 219). Today it is officially referred to after the French spelling as ‘Douala’. German officials as well as representatives of the local population referred to it during the time of German colonialism as ‘Duala’ and I will use this notation in this chapter as it represents the historical context I am describing here. See also Austen and Derrick 2011.

authorities of the two largest families (Akwa and Bell) signed the so called 'protectorate contract' (*Schutzvertrag*) with the German trade company *Woermann and Jantzen & Thormählen*, in the hope that the alliance with the Germans would strengthen their own position within their communities.<sup>60</sup> The trade company later transferred the sovereignty to the German empire.

The founding of the German colony Kamerun had thus taken place as a legal transaction, although as I shall show in the course of this chapter, the two parties understood different things under the terms of the contract. Parts of the treaty assured the Duala the position as middlemen in trade with the inland area,<sup>61</sup> but ultimately their monopoly was broken by the Germans. The fact that in 1905 the Duala filed a petition against the German colonial administration in Kamerun, accusing it of misconduct and misuse of power, of exploitation and unlawful enactment of the regulations, shows that the German colonisers did not abide by the agreement, or never took the contract seriously for what it was, a legally binding document.

The petition that arrived at the German parliament in 1905 was signed by twenty-eight chiefs from the extended Akwa family.<sup>62</sup> Their names were: Dika Akwa, Muange Mukuri, Mpondo Ejengele, Koto a Jongo, Duala Ngongi, Ejango Same, Kwedi Edeme, Mudio a Koto, Ndumbe a Toi, Efima Ngube, Dikoto Mbende, Efongolo a Mbau, Dume a Mutome, Mungi a Mbene, Edimo a Besima, Mpondo a

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<sup>60</sup> Hamann describes in her study the existence of a 'central juridical council' called the 'Ngondo', in which representatives of all Duala families would take the most important decisions. Whether or not the Ngondo was in session during the time of German colonialism as well is, however, disputed amongst historians, as there are no references to be found in the official sources of the colonial imperial archives (*Reichskolonialamt*). However, the fact that the files of the colonial administration frequently mention that 'assemblies' were held amongst the Duala and the high number of signatures under the petition lead Hamann to the conclusion that the Ngondo was also active under German colonial occupation (see Hamann 248).

<sup>61</sup> The contract from 12<sup>th</sup> July 1884 stated that the land that the Duala had cultivated would remain under their authority. This particular issue of the land of hunting grounds became one of the major conflicts between the German colonial administration and the Duala.

<sup>62</sup> A copy of the petition can be found in the Federal Archives in Berlin, "*An den allerdurchlauchtigsten allergnädigsten deutschen Reichstag Berlin*" (19 June, 1905), in BArch R1001 4435. It was also reprinted in the protocols of the German parliament's commission to investigate the petition in 1906, found in the state archives of Hamburg, HH 111-1 CL VII, lit.lb., file No. 294, attachment 1, pg. 3393.

Mbongo, Akwa Elame, Edeme a Ngu, Mponge a Mpondo, Eteki a Kinge, Dibunje Epaka, Ebonge a Tonga, Madika Elange, Georg a Dibonge, Mudiki a Rgoge, Ndumbe Epee, Beteke a Njebon, and Kwa Ndem.<sup>63</sup>

In the same year, the son of Dika Akwa was arrested in Hamburg for credit fraud and for fraudulently using the title of nobility. Mpundo Akwa had come to Germany from Kamerun as a young man, had enjoyed a German school education, and had later tried to build a business in Germany. While he was acquitted of all charges the same day, his trial stirred heated debates in the public and political spheres on the ‘proper position’ of Africans in the German nation in the years to come. The presence of Mpundo Akwa as a representative from a German colony in the metropole, dressing and acting according to the cultural repertoires of the white bourgeois subjects, troubled many of the prevalent and German specific assumptions and conceptions of blackness.<sup>64</sup> It challenged the idea that the metropole “was indisputably German and white, while the colonies represented the exotic, other, and non-white” (O’Donnell 44). Derogatory labels and stereotypes circulated the German public sphere at the turn of the century, casting those ‘travelling Africans’ as “disruptive Europeanized Africans who challenged white supremacy by mimicking but never truly attaining German standards of dress and culture” (O’Donnell 53).

Faced with a great amount of blatant racism in the aftermath of his trial, Mpundo Akwa took one of his insulters, a former navy lieutenant, to court for defamation. This second trial was perceived as spectacular and unprecedented in

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<sup>63</sup> “*An den allerdurchlauchtigsten allergnädigsten deutschen Reichstag Berlin*” (19 June, 1905), in BArch R1001 4435.

<sup>64</sup> Also in this chapter, I understand subject positions as ‘white’ and ‘black’, ‘European’ and ‘African’ as socially constructed and the same counts for the category ‘race’. I will therefore use *black* and *white* only where it is of importance to point at processes of racialization. Otherwise I will use the terms ‘Kamerunian’/’Duala’ and ‘German’ to refer to the particular individuals and populations in this case study in order to avoid repeating the pejorative ‘native’ where not necessary.

German juridical history, as it was a black man suing a white man for his right to honour.

This chapter explores the interplay of law, race, and performance in the dynamics of the formation and dispossession of colonial subjects in the German empire, through the specific case of the ‘Akwa Affair’. The main question here is how legal and cultural mechanisms were productive of the different bodies, and contributed to the processes of subjectivisation. I will therefore use the concept ‘performance’ in the first two parts of this chapter to designate the specific acts of claiming and enacting rights by those who have been denied these rights, through the case study of the Duala petition in the first part, and through Mpundo Akwa’s trials in the second part. Here, I will show how the mechanisms through which people of African heritage residing in Germany at the turn of the century were racialised echoes anti-theatrical discourses of duplicity, imposterism, acting, and fakery. In relation to this, the phenomenon ‘mimicry’ will be discussed in this part to unpack the potential of these faculties (imposterism, mimicry, duplicity) for challenging or even defying racialising processes. Both cases are significant examples of resistance against the colonial system as the Duala and Mpundo Akwa successfully acquainted themselves with a German understanding of the law and legal procedures as well as with a particular German understanding of ‘honour’ and used this to undermine the legitimacy of the colonial project.

In the third part, I analyse the representations and mediations not only of the ‘Akwa Affair’, but also of other theatrical encounters on the popular theatre stages between male characters from the colony with female characters from the metropole. In the last part, I show that the stagings of erotically charged interracial romances at the turn of the century depicted a ‘colonial desire’, which was just as much a part of colonial encounters as the disavowal of the ‘Other’. The discourses and depictions of

mixed-relations exemplify the ways in which local realities subverted idealized visions of empire and troubled the empire's claim to a stable truth, by presenting lives lived differently. Before I go on to investigate the Duala petition in more depth, I want to outline some metropolitan discourses at the time that build an important background for understanding the dynamics between Germany and Kamerun in this conflict. These being the discourses on miscegenation, 'race consciousness', and on German citizenship.

As I have argued already earlier in this dissertation, Germany at the turn of the century was marked by an increase in social and geographical mobility. Deep shifts of social categories had occurred in the wake of the process of nation-building, the rapid modernisation of the German economy, the industrialisation of production, and the urbanisation of German cities. The authoritarian and patriarchal political system was threatened by the growth of the labour movement, the Socialist party, and the women's movement. Categories of class and belonging that formerly provided stability were now fluctuating. The new mobility brought more strangers and mixed classes into contact, which stirred "anxiety and confusion about social roles and the norms of behavior" (Goldberg 10), also along racial lines.

In his study on the figure of 'the Black' in German culture, *On Blackness without Blacks* (1982), Sander L. Gilman argues that in late nineteenth century Germany "virtually no Blacks were present" and that the specific German conception of blackness thus developed in the absence of a black presence (Gilman xi). Blackness functioned in Germany, according to Gilman, as a 'mirage', "a protean structure generated by anxiety and externalized in order to extirpate this anxiety" (xiv). Yet, as more recent studies on German colonialism and the history of blackness in Germany since Gilman have shown, "German conceptions of Blackness and Black Germans in particular have been shaped in profound ways by a series of

encounters with Blacks both domestically and in its former colonial territories” (Campt, *Other Germans* 82). An increasing anxiety about racial difference and racial amalgamation became apparent in that time as effects of colonialism and migration.

But the new mobility in Germany also impacted a new legal culture at the end of the nineteenth century. As historian Ann Goldberg shows in her study on honour culture *Honor, Politics, and the Law in Imperial Germany* (2010), lawsuits from marginalised and outsider groups in the German empire, like Jews, workers, women, and psychiatric patients against their superiors adopted or reshaped ideas of honour for new claims of citizen rights and emancipation. Goldberg argues that “[w]hat was new in the German nineteenth century was the association of ‘claim rights’ with those of modern citizenship and equal rights, together with practices associated with mass, participatory politics” (Goldberg 11). These legal actions of people in allegedly ‘inferior’ positions against their social superiors, and even against government officials, were an “extraordinary move” (Goldberg 11) in the history of German jurisdiction, and impacted the definitions of the national community and the legislative attempts to define Germanness in profound ways. I read the different trials and claim rights of the ‘Akwa Affair’ in this chapter as part of this new legal culture.

Compared to the colonial war of the Herero and Nama in South-West Africa, as discussed in the first chapter, the petition of the Duala shows a different kind of indigenous resistance, one that is not a physical resistance to colonial invasion, but a resistance in the sense of a constitutional struggle against an already established colonial administration. Both the Duala petition and Mpundo Akwa’s lawsuit against the former navy lieutenant use the institution of the law and the stage of the court as a tool to question colonial power. What the Duala and Mpundo Akwa were defending “went to the heart of their sense self and social identity” (Goldberg 2). In particular, the right to honour, as in Mpundo’s case, translates into the right to be

respected and recognised by the community in which one lives, and this translates into value of one's person.

Studying law *as* performance, as I suggest in this chapter, and thus as an enactment of embodiment of the law rather than the representation of law *in* performance, opens up “a more robust understanding of legal procedure's social function”, as theatre scholar Catherine Cole (2010), for instance, argues in her book on *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission* (Cole 5). Other theatre and performance studies scholars have argued similarly for drawing attention to the relationship between theatre and the law, as, for instance, Yvette Hutchison's analysis of the TRC's impact on negotiating memory, and constructions of individual and collective subjectivity in her book *South African Performance and Archives of Memory* (2013). Alan Read's book *Theatre and Law* (2016) offers the first comprehensive account of the relation between performance and legal processes. Next to representations of the law and justice in theatre plays and performance, Read convincingly shows that the law is a performative mode of practice and deeply inscribed in our everyday practices. However, rather than merely celebrating the relation between theatre, performance and the law, one should stay alert, according to Read, as to when and where “legal processes benefit from their relations with the public, the performative and the spectacular, and where they are complicated and sometimes diminished by their continuous relationship with theatricality” (2). In its thematic focus and theoretical engagement with theatre and law Marett Leiboff and Sophie Nield's edition on ‘Law's Theatrical Presence’ for *Law Text Culture* (2010) stands out. It encompasses considerable contributions by theatre scholars such as Michael Bachmann, Theron Schmidt, and Graham White on such diverse issues as the political potential of theatricality in acts of public apologies, Hannah Arendt's concept of ‘drama’ in her analysis of the Eichmann trial, and implied performances

in public records. Scholarly works on censorship and theatre make up most of theatre studies' engagement with the relation between law and performance. Relevant scholarship for the French and British context includes the books by Helen Freshwater on *Theatre Censorship in Britain* (2009) and Nicolas Harrison's *Circles of Censorship* (1995). For the German context, Jan Lazardzig's chapter on 'Performing *Ruhe*: Police, Prevention, and the Archive' in Michal Kobialka and Rosemarie Bank's edited collection on *Theatre/Performance Historiography* (2015) gives an intriguing insight into the relation between theatre, the police, and the maintenance of order, which will play an important role in the third chapter.

Summarising the basic findings of this short overview of theatre studies' engagement with performance and the law, one can conclude that studying law *as* performance helps to understand the legal and cultural mechanisms as productive of the different bodies involved. It helps to understand the law from the ways in which it compels subjects to embody and perform recognisable identities. It also underscores the centrality of the body - of the raced, sexed, classed, and ethnicised bodies - in the articulations of imperial ideology and as a site through which colonial power was exercised and resisted. Moreover, it highlights the contact in which these bodies were with each other, not only involved in intimate personal and sexual relations, but in motion, subjection, and struggle.

It is also through the focus on the body that spaces like the court and the theatre can become visible to us as spaces where colonial power was experienced on an everyday basis; likewise, the theatre and the court were privileged spaces in which these bodies could gain a heightened visibility in the public sphere. While associations and relations between theatre/performance and the law are manifold, it might in fact be this heightened sense of visibility that is the most basic association between the two spheres. As the popular idiom that Hannah Arendt (1963) quoted in

her analysis of the Eichmann trial demands, “justice must not only be done but must be *seen* to be done” (Arendt, *Eichmann* 277, emphasis by me). The public form of the trial can thus be seen as the performative application of the law, where the law can reveal itself and show itself in action, where ‘justice’ can be made to be seen and thus requires a theatrical scene. In this sense, the trial is “showing doing”, one of performance’s prerequisites, as Richard Schechner famously formulated it (22). The law is therefore not only discursive or scripted, but embodied as well. While the law is performative in the sense that it relies on a series of different speech acts, it also materialises in and on the body. It is through expressive acts and embodied actions that people perform the law and become subject to the law. Analysing racialised subject formations and the resistance against them through the lens of performance helps to highlight the legal and cultural mechanism productive of and in the bodies involved. One could therefore argue that the law comes alive between “juridical performativity and embodied action” (Chambers-Letson 2).

It is, however, important to keep in mind that *how* the law (and here also the law needs to be understood in its multiplicity) manifests in bodies and in embodied acts differs from case to case and body to body: a colonial subject on trial in the metropole surely felt and embodied the law differently than the white judge indicting him or her. The same counts for my analysis of representational acts in the public sphere and on the theatrical stage. Rather than assuming that public performances and artistic performances share the same parameters, it will be crucial to define the relation between the law and performance for each case anew.

## Performing and Resisting Colonial Law in Kamerun

To his Serene Highness the German Parliament Berlin.

Bonaku, Duala-Kamerun, June 19<sup>th</sup> 1905

We, the signatory chiefs of ‘Bonambela-Duala-Kamerun’ send to the German parliament our complaints to inform our gentlemen of the ‘Deutsche Reichstag’ about all the mischief that has been committed by the imperial government of ‘Kamerun’ under the leadership of governor v. Puttkamer, especially what he has done to our ‘king’ and chiefs and the whole population [...].<sup>65</sup>

Those are the words with which the petition of the twenty-eight Duala chiefs opens. The petition arrived at the German parliament in Berlin in June 1905 and accused the colonial administration in Kamerun of exploitation and enforced labour, of arbitrarily enforced rules and regulations, and the temporary suspension of rights based on the caprices of the governor of Kamerun at the time, Jesco von Puttkamer. The aim of the Duala petition was not to overthrow the colonial system as such, but to reform it. Their main concern was thus not to discard colonialism at large, but the way in which the colonial administration ruled in Kamerun.

The petition states that “the conduct of the local German government [in Kamerun, LS] humiliates the country and ruins the good reputation of the ‘German empire’”.<sup>66</sup> It concludes: “We do not want to have governor v. Puttkamer, his judges, and district officers, in other words his whole cabinet, here any longer”.<sup>67</sup> The

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<sup>65</sup> Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde, file: BArch R 1001 4435 “An den allerdurchlauchtigsten allergnädigsten deutschen Reichstag Berlin”, 19. Juni 1905, transl. by me.

<sup>66</sup> Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde, file: BArch R 1001 4435 “An den allerdurchlauchtigsten allergnädigsten deutschen Reichstag Berlin”, 19. Juni 1905, transl. by me.

<sup>67</sup> Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde, file: BArch R 1001 4435 “An den allerdurchlauchtigsten allergnädigsten deutschen Reichstag Berlin”, 19. Juni 1905. Transl. LS

petition, however, also stresses the Duala's relentless loyalty to the German emperor, that they see themselves as German and want to remain German, that they do not want to be dependent on the German empire but want to be hardworking, loyal "German subjects" (*Unterthanen*).<sup>68</sup> This self-image of the Duala collided with the self-image of colonial sovereignty and became the cornerstone of the conflict between the two parties. It shows that the allegedly stable positions of coloniser and colonised were anything but stable, and rather paints a picture of the negotiation of subject positions in the context of colonisation and the consequences that it had for local communities. As a document of its time, the petition has thus a high epistemic value and needs to be read as such, rather than be treated merely as a source of anti-colonial resistance. It gives not only a picture of colonial power practices, but also shows an idea of society that stood contrary to that of the colonial hegemony. It is in this sense also a valuable documentation of its time. It describes, for instance, the state of the colony as a general 'state of exception', in which arbitrary rules and regulations enforce punishment and take away rights.

German political theorist Carl Schmitt (1922) has famously defined sovereignty, as the power to suspend the validity of the law: "Sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception" (cit. in Agamben 11). In his reading of Schmitt's political theory and Foucault's analysis of biopolitics, Giorgio Agamben understands sovereignty as the power over 'life'. He posits that "the exception is the originary form of life" (Agamben 26). The capture of life in law is "the condition of being included through an exclusion, of being in relation to something from which one is excluded or which one cannot fully assume" (26). It is a "limit-figure" of life, that Agamben sketches, a threshold in which sovereignty takes place.

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<sup>68</sup> BArch R 1001 4435

In building on Agamben's definition of sovereignty as the power over 'life' for the colonial context, Ann Laura Stoler argues in her article "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty" (2006) that the suspension of the law and the state of exception lies at the heart of every imperial project (140). In relation to Agamben's definition of the threshold, Stoler defines imperial sovereignty as "imperial formations" (*On Degrees* 140). Those imperial formations are "extended and extensive examples of macropolitics whose thick or thin thresholds of vague political status and territorial autonomy are fundamental to their technologies of rule", according to Stoler (*On Degrees* 141). Similar to Stoler's concept of 'imperial formations', anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff (2007) have referred to the 'state of exception' in the realm of colonial empires as imperialism's 'lawfare'. Lawfare is defined by the Comaroffs as "the use of its own rules – of its duly enacted penal codes, its administrative law, its state of emergency, its charters and mandates and warrants, its norms and engagement" (Comaroff 30). Taking all of the aforementioned definitions of the state of exception into account, the Kamerun that the Duala petition describes is a case in point. The Duala had been witnesses of a state of exception in which their 'right to have rights', to evoke Hannah Arendt's famous phrase, had been subjected to the arbitrary rule of one governor.<sup>69</sup> Arendt introduced the idea of 'the right to have rights' in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973 [1951]) in the part called 'Imperialism'. Here she examines historical episodes from European colonialism "as illustrating the breakdown of the rule of law" (Benhabib 52). "[T]he fragility of principles of human rights to govern interactions among human beings who, in fact, have nothing but their humanity in common" is evidenced for her by the colonisation of Africa (cit. in Benhabib 52).

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<sup>69</sup> The petition lists incidents in which the German colonial administration looted whole villages, enforced the indigenous population into acts of labor, killed several Kamerunians and 'stole' indigenous women.

The lack of a law-dispensing state for those human beings who suffered under colonisation is thus not replaced by a functioning principle of abstract human rights, as the Duala petition has shown. But it also does not guarantee the privileges and protections that the status of citizenship could secure, as the discussion of the state of exception has shown. In their legal status the German colonies, also euphemistically called ‘protectorates’, were neither independent states nor parts of the empire. They were subjected to the sovereignty of the German empire but not constitutionally incorporated. This is important to know, because the legal status of the colonies also defined the legal status of its inhabitants. The local populations of the German colonies were *not* considered to be members of the empire (*Reichsangehörige*). This differs, for example, from the legal status of colonial subjects in the British and French empires (Banerjee 2010). In the case of England the question of the legal status is, however, more complicated than that, as the British empire had many different ways that colony and metropole could legally relate to each other. In the so-called crown colonies, everyone was a British citizen. In the French empire, the colonies were considered as part of the ‘Grande Nation’ and from 1904 onward the colonies were subjected to the central government in Paris. All of its inhabitants were thus considered to be members of the French ‘motherland’ (Saada 2012).

Due to the lack of a consistent ‘colonial law’, the German colonial administration relied in its jurisdiction to a large extent on a mix of elements from metropolitan and indigenous law. Often ‘native’ legal customs were reinvented to justify ad hoc arrangements and the suspension of rights. No law was in place that would define the legal frame of putting a native on trial in the colonies

[*Eingeborenen-Rechtssprechung*].<sup>70</sup> There were no independent judges in place in the colonies that could have assured a fair trial. Nor were there lawyers in place that could have assured a proper defence for the accused. In fact, the main demands of the Duala were about the reformation of the colonial legal system and especially the establishment of legal counsels and lawyers amongst the indigenous population.<sup>71</sup> Without independent judges and legal counselling, it was the political administrators who would act as judges in the colonial courts. This would have meant for the Duala that the governor von Puttkamer, who was the central point of their complaints, would have also been the judge of their complaints. This is also what happened when von Puttkamer used his position as governor to imprison the petitioners for defamation.

Von Puttkamer's harsh reaction to the petition is less surprising if one considers that the idea of state honour was a "critical component of Germany's highly rationalized bureaucracy" at the time (Goldberg 14). If one offended an official of the German state one insulted the whole state (*Beamtenbeleidigung*) and officials at all levels made use of their rights as representatives of the state to enforce respect and obedience through the idea of state honour, as Goldberg shows in her study. The reaction of von Puttkamer also signals the impact that the petition had for the stability of colonial authority and German sovereignty in Kamerun. It suggests that the petition was perceived as more than a letter of complaint against one governor, that it was read as a letter of complaint against the authority of the colonial state.

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<sup>70</sup> The law says that "the jurisdiction of the natives is not defined by law. It is defined that they are not eligible to the jurisdiction of the *Konsul*. (...) that in that sense also the German imperial laws do not directly apply to them" (transl. by me). In the German original, the law reads the following: "Die Strafrechtspflege über die Eingeborenen ist gesetzlich nicht näher geregelt. Es ist bestimmt, daß sie der Konsulargerichtsbarkeit nicht unterliegen - §4 des Schutzgebietsgesetzes vom 25. Juli 1900 (Kolonial-Gesetzgebung Bd. 5 S.143) -, daß also die deutschen Reichsgesetze keine unmittelbare Anwendung auf sie finden." *Reichstagsaktenstück Nr. 323 (Untersuchung in der Beschwerdesache der Akwahäuptlinge*. State-archive Hamburg, file 111-1, CL VII, Lit.Lb.)

<sup>71</sup> see BArch R 1001 4435.

One strategy of assuring colonial authority and sovereignty in the colony was the application of legal categories to all its subjects. As cultural historian Catherine Hall has pointed out in her book *Civilizing Subjects* (2002), once empire became about the governance of people rather than merely about trade, colonialists had to think about “the creation of new subjects – colonial subjects – who would consent to being ruled” (774). Colonial subjects were interpellated into different forms of legal subjectivities. The establishment of legal categories like ‘subject’ and ‘citizen’, ‘white’, ‘native’, ‘mixed-blood’, and ‘naturalised’, formed the basis on which the rules and regulation could be enacted. This shows how much the law was productive in subject formations, in that it compelled its subjects to embody and perform recognisable legal, racial, and ‘manageable’ identities.<sup>72</sup>

That the legal system in the colony was a dual system is shown by an entry in the colonial lexicon from 1920. It states under ‘native law’ (*Eingeborenenrecht*) that “the native population in the German protectorates lives under a special jurisdiction.”<sup>73</sup> This dual legal system separated the people into two different legal categories: ‘natives’ and ‘non-natives’. Both categories were tied to different jurisdictions. While ‘natives’ did not fall under the norms of the legal system that were applied in Germany, ‘non-natives’ did. ‘Natives’ were defined as all members of the “coloured tribes” residing in the colony, including those of mixed-race-blood.<sup>74</sup> The latter were defined through the ‘one-drop rule’, meaning every person with one ‘native’ ancestor would be ruled out from being German. This rule was established in the wake of the anti-miscegenation laws which were established first

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<sup>72</sup> The act of categorisation also assured the German empire its hegemonic position as a colonial power. In the logic of racial hierarchy it was “the duty to confirm the dominion of the developed races in order to gradually lead the underdeveloped peoples ... to higher levels of intellectual and moral development”, as the German colonial secretary Wilhelm Solf had proclaimed (cit. in El-Tayeb, *Dangerous Liaisons* 39). It was thus under the flag of a civilizing mission, that the exploitation of land and people in the colonies was justified.

<sup>73</sup> *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon* from 1920, Vol. III., p. 312, [http://www.ub.bildarchiv-dkg.uni-frankfurt.de/Bildprojekt/Lexikon/php/suche\\_db.php?suchname=Schutzgebietsangeh%F6rgrigkeit](http://www.ub.bildarchiv-dkg.uni-frankfurt.de/Bildprojekt/Lexikon/php/suche_db.php?suchname=Schutzgebietsangeh%F6rgrigkeit)

<sup>74</sup> *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon*, 1920, Vol. III., p. 312.

in South-West Africa in 1905, with the other colonies following with similar decrees in the years after (East Africa 1906, Samoa 1912). Interestingly, administrative orders for ‘natives’ often also used terms like ‘coloured’, whereas ‘non-natives’ would be referred to by their citizenship or membership to the state (*Staatsangehörigkeit*).<sup>75</sup> Citizenship was thus a criterion that was closely related to whiteness in the colonies, as a definition of the ‘metropolitan’ law from the colonial lexicon from 1920 shows: “Citizens of the Empire - also those of colour - are subject to the law of the Whites, meaning the German law.”<sup>76</sup> This definition of German law as ‘white law’ makes it clear how closely associated Germanness and whiteness were at the time and echoes the common opinion at the time that “one could not be German if one were not white” (El-Tayeb, *Dangerous Liaisons* 43).

The spectre of ‘mixed-race’ Germans was framed as endangering the whiteness of the Germans also within Germany, which was at the beginning of the twentieth century increasingly understood as an ethnic body (*Volk*). Citizenship, race, and national identity became thus more and more intertwined also in the metropole. And indeed, if one looks closer into the development of the German citizenship law which was ratified in 1913 it becomes apparent that the debates on miscegenation in the colonies had an important impact on the metropole as well. As historian Howard Sargent (2005) postulates in this regard, the discourse on how to reform the German citizenship law in the years leading up to its ratification was positioned between the inclusion of ‘ethnic’ Germans in the colonies, and the exclusion of everyone else from claims to German citizenship.

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<sup>75</sup> Also, the debates about whether people from other countries than Germany or its colonies would be subject to native or non-native law are revealing in this regard. The regulations state that people from foreign “civilized” nations would be subjected to the jurisdiction of non-natives. While Japanese people were defined as non-natives (and hence as white), Arabs, Indians, and Afghani were defined as natives (and hence as black). Special regulations, for instance, were in place for Christian Syrians and Chinese people in Samoa.

<sup>76</sup> *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon*, 1920, Vol. III., p. 312.

Colonial publicists, like Friedrich Fabri, lobbied for a conception of the German citizenship that would include the German colonies. This was the base for the growing and organised colonial movement among patriotic societies claiming to serve the interest of all Germans. Those patriotic societies often used the argument that Germans in the colonies were even more German than those at home, because they had to maintain their national belonging within hostile environments, including the contact with the ‘natives’. They rallied for an expansive view of German identity beyond the state borders of 1871. Sargent asserts, “[u]nder their leadership, the popular conception of citizenship changed from a ‘transnational’ mode, designed to discriminate on the basis of class rather than nationality, to an ‘ethnocultural’ definition of the German nation, which defined citizenship as membership in the *Volk*” (25). Social Darwinism and eugenics thus not only played an important role in German colonialism, but their lobbying even had an impact on the consolidation of a German national identity along racial lines. Sanctified by scientists like the infamous eugenicist Eugen Fischer,<sup>77</sup> “the equation of the terms ‘people’ (*Volk*) and ‘race’ became increasingly common” (El-Tayeb, *Dangerous Liaisons* 46).

Against the background of these efforts to strengthen the rights of ethnic Germans abroad and to diminish the rights of others (especially non-whites) immigrating into Germany, a new German citizenship model was born in 1913. This model based German citizenship on descent and blood (*jus sanguinis*), and not on residence in the territory of state (*jus soli*). It remained in effect until 1999, when the German government supplemented the principle of descent with the acquisition of nationality by birth.<sup>78</sup> As political theorist Seyla Benhabib clarifies, *jus sanguinis* is

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<sup>77</sup> Eugen Fischer conducted in 1908 a study on a population of mixed race people, known as the ‘Rehoboth Bastards’ in Southwest Africa, in which he investigated the “effects of the genetic transmission of racial difference” (Campt, *Converging Spectres* 327).

<sup>78</sup> The new citizenship act of 1999, however, still encompassed large restrictions on granting citizenship to children born in Germany of foreign parents and included new measurements on

based on the conflation of “the *ethnos* with the *demos*, of ‘belonging to a people’ with ‘membership in a state’” (Benhabib 60). The citizenship model thus favoured an “ethnocultural image of nationhood” (Sargent 28) over the conception of the state’s interests. This is also stressed by Rogers Brubaker in his book *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (1992), in which he analyses the different modes of assigning citizenship in France and Germany. He also comes to the conclusion that “the French understanding of nationhood has been state-centred and assimilationist, [while] the German understanding has been *Volk*-centred and differentialist” (cit. in Wildenthal, *Race and Gender* 264). In her analysis of disputed German citizenship cases in the German colonies, historian Lora Wildenthal builds on Brubaker’s discussion of citizenship but focuses on the neglected aspects of his study: cases of citizenship claims from the German colonies. She argues that it was these ‘unusual’ cases at the margins of German history which “tested the limits of citizenship law and forced Germans to clarify their terms” (Wildenthal, *Race and Gender* 264). Her study shows that what was threatened in this citizenship model was the status of People of Colour as German citizens, and it gives an indication why until today ‘black German’ is perceived as a contradiction in a nation’s white majority.

Although the German law officially allowed for ‘natives’ to become naturalised as Germans, this almost never happened.<sup>79</sup> With the help of contemporary race theories and Social Darwinism, it was argued that German law

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integration and naturalization. Children born in Germany of foreign parents obtain German citizenship at birth only if one parent has been a legal resident in Germany for at least eight years. Children who also acquired the nationality of their parents must decide by the age of 23, which nationality they want to keep, as the German law does not allow for dual-citizenship (Eley and Palmowski 2008).

<sup>79</sup> An example of a local magistrate in the Weimar Republic illustrates this well. He rejected an African’s request for naturalization because “direct citizenship should be granted only to those natives who in their educational and economic level and in their morals deserved the civil and legal equality with non-natives’ and that no ‘full-blooded native’ could fulfill this prerequisite” (El-Tayeb, *Dangerous Liaisons* 47).

was not transferable to a native population because it was the expression of the high cultural level of the ‘Europeans’, a level that the ‘natives’ had not yet achieved and thus were in need of a different jurisdiction.<sup>80</sup> What this logic indicates is the extent to which race theories were used to justify the dual nature of the colonial law and the exclusion of parts of the population based on their racial and cultural difference. Interestingly, it was the aforementioned ‘high cultural level’ that was at stake in von Puttkamer’s questionable behaviour and subject of the petition of the Duala. The petition complaint about the lascivious behaviour of the colonial officials and their polygamy. Namely, the governor was not only relegated back to Germany because of misconduct against the ‘natives’, but most of all for his morally questionable personal life. He had lived in the colony for years with his mistress, whom he had presented to the colonial society of Kamerun as his ‘cousin’. The story of the false cousin became a colonial scandal that was not only circulating in the German press at the time, but also made it onto the theatre stage, as I will show in the third part of this chapter.

In the wake of the arrest of the chiefs and the summoning of Jesco von Puttkamer back to Germany, the German parliament debated the Duala petition and a possible reform of the colonial legal system. All parties in the German parliament were unified in the conviction that a radical reform of the colonial jurisdiction needed to take place. As one delegate stated: “The present situation in the colonies does not represent a state of the law, but a state of lawlessness, for both Whites and Blacks alike.”<sup>81</sup> Another delegate suggested to install a ‘protectorate-membership’ (*Schutzgebietszugehörigkeit*) in the colony, pointing to the lack of a law-dispensing body that could assure more rights for the ‘natives’. Yet another Social Democrat

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<sup>80</sup> *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon*, 1920, Vol. I, pp. 507 ff. “Eingeborenenrecht”.

<sup>81</sup> *Reichstag*, 70th assembly, Monday March 19, 1906, p. 2136.

warned the parliament that “what has been overseen in the utterance of the verdict, is the fact that the petitioners had been former sovereign rulers of that country that is now in German hands”.<sup>82</sup> While all of these utterances show the important role that the critique of the Duala played for informing the German parliament and here especially the anti-colonial opposition about the practices of the colonial administration, it is the last statement that really hits the problem on the head. In evoking their sovereignty as former rulers, the delegate points, intentionally or not, to the crux of the situation, that colonial rule depends on what Catherine Hall has called ‘the making of new subjects’ (Hall 271), subjects that once had a status in their community and that now needed to submit to the rules and regulations, to the lawfare, of the colonial system.

I want to argue in the following section that through enacting the right to complaint despite the fact they were legally not in possession of that right, the Duala pointed not only to the legal consequences that the subject position ‘native’ entailed, but in the same time resisted being fully interpellated by this category. It shows how much the categorisation and the dual legal system troubled the self-image of the Duala. Moreover, it suggests some of the fundamental differences in how the Duala and the Germans understood the notion of sovereignty and the rights that were allocated to both parties in the Duala territory.

In her analysis of the ‘Akwa Affair’, historian Elisabeth Joeden-Forgey (2002), for example, points out that contrary to the colonizers’ ideal of separation, the Duala notables evoked realms of analogy and similarities between the German state and their own state in their writings. These references of similarities and the language of contact had grown out of the long shared history with Europeans through trade. Their recurring insistence on being German in their petition stresses that

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<sup>82</sup> *Reichstag*, 70th assembly, Monday March 19, 1906, p. 2149.

language of similarity. Terms like ‘prince’ and ‘king’, so very central in the ‘Akwa Affair’, “can be seen as linguistic markers of a shared social space between European and Duala traders, and the product of an attempt to negotiate economic and political alliances during a time in which Duala notables controlled the coast” (Joeden-Forgey 93). The designation ‘king’, for instance, was given to the Duala by the British. It is according to the same logic that the Duala believed themselves to be kings of their own ‘state’, a state similar to that of the Germans. However, according to German norms, the use of the title ‘king’ was closely tied to the idea of sovereignty. In the eyes of the coloniser it was the German emperor alone who carried all the sovereignty, and no Duala ‘king’ would have the right to claim any sovereignty at all. The aforementioned delegate thus got it wrong when he assumed that the Duala were petitioning because they were *former* sovereign rulers; rather it is more likely that they saw themselves still as such, and thus in the right to complain. One could argue that against the colonial utopia of strict separation, the Duala envisioned a heterotopia of analogies and similarities.

This also defies a simplistic reading of the Duala petition in a binary framework of colonial power versus indigenous resistance, as, for instance, Frederick Cooper (1994) has criticised it. In order to come to more complex analyses, one needs to “probe the clash of different forms of social organization without treating them as self-contained and autonomous”, according to Cooper (cit. in Hamann 222). Binary oppositions like coloniser/colonised or domination/resistance, as Cooper continues, “end up constraining the search for precise ways in which power is deployed and the ways in which power is engaged, contested, deflected, and appropriated” (cit. in Hamann 222). In other words, two things are important in the case of the Duala: one, it is important to carefully pay attention to the particular techniques with which the Duala responded to the German colonial administration

(the petition) and two, the fact that the Duala did not envision overthrowing the colonial system but reforming it. Most of the Duala, in fact, did not resist the colonial system at all. On the contrary, many of them were part of a West-African elite that had been trading with European companies for centuries and followed their own political and economic agenda. But also, those petitioning represented the Duala elite, responding to the steep cuts by the Germans to their sovereignty over land, and here especially over hunting and trading grounds.

The question of the particular technique of resistance and their particular effects needs, however, a closer look. Instead of applying the tools of warfare, the Duala used the imperial tools of *lawfare*. In writing a petition, the Duala used the same strategy as “the writing machine of the law” and its scriptocentrism, which Michel de Certeau defined as the “hallmark of Western imperialism” (cit. in Conquergood 147). The choice of *writing* a petition does not only mimic the bureaucratic apparatus of the German empire, but also shows their deep understanding of the ones they were addressing. A petition was something that the imperialists could apprehend in its legal claims, as it catered to the bureaucratic and legal language of the German colonizers. De Certeau calls the act of using literacy as a tool of control *intertextuation*. He asserts that at the basis of the constitution of the ‘West’ lies the assumption that only the written word is understood (Conquergood 147). It is exactly this control that the Duala defied by applying its own rules against it. The many remarks of disbelief in the newspapers about the truthfulness of the news that an appeal from Kamerun had been handed in at the Colonial Department in Berlin shows that this form of critique from the colonies came as a surprise to imperial Germany. The strategy of making use of the hegemony of textualism and scriptocentrism by a people who are identified as ‘natives’ and allegedly without a

culture of the written word mimicked the textualism of the colonial regime and deflected its power.

Also, Mpundo Akwa's lobbying practice in Berlin for the release of his father and the other chiefs in Duala shows an application of juridical knowledge. He invoked the same terms of analogies as the Duala petition had, in that he argued that every German subject, "no matter where he [sic!] lives", <sup>83</sup> has the right to hand in a complaint about his superior. His letters to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggest that he understood the Duala and himself to be German and to fall under the same law as other German citizens, despite the dual legal system that was in place in Kamerun. In insisting on "the constitutional right to appeal", <sup>84</sup> he appealed to the justice system of the German empire and its promises of equality and justice *for all*, overlooking that it was precisely that justice system that saw him as not eligible for any constitutional rights and not even included in the 'all' of universal justice. The Duala neither enjoyed the right of citizenship, nor were their *human* rights assured under the 'lawfare' of colonialism. As the colonies were neither sovereign states nor constitutionally part of the empire, there was no official 'membership' to a political community available for the chiefs which could have allocated them the right to complain, let alone a German citizenship status from which they could have argued their right to complain.

Their example troubles Hannah Arendt's aforementioned conception of what makes a political subject. Arendt argued that a subject that has 'the right to have rights' is not the bare human being, who holds her rights based on her humanity

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<sup>83</sup> The letter reads in the German original as the following: "... dass es einem deutschen Untertan, einerlei wo er wohnt, erlaubt sein muss, Beschwerden, die er gegen seine Vorgesetzten glaubt erheben zu können, bei denjenigen Behörden anzubringen, die nach seiner Meinung hierfür zuständig sind. Das Recht der Beschwerde wird vereitelt, wenn der Beschwerdeführer bestraft wird, weil er es gewagt hat sich zu beschweren; [...]". BA Berlin Lichterfelde, file BArch R/1001 4435. Letter of Mpundo Akwa to the Emperor.

<sup>84</sup> BArch R/1001 4435.

alone, but “the situated human who holds rights among her equals in the political community”, as historian Alison Kesby (2012) explains in her book *The Right to Have Rights* (10). Having a lawful residence in a political community (citizenship) is thus pertinent to Arendt’s conception of the subject. It is the prerequisite for “having a voice and agency and above all a political status” (Kesby 6). For the colonial context, however, this creates an impossible situation, as Mpundo and the Duala have shown. Arendt’s theory of the subject of rights is thus not that easily applicable for the colonial context. How then can we understand the act of complaint by the Duala as a political act and the Duala as political subjects?

I suggest understanding the act of official complaint of a people that officially does not hold that right as an act of *dissensus*, in the sense in which Jacques Rancière has most famously described it in his books *Disagreement* (1999) and *Dissensus* (2010). He has pointed to politics as a process that stands in diametrically opposition to the sphere of the ‘police’: “The ‘police’ is the order or logic which determines a party’s share in the order – that is, who is recognized as a political actor, which activity is ‘visible’, or what ‘having a part’ means” (Kesby 121). The police is the order of the visible and the sayable. It does not refer to a state apparatus (as ‘police’ would be understood in terms of common sense) but to a logic, in which ‘consensus’ is the guiding principle. Rather than confining politics to a predetermined sphere, such as a political community or the public sphere from which those who lack legal status are excluded, Rancière thus understands politics as “the rupture of this [the police’s, LS] logic by a surplus subject – a ‘supplementary part’ – ‘the part of those who have no part’” (Kesby 122). This means that in the police logic each ‘part’ and subject have their allocated roles and places. Politics, on the other hand, takes place when the order of the police is interrupted and when that which had no visibility and audibility in the logic of the police becomes visible and audible.

The emergence of the political subject, the process of subjectivisation, in Rancière's logic, takes place in this enactment of *dissensus*: "The question of the political subject is not caught between the void term of Man and the plentitude of the citizen with its actual rights. A political subject is a capacity for staging scenes of dissensus" (Rancière, *Dissensus* 69). What we can take from this is that contrary to Arendt's conception of the subject of rights as citizen, Rancière's right-bearing subject is more fluctuating. The subject of rights is not only the one who possesses rights (as, for instance, a citizen does) but the collective subject that puts the written declarations of laws to the test "and enacts them" (Kesby 124). Politics, on this account, becomes a certain mode of acting, a disruption of the 'common sense'. This can be easily translated to the colonial context, in which the logic of the police complies with the colonial discourse and imperial agenda, which are also based on a distribution of the sensible, as the need for 'making of new subjects' has shown. Politics in this context, is the disruption, the ambivalence orchestrated by those elements in colonial encounters which are not that easily controllable, which disrupt the order, or reveal the workings of this order. It has the power to decentre the police/colonial logic from its position of power.

The Duala's petitioning becomes a powerful tool to counter the rules and regulations of the German colonial administration without engaging in warfare, in that it eluded the subject position to which the colonial order had confined the Duala as 'natives' without the 'right to have rights' and to a people without a scripture. The many voices of disbelief in the German newspapers at the time about the fact that the Duala people had indeed written a petition against the German government proves that the petition performed a *dissensus* in that colonial order at the time. Also, the fact that the officials of the colonial administration dismissed the petition as 'nuisance' and 'insolence' signals that the petitioners were perceived as children to

which the German government behaved as an educator. The political scale of the act of petitioning and the importance of that particular form (the petition) became only fully apparent when discussed against the background of who was actually ‘hearable’ and ‘perceivable’ as a political subject at the time. This ‘mimicry’ of imperialism’s ‘writing machine’ was a powerful tool not only for the Duala at the time, but historians speak of a whole ‘wave of petitioning’ in West Africa at the time (Rüger 1968). Even after the majority of the petitioners were imprisoned and some of them died in confinement, representatives of the Duala continued to draft new petitions to point to the mismanagement and the acts of exploitation by the German colonial administration.<sup>85</sup>

### Performing and Resisting Metropolitan Law in Hamburg

In 1905 the notorious prince from Kamerun, Mpundo Akwa generated a ‘media buzz’ in the German empire through his appearance in two different trials, of which he was once the culprit and once the plaintiff. Both trials filled the courtroom in Hamburg-Altona with a great number of curious onlookers, most of whom had come for the spectacle of watching the public performance of the African prince. More than a spectacular performance, however, the trial became a focal point for German politics: “supporting or vilifying Mpundo Akwa was to become somewhat of a *cause célèbre* among various political factions,” as historian Elisa von Joeden-Forgey posits (92). The German newspapers were not only vividly reporting about every

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<sup>85</sup> The archival files of the Department for Foreign Affairs of the German empire suggest that the Duala were not the only representatives from an African colonized country that used the law to claim their rights. A Mr. Ibrahim Kachala, prince of Bornu, for instance, demanded in 1913 through a letter from his Berlin-based lawyer compensation from the German government for losing parts of his father’s land in the wake of colonization. He wrote that Bornu had been lost in the distribution of the land between England, France, and Germany, and that he sees himself as the lawful heir “of the territory, which possibly now belongs to Germany”. The letter states that what happened to him “had happened in similar cases between Germany and other countries with former sovereigns and chiefs in Africa”. Letter from Mr. Ibrahim Kachala, prince of Bornu to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin 20<sup>th</sup> May 1913. Translation by me. BA Berlin-Lichterfelde. BArch R1001 4457/f.

step of the trial, sometimes even twice a day, but also stirring in its aftermath a discourse that linked the rhetoric of anti-theatricality not only to Mpundo Akwa, but to blackness more generally.

Whereas Dika Akwa was tried in Kamerun according to ‘native law’, his son Mpundo Akwa was tried in Hamburg-Altona according to metropolitan law. To summarize the accusation, he was charged with credit fraud, because he had used his father’s royal status as credibility towards his German business partners. What Mpundo Akwa could not have known was that the colonial administration in Kamerun had informed his business partners in Kiel and Hamburg that King Dika Akwa was not a king at all and neither was Mpundo Akwa a prince, that both were colonial subjects fraudulently using titles of nobility to trick German businessmen. Moreover, Governor von Puttkamer had prohibited the Akwa family from collecting money in the colony that they wanted to send to Germany to support their son. Left in Germany without any money but the promise to receive some soon, it is indeed likely that Mpundo Akwa lived in Hamburg on credit. When his creditors got hold of the information from the colonial administration in Kamerun, they charged Mpundo Akwa, who was in the dark about the events in the colony, with fraud. He was represented in court by his lawyer Moses Levi, a member of an established Jewish family in Altona. Levi’s defence speech is in itself an interesting document as it was written retrospectively. It is rather a memoir and does not convey the exact text read out in the court that day. I will therefore treat his defence speech as an interpretation of the trial, one that highlights the importance of the court case for the time in which it took place.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> This reading is also suggested by Levi himself who gave the published defence speech the subtitle: *Reminiscences and Perhaps a Small Contribution to the Cultural History of the Fin de Siècle*. Levi wrote his defence speech after having fled from the Nazis to the USA and it is thus likely that Levi wrote his defence speech also with the Holocaust in mind and from experiencing what the conflation of race and law could look like when taken to its extremes.

I argue in the following section, that at the centre of Mpundo Akwa's trial was not really the credit fraud, rather at trial was the question of status and subject-position ('native' and 'royal') of Africans residing in or visiting Germany and the techniques of racializing these positions and deeming them 'not German'. While the law of the German empire did not offer any racial definition (this was only introduced through the Nazis), "ideas of race were certainly present in the formulation of the law", as historian Lora Wildenthal argues in her analysis of disputed citizenship cases in German colonies (*Race and Gender* 266). The extent to which the concept of race was presented in discussions on citizenship at the time also shows the many conservative voices who demanded more legal regulations of Mpundo Akwa's status and presence in the metropole in the aftermath of his trial. Levi's defence speech is so interesting because it shows that Mpundo Akwa became subject to legal regulations while in fact existing outside the universal assurance of the law as a *colonial* subject.

In his defence of Mpundo Akwa, Levi argues for the extension of the metropolitan law to colonial subjects. This points to the fact that *the* law did not apply to everyone in the same way. It shows the challenges that the act of colonisation had posed "for universal and Enlightenment institutions such as the law" (Joeden-Forgey 85), as we have already seen in the case of the Duala petition. German colonial subjects living in Germany had no claim to German citizenship: "Instead they were given 'certificates' of their colonial status that legally left them without nationality" (El-Tayeb, *Dangerous Liasons* 47). Mpundo Akwa's citizenship status was unclear, as Joeden-Forgey argues: his registration in Hamburg identifies him as from the "German Protectorate" (*Deutsches Schutzgebiet*) and his Altona file simply states "Traveller" (*Reisender*) (Joeden-Forgey 85). Mpundo Akwa often

referred to himself as a German citizen and many newspapers took up this self-image in the aftermath of the trial.

Levi refuted in his defence the accusation that Mpundo Akwa had fraudulently been using the title of nobility through a complicated strategy of invoking some of the racist stereotypes about ‘natives’ and black people that had been circulating the public sphere(s) before the trial and tried to cast them in a different light. Levi’s defence can be read as a way of carefully controlling the way that Mpundo Akwa’s blackness and his ‘Africanness’, “were to influence decisions about his guilt or innocence, both inside the courtroom and in the wider public arena” (Joeden-Forgey 92). One of these stereotypes, evoked by Levi in the courtroom, was the assumption that African people were in general prone to mimicry:

One cannot be surprised that Mpundo Akwa after years of this beguiling intercourse with society, this competition for his company, this glorification of his blue blood should not have developed certain grand airs and mannerisms, perhaps not even in a positive way, which also can be observed in these circles among the young. (Levi, cit. and transl. in Joeden-Forgey 96)

Levi points here to Mpundo Akwa’s popularity amongst the royal houses of Northern Germany. Many of them had also attended the trial as audience or as character witness. While Levi insinuated in the quote above that Mpundo Akwa had learned the reckless behaviour money wise for which he was tried at court from the German aristocracy, in the sense of a cultural performance, he essentialised this behaviour in that he further argued that this act of mimicry was a ‘cultural disposition’:

If furthermore one takes into account the different mentality and outlook of a black person, his basically different attitude with regard to morals, ethics, customs and decorum, and quite a different innate cultural and critical capacity, if one considers that in spite of his conversions to Christianity there must be some remnants of

paganism in his psyche, considering all this it seems more than unfair to hold him completely accountable for his behaviour, his way of dressing and his general attitude, not to seem to be what he really is, that we should not draw unrealistic conclusions about the worth and character of his personality. (Levi, cit. and transl. in Joeden-Forgey 96)

Before unpacking Levi's problematic but successful defence strategy in more detail, it might be helpful to engage with the concept 'mimicry' first.

In colonial and postcolonial literature, mimicry is a popular concept that is usually understood with reference to members of a colonised society imitating the cultural and linguistic forms of their colonisers. In *The Location of Culture* (2012), Bhabha reads colonial mimicry as "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (122). He describes mimicry as a performative technique or even *as performance*. Mimicry as performance does not assimilate cultural differences, but keeps them alive as such as differences (Bhabha 122). This becomes, according to Bhabha, most evident in colonialism's 'civilising mission' and its inherent paradoxes. On the one hand, the goal of the civilising mission was to transform the local culture by making it 'repeat' the colonisers' culture. This element of the civilising mission thus envisions the reformation and elevation of the colonial subject to a 'higher cultural level'. On the other hand, the colonial project was based on ideas of ontological difference and the 'fixity' of the races and a hierarchy of the white race over the black race. This element of the colonising mission clearly stands in contradiction to the idea of elevation. Bhabha points to this paradox when he describes mimicry as containing a destabilising "ironic compromise ... the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (cit. in Moore-Gilbert et.al.120). The Other can be 'Anglicized' but never fully 'English', as one of Bhabha's examples goes.

Conservative voices in the parliamentary debate about the Duala petition, for instance, explained the legally sound language of the petition by assigning its authorship to one of the chiefs who had been working in the colonial administration and thus knew the system from within, assigning the authorship of the petition to what V.S. Naipaul has coined ‘mimic men’, foreign-educated members of a colonial society who worked as translators or civil servants in the colonial administration. Whereas the partial representation (‘almost but not quite’) of the colonial subject produced such ‘mimic men’ of the colonial administration, or as Bhabha calls it, “authorized versions of otherness” (126), these subject positions could also easily be perceived as a menace to colonialism’s claim to absolute authority and authenticity.

What Levi invoked in his defence strategy is the image of the ‘mimic man’ and in such a manner that is the least threatening possible to the authority of the colonial and imperial order. But what he also invoked is a discourse of anti-theatricality that was not only burgeoning in the course of the two Akwa trials, but which was similar to Levi’s own strategy linking mimicry to blackness. Jonas Barish (1985) has most famously described the ‘anti-theatrical prejudice’ as a fear of theatricality in its different manifestations: “the insidious theatricality of life and the exhilarating theatricality of art” (cit. in Balme, *Pacific* 77). Levi uses this anti-theatrical rhetoric in that he unties it from blackness and binds it to class, namely to the alleged heightened theatrical behaviour of the German nobility. He argues in Akwa’s defence: “Considering the environment [of the German nobility] in which he grew up it was very unlikely that the idolized prince would not start to *feel* like he was a prince and feel obliged *to act* according to his high status” (Levi, transl. and emphasis LS). The argument evokes an image of an ‘authentic’ persona of Mpundo Akwa, which had been tainted in the colonial encounter with the German nobility in which he had been seduced to become someone else. Moreover, it evokes a

particular acting technique, in which the actor embodies the role most authentically when truly feeling as if he/she was the character. Thus, Levi balances the mimicry of Akwa with a discourse of authenticity and sincerity underlying his cultural performance. In evoking Mpundo's clothes and habitus as an act and *as* performance, Levi (intentionally or not) also demonstrates the constructedness of class positions. Mpundo became a prince because other princes made him one, because he started to *feel like* a prince and acted accordingly. This logic frames class as a cultural repertoire which one steps into and for which one's enactment of the repertoire has to be believable enough.

In the first instance, Levi's defence strategy paid off. Mpundo was acquitted of all charges. However, Levi's picture of Mpundo Akwa as the perfect 'mimic man', as someone who adopted German manners and dress-codes, but did not fully become German, turned in the aftermath of the trial from an 'appropriate' subjectivity to an 'inappropriate' one in the eyes of the German public. In other words, the public opinion outside of the courtroom turned the image of the 'mimic man' into an 'unauthorised version of otherness', namely the image of an 'imposter', a "black imposter prince", as the pro-colonial newspaper *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* called Mpundo Akwa.<sup>87</sup> The shift from the image of the 'mimic man', who was released of all charges because of his cultural and ethnic difference, to the image of the 'black imposter', who was framed as guilty because of his difference, indicates the aforementioned paradox rooted within the colonial project. It also points to the fact that colonial mimicry is both a product of and a producer of this paradox, and shows how quickly it could turn from a tool of colonial power into a menace to colonialism's claim to absolute authority.

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<sup>87</sup> *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, no. 212, August 8, 1905. Federal Archives Berlin *Lichterfelde*, File BArch R1001/4300.

The image of the ‘black imposter’ was quickly repeated and distributed by other newspapers as well and raised the question as to whether or not Mpundo was really who he said he was: a prince. Interestingly, stories and anecdotes about imposters and imposterism boomed in turn-of-the-century Germany. Theatre historian Peter Marx (2008) suggests that this great interest in imposters was rooted in the aforementioned deep shifts of social categories that modernisation, urbanisation, and industrialisation had brought about within the German empire at the time. He therefore reads the figure of the imposter as symptomatic of an age in which an increase in social, political and geographical mobility was real and sometimes feared.

The racialised imposter figure can be read in a similar way as symptomatic of a “society in motion”,<sup>88</sup> which was not only anxious about class mobility, but also about an increased immigration from the colonies and the instability of allegedly stable racial hierarchies. While Levi was carefully insinuating references to the theatre and to an anti-theatrical discourse, the figure of the imposter places Akwa centre stage in reference to both. It echoes the discourse of ‘anti-theatricality’ in that the figure of the imposter is linked to notions of deception, fakery, fraud, pretense and role-playing. Similar to the actor, the imposter has a carefully executed repertoire, an audience, while making use of a costume that enhances his or her skilful deception. Hans von Manteuffel, criminal inspector of the royal court, describes the imposter in 1908 as follows:

The imposter as well as the Trickster can only excel in his profession, if he manages to copy through his outer-experience as well as through his manners as detailed as

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<sup>88</sup> Peter Marx quotes Fritz Stern who described German society at the turn of the century as “a society in motion, and mobility was its essence and its trauma” (cit. in P. Marx 18).

possible the modes and ways of those social circles to which he wants to find access.<sup>89</sup>

Akwa, however, was called an imposter not for intentionally tricking his audience by using their cultural and social signs, as the definition of von Manteuffel suggests, but because his public performances were perceived along racial lines, and his racial markers were perceived as being at odds with the racial markers of the cultural repertoire to which he was adapting. He betrayed the common opinion influenced by Social Darwinism that black people by definition were unable to produce culture. His public appearances in court and his visits to the Colonial Department while being dressed like a *Kultur Mensch* [civilised person], speaking in perfect German, partly gained so much attention from the press *because* he did not comply to the stereotypical image of the uncivilized ‘savage’. The newspaper articles did not get tired of either admiring his appearance as an ‘intelligent young man’<sup>90</sup> or ridiculing him for trying to come across as one. All of them repeatedly reported on his European clothes<sup>91</sup> and that he spoke fluent German.

Mpundo’s presence in the metropole, his outward appearance, and his demands for a reformation of the colonial system thus challenged the basic justification of Germany’s position as a colonising power, namely that ‘inferior races’ were not able to reach the same level of the ‘cultured’ and ‘civilised races’.

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<sup>89</sup> Hans von Manteuffel. ‘Über Falschspieler und Falschspiel’. In: Hans Ostwald. *Großstadt Dokumente. Das Berliner Spielertum*. Berlin 1908.

<sup>90</sup> See the newspaper article in *Hamburger Correspondent*, No.154, March 25, 1906, HH 111-1 Senat, CL VII, Lit.Lb., No.28a2, Vol.110, Fasc.24.

<sup>91</sup> The issue of ‘dress’ in colonial encounters is a research topic in itself and cannot be discussed in this frame in great length. An anecdote about Friedrich Maharero, son of the Herero chief Samuel Maharero, indicates nevertheless the impact that attire could have in the cross-cultural encounters of the colonial project. Friedrich came to Berlin in 1896 to attend the Colonial Exhibition (*Kolonialausstellung*) and to do politics. He and his delegation were supposed to be exhibited in the exhibition as ‘natives’ from Southwest Africa, but refused to appear in anything else but the ‘European’ clothes, those clothes that they would normally wear. They won this ‘battle’ of the robe with the argument that they are not pagans anymore, but Christians, and that their suits and hats symbolized their status as Christians.

Framing Mpundo Akwa as a 'black imposter' can thus be read as an attempt of controlling and confining his persona in a fixed image. Framing Mpundo as a black imposter was a strategy of denouncing his 'cultured' and 'civilised' presence in the German public sphere as fake and artificial in order to keep the hegemonic colonial order in place. The fact that he had been summoned to court for fraud needs to be read as more than an accusation of *credit* fraud. What was at stake in this court case was his 'fraud' on the established racial hierarchies and Social Darwinist assumptions of static race positions, which his public performances in Western clothes and habits challenged.

What the act of framing Mpundo Akwa as an imposter overlooks, however, is, that in order to perform the repertoire of the imposter one needs a high level of knowledge about the social group one is aiming to enter. The imposter figure is not only a fake but also reveals that social codes and cultural repertoires are not static or fixed at all, but are performative and thus prone to change. The black imposter's mimicry acts like a distorting mirror fracturing the identity of the coloniser through the production of a subject, which is *almost but not quite*, according to the hegemonic norms and framings of race and class and, as psychoanalytical theory would have it, rearticulates the presence of the colonising subject "in terms of its 'otherness'" (Moore-Gilbert et.al. 121). In this logic, the identity of the coloniser relies on the presence/existence of the Other. Bhabha even goes so far to argue that because of this dependency of the coloniser's identity formation on the Other, 'Englishness' is in fact a belated effect, one that only evolved as a consequence of the contact with an alien culture. Through mimicry, the colonial subject is empowered to return the coloniser's gaze. It allows it to elude the subject position to which the colonial order seems to confine the colonial subject.

This potential of the ‘mimic man’ or the ‘black imposter’ to elude their ‘proper position’ within the colonial and racial order of things, became most apparent in the events that lead to Mpundo Akwa’s second trial, the one in which he himself appeared as a plaintiff. The hostile reactions towards Mpundo Akwa in the aftermath of the trial were manifold, but it was especially the voices of the supporters of von Puttkamer that were the most vocal in blaming Mpundo Akwa for the relegation of the governor. Pro-colonial newspapers like the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* responded about the trial in explicitly racist terms and commented under headlines like “Blacks in Germany”<sup>92</sup> about the unwanted presence of black people in Germany in general. Conservative voices like that of former navy lieutenant Heinrich Liersemann, who published a whole book<sup>93</sup> about Mpundo Akwa in 1907, were less interested in the legal status of Akwa than in his ‘proper position’ within the German nation. Here, ‘proper position’ most often referred to the position in the logic of a racial hierarchy, in the colony as well as in the metropole.<sup>94</sup> Many of these articles framed “the combination ‘black’ and ‘German’ as an impossibility” (El-Tayeb, *Dangerous Liasons* 46).

Mpundo Akwa became a ‘stand in’ in these discussions, a *pars pro toto*, for ‘all’ black people that resided or potentially would be residing in Germany. The experience of this split between identity and role, between race and nation has been described by many writers of colour over the past decades (Paul Gilroy: *There Ain’t*

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<sup>92</sup> *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, No. 212, 2 August 1905, from the Federal Archives Berlin *Lichterfelde*, File BArch R1001/4300.

<sup>93</sup> It was published under the title ‘*H.R.H. Prince’ Ludwig Paul Heinrich M’Pundo Njasam Akwa. A contribution to the race question*. The original title in German is “‘S.H.K. Prinz’ Ludwig Paul Heinrich M’Pundo Njasam Akwa. Ein Beitrag zur Rassenfrage”. The usage of Akwa’s name as the title of the publication is a reference to Akwa’s business-card with the indication of his royal status (HRH) which caused a great amount of derogatory comments in the newspapers at the time.

<sup>94</sup> Voices like the following were not uncommon in the German Empire at the time: “The German Empire will have many colored subjects in the future, but colored Germans there will never be, since color and other signifiers mark the human bastard with the inextinguishable sign of its decent and according to these signs, it will be named and ethnologically classified.” From the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, 8 March 1906, translation from El-Tayeb, *Dangerous Liasons* 47.

*no Black in the Union Jack*; Franz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Mask*). Most famously it has been described by W.E.B. Du Bois as the condition of doubleness. Like Mpundo Akwa, Du Bois had also spent some years in Germany. He describes in his book *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903) the American racism of the 'Color Line' as a generator of a condition that he calls 'double consciousness'. He describes how acknowledging that one is at once black *and* American generates an inner split, which makes one look at oneself through those norms of society that treat African American subjects as a 'problem'. The phenomenon of double consciousness is the expression of the experience of racism under which the descendants of the African diaspora had to live:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of the others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One feels his two-ness, - and American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (cit. in Roach 83).

While there is no documented testimony by Akwa about how he might have felt with regard to the aforementioned conceptions of double consciousness, his reactions towards the racist debates that sparked in the aftermath of his trial can give nevertheless some clues. In particular, the fact that Akwa decided to sue the aforementioned former navy lieutenant Liersemann, when the latter claimed in an article of the conservative newspaper *Preußische Korrespondenz* to have personally known Mpundo Akwa from his early years in Kiel as "an undeserving (*minderwertig*) subject".<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Liersemann. 'H.R.H. Prince' Ludwig Paul Heinrich M'Pundo Njasam Akwa. *A contribution to the race question*.

Mpundo Akwa succeeded with his law suit and got the defamation trial that he had hoped for. This second trial was perceived by the public as even more spectacular than the first trial and many were outraged as well as intrigued by the novelty of the suit: “It may be for the first time in the annals of criminal history that a ‘Black’ sues a ‘White’”, as the *Hamburger Correspondent* reported.<sup>96</sup> The trial attracted so much publicity and spectatorship that it even had to be moved to a larger room (Joeden-Forgey 101). The attorney of the navy lieutenant even marked this trial as ‘exceptional’ in his opening remarks, as the papers report: “This is no common libel-case. It is rather something exceptional, that a Black indicts a White and the case clearly has a strong political undertone.”<sup>97</sup> The same article found it worth mentioning that the trial had attracted a large audience, “amongst which were many Negroes”.<sup>98</sup>

Considering the honour culture of the time, however, Mpundo Akwa’s reaction to the insult was not at all an exception. As legal historian Ann Goldberg stresses, “since the Middle Ages, Germans have been successfully suing one another for not only public speech that harms reputation, but for insults (*Beleidigungen*) that make them *feel* disrespected, irrespective of whether their reputations have actually or potentially been harmed” (4). She points out that the nineteenth century with its new claimants from rather marginalised backgrounds “played a critical role in perpetuating Germany’s juridified honor culture” (4). What was extraordinary about these new forms of lawsuits at the turn of the century was not the fact that also people from marginalised or outsider groups (like Jews, workers, women) also defended their honour in court, but the verticality of these lawsuits: “Vertical

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<sup>96</sup> *Hamburger Correspondent*, No. 13, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1908 (evening issue). HH 111-1 Senat, CL VII, Lit.Lb., No.28a2, Vol.110, Fasc.24.

<sup>97</sup> *Hamburger Nachrichten*, No. 822, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1906 (evening issue). HH 111-1 Senat, CL VII, Lit.Lb., No.28a2, Vol.110, Fasc.24.

<sup>98</sup> *Hamburger Nachrichten*, No. 822, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1906 (evening issue). HH 111-1 Senat, CL VII, Lit.Lb., No.28a2, Vol.110, Fasc.24.

lawsuits between unequals (...) could also now involve legal actions of inferiors against their social superiors and even against government officials” (Goldberg 11). This clearly applies to Mpundo’s libel-trial against the former navy lieutenant, which interfered with the vertical order of white hegemony over people of African heritage. Filing such a suit presupposed an inherent claim to dignity and the right to defend it in law. It clearly questions the ‘naturalness’ of the colonial hegemony based on a system of racial hierarchies.<sup>99</sup>

His law suit indicates the sea-change that Goldberg describes as “underway in Germany as outsider groups were creatively seizing upon and transforming a juridical honor idiom to claim new right” (Goldberg 157). While in many cases the libel-lawsuits rather reproduced Germany’s stratified social order, the incentive for an individual to go to court over a defamation was “to reclaim a level of respect consistent with the individual’s status and thus re-establish a status quo brought into disequilibrium by the affront” (Goldberg 45). But in the eyes of the imperialists, it was exactly the status quo that was threatened by the law suit in the first place, as the status quo did not include the presence of a person of African heritage appearing in the imperial public sphere as a subject with rights. By claiming his right to indict the former lieutenant for libel, Mpundo Akwa re-evaluated a public sphere that had conscripted blackness as inferior and duplicitous. In using his deep knowledge about

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<sup>99</sup> Taking legal actions against insult was also a way for Mpundo as a businessman to defend his material existence. Honour was an important base for doing business as credit involved trust and reputation. Goldberg stresses that “honor was an essential way of doing business. Merchants, entrepreneurs, and bankers worked diligently to maintain honorable reputations of probity and trustworthiness. They did so not only through staying solvent and maintaining respectable business dealings but by displaying markers of bourgeois respectability, cultivating proper (Weberian) ‘lifestyle’ in their social and personal relations” (57). The only testimony that I could find from Akwa himself from this trial points to both, the incentive of repairing his reputation as a businessman, as well as the larger political context in which the trial was place. He explained, that he intends “to establish an overseas trade between Germany and Kamerun” and that he “would not have sued captain lieutenant Liersemann, if he would not have tried to ruin me because I filed a complaint against Mr. von Puttkamer” In: *Hamburger Nachrichten*, No. 822, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1906 (evening issue). HH 111-1 Senat, CL VII, Lit.Lb., No.28a2, Vol.110, Fasc.24.

German legal procedures and a particular German understanding of ‘honour’ he managed to undermine the legitimacy of racial hierarchies and colonial order.

The many attempts to expel Mpundo Akwa from Hamburg to keep him from potentially stirring anti-colonial voices in the metropole show the extent to which Mpundo Akwa’s public appearances posed a threat to the colonial discourse. The defense lawyer even prevented that the court case would be translated into Duala, because he feared a ‘wave of triumph’ that would spread through Kamerun, if a German court would sue a white person for insulting a black man<sup>100</sup>. The fact that when he indeed got deported back to Kamerun in 1912, he was imprisoned and enchained in order not to stir anti-colonial protests in the colony either, shows the subversive power that the colonists allocated to his persona.

### Spectacles of ‘Blackness’

On 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1906 a letter from Kamerun arrived in the Colonial Department in Berlin issued by a certain ‘theatre inspector’ Scholz.<sup>101</sup> The theatre inspector asked in his letter for the permission to bring a “black band” stationed in Duala on a concert-tour to Germany. He predicted the great success of the concert-tour with the argument that the band “comes from the colony and consists exclusively of blacks”.<sup>102</sup> Scholz’s excitement indicates two things: first, that although the importation of German ‘colonial subjects’ from the colony for the purpose of

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<sup>100</sup> In: *Hamburger Nachrichten*, No. 822, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1906 (evening issue). HH 111-1 Senat, CL VII, Lit.Lb., No.28a2, Vol.110, Fasc.24. It is obvious, that for Liersemann and his counsel their defence strategy was less about revealing the truth than about upholding proper race distinctions. Interestingly, the court ruled in favour for Mpundo with the argument that “there could not be different forms of justice for blacks and whites” (Joeden-Forgey 102). Liersemann was charged in first instance with a minor fine. He appealed this sentence, supported by an immense outcry in the pro-colonial circles, and was acquitted in a second instance of all charges. Despite the fact that Mpundo Akwa lost this insult trial in the very end, it still forms a remarkable example of how an outsider used the juridical language of honour to claim his rights within the German metropolitan law.

<sup>101</sup> BA Berlin Lichterfelde, BArch R1001 4457/f.

<sup>102</sup> BA Berlin Lichterfelde, BArch R1001 4457/f.

exhibition had been prohibited, there was still a market for entertainment by performers from the colony, and second, that ‘blackness’ was a selling factor in 1906 Germany. Zoo-keeper and impresario Carl Hagenbeck, amongst others, had been touring Europe with his famous ethnographic shows (*Völkerschauen*) since 1874, and had made the “spectacles of alterity” (Balme, *Pacific* 130) popular in Germany.

Given the popularity of the ethnographic exhibitions, an all-black-band from the colony clearly promised great commercial success for a self-acclaimed entrepreneur like Scholz. But the prompt answer from the Colonial Department reveals something else. A colonial agent answered to Scholz’s request the following: “If a concert-tour of the Kamerun protectorate-band will be considered at all, then surely only after the Akwa-Affair is solved and more or less forgotten, thus earliest in a couple of years”.<sup>103</sup> The response of the Colonial Department links the case of the Akwas and their visibility in the public sphere to the sphere of popular entertainment, indicating the general attempt to control and regulate migration from the colonies into the metropole at the time and that this control functioned as a means to regulate the modalities and intensities of colonial encounters. The link between the visibility of the popular stage, in the case of the music entertainment, with the visibility of the court, in the case of the ‘Akwa Affair’, which the correspondence between Scholz and the Colonial Department establishes, will be in the focus of this last part.

The theatrical stage was the privileged place for crossing the boundaries that racial discourses were so ostensibly trying to keep intact. Here, “expressions of the clandestine, furtive forms of what can be called ‘colonial desire’: a covert but insistent obsession with transgressive, interracial sex, hybridity and miscegenation” (Young ix) could be played out and embodied. On stage, racial boundaries could be

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<sup>103</sup> BA Berlin Lichterfelde, BArch R1001 4457/f.

crossed without having to fear actual miscegenation. When in 1906 the figure of Mpundo Akwa appeared on the stage of Berlin's *Metropol-Theater*, it was thus used as an invitation to bring this colonial desire onto the stage.

The two most popular motifs that featured in Mpundo Akwa's stage representation were the blackface mask and the issue of miscegenation, both again phenomena of duplicity and potential ambivalence. The incentive for the appearance of the figure Mpundo Akwa was, however, not Akwa's trial nor the appeal of the chiefs, but the colonial scandal around the 'false cousin', which had become a highly popular topic in the mass media at the same time that the Akwas were still stirring the public's interest.<sup>104</sup>

The revue of 1906 went by the title 'And the devil laughs along' [*Und der Teufel lacht dazu*] with a libretto and music by Julius Freund and Viktor Holländer.<sup>105</sup> It looks back at the events and scandals of the bygone year. The revue staged the German empire as a colonial 'world-theatre', that is reigned by the devil. The devil receives the sins from different European countries. The first one to enter the stage and report to the devil is the sin of Vienna. She mentions that the people in Vienna argue a lot and that instead of dancing the waltz, everyone now dances the way they like. The devil shows his appreciation of the chaos in Vienna. Then the sin from Paris enters the stage whilst dancing a "Cancan or Cake-Walk", and is praised by the devil for her devilish doings in the recent Morocco Crisis.<sup>106</sup> More and more (female) representatives from different countries enter the stage and present 'typical' dances. The last one to enter is the sin of Berlin, who arrives without a dance. She

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<sup>104</sup> As mentioned in the second chapter, the *Metropol-Theater* [until 1898 *Theater Unter den Linden*] became under the directorship of Richard Schultz one of Berlin's most popular stages and advanced in the 1920s to a world-famous operetta-stage.

<sup>105</sup> *Der Teufel lacht dazu. Grosse Jahres-Revue in Sieben Bildern*. Score for piano and voice. Text Julius Freund, music Viktor Holländer. Typoscript from 23 September 1906. The libretto can be found in the theatre collection of the Free University Berlin, Kst 7 97/92/W180 13.

<sup>106</sup> The so called 'first Morocco Crisis' (1905/06) was a state of increased tension between France and the German Empire over the influence on Northern Africa.

reports that there is not much to inform the devil about: the people of Berlin are too moralistic and solid to be sinful. In disbelief, the devil decides to go to Berlin and take a look for himself at why the Germans are lacking in sinfulness and devilish energies<sup>107</sup>. In Berlin the devil encounters an authoritarian state, who counts and censors its people, and the Berliners who try to escape the rigid regime of state tax and censorship. He also comes across a ‘colonial cesspool’ of sex and violence, in which he encounters an African prince intervening against the German colonial system and a woman who had been smuggled into the colonial high society with the help of a governor. The two are of course none other than Mpundo Akwa and ‘the cousin’ filing a complaint against the same person: Jesco von Puttkamer.

The cover of a popular music journal at the time shows a picture from the revue depicting the popular Metropole actors Henry Bender and Fritzi Massary in their roles of Mpundo Akwa and the cousin.<sup>108</sup> The picture together with the typo-script of the revue gives us a clue of how Mpundo Akwa and the cousin were represented on stage. The stage-directions of the typo-script describe the Mpundo Akwa figure as ‘half civilised, half African’ echoing the aforementioned concept of the ‘almost the same but not quite’. Bender’s face is painted black and his hands covered in gloves. He wears a tail-coat and underneath it a short vest with flowers and a white shirt. His checkered pants seem slightly too big and the enormous bow-tie around his neck even more so. His whole appearance references the image of a

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<sup>107</sup> The devil, played by the popular actor Josef Giampietro, functions in the revue as a dramaturgical device, leading the audience through the different ‘images’ presented on stage. It is through his eyes, that the audience looks back at the events from the bygone year. His car-ride through Berlin is marked in the program-leaflet as a ‘kinematographic journey’, suggesting that the *Metropol-Theater* applied the by then still relatively new medium of film in its revues. This is in so far significant as it defies the popular narrative of theatre history scholarship that cinematic projections first entered the theatre stage in the productions of Erwin Piscator and the so called theatre avant-garde. Rather, as this example proves, it was the popular stages that experimented with new technologies in the theatres and thus informed the stage techniques of the historical avant-garde.

<sup>108</sup> Front page of the journal *Musik für Alle*, No.10. Depicts Fritzi Massary in the role of ‘the cousin’ and Henry Bender in the role of ‘Mpundo Akwa’ in the Revue *Und der Teufel lacht dazu* 1906. Found at <http://operetta-research-center.org/>

clown rather than that of a turn-of-the-century gentleman. Bender, one could argue, represents Akwa as a popular colonial stereotype: a caricature of a black African man who wears European bourgeois clothing (most often a tailcoat and/or a top-hat), but usually fails to wear them properly. Either the clothes are too big or too short or a significant part of the outfit is missing, for example the pants. The figure echoes the paradox lying at the heart of colonialism's 'civilising mission' and turns the elevation of the colonial subject into a laughable image, in that the stereotype arrests the possible fluctuation of identity markers, social positions and cultural signs into one stable image. Hence, the stereotype suggests that identity and belonging are, in fact, always and eventually determined along racial lines. Furthermore, it shows that the attempt to acquire other cultural signs than one's own must sooner or later fail.

Nevertheless, the fact that figures like the black imposter were circulating the public spheres in the first place shows that assumed racial hierarchies and oppressive colonial strategies were never fully able to determine all scopes of action as imperial every-day life was more ambivalent and complex than race theories could determine. Those figures can thus also be understood as moments of transgression, because their effectivity was never fully determinable, especially not on stage in moments of live performance where every gesture and intonation could also insinuate the opposite of what it was supposed to express. It is these ambivalences and doubleness in figures like the black imposter that invoked both control and resistance, fear and affection at the same time. This resonates most pressingly in the phenomenon of the blackface mask.

In her reading of the scene, historian Astrid Kusser (2013) interprets Bender's blackface performance as a reference to nineteenth century American minstrelsy shows and the American stereotype of the *Coon* rather than to the German stereotype. In its formation, American blackface minstrelsy developed two main

stock-characters, that of the “plantation rustic” called Jim Crow and that of the “urban dandy” referred to as Zip Coon (Lott 23). The Coon character was mocking free black people. He represented the urban black man mimicking the white upper-class in speech and dress and usually failed in it. Similar to the German version of the ‘black dandy’, the Coon wore tail coats and white gloves, and was mainly occupied with parties and women. According to historian Eric Lott (2003), blackface performers, like clowns, rely on a certain amount on doubleness, because they often inspire both “a certain terror as well as great affection” (25). He quotes Ralph Ellison on this resonance of doubleness in American blackface minstrelsy:

When the white man steps behind the mask of the [blackface] trickster his freedom is circumscribed by the fear that he is not simply miming a personification of his disorder and chaos but that he will become in fact that which he intends only to symbolize; that he will be trapped somewhere in the mystery of hell ... and thus lose that freedom which, in the fluid, ‘traditionless’, ‘classless’ and rapidly changing society, he would recognize as the white man’s alone. (cit. in Lott 25)

The black mask is here presented as a tool “to play with the collective fears of a degraded and threatening – and male – Other while at the same time maintaining some symbolic control over them” (Lott 25). Thus, when one inverts the racist logic of minstrelsy, its actual function is that “of staging racial categories, boundaries, and types even when these possessed little that a black man could recognize as ‘authentic’” (Lott 37).

While both Ellison and Lott write about blackface minstrelsy in a specific historical, geographical, and political context, namely American *antebellum*, literature scholar Jonathan Wipplinger (2011) studied the presence of blackface in turn-of-the-century Germany. He shows that blackface was a phenomenon not uncommon to German culture and had existed since the mid-nineteenth-century “as

part of the German cultural encounter with America and African Americans” (458). While the German reception of blackface began as a curious reaction to American entertainment culture, “its presence had the effect of forcing a reevaluation and reinterpretation of the very notion of what it meant to German in modernity”, posits Wipplinger (458). More than an entertainment import, the blackface-mask functioned in Germany as a “nodal point of societal uncertainty” (Wipplinger 458). Especially because it not only suggested identities in flux with regard to race, but also with regard to class. As Wipplinger emphasizes, “blackface and black performers were almost exclusively encountered in the variety theatres, i.e., in modern, urban entertainment establishments (...) outside of the traditional parameters of bourgeois cultural consumption” (458).<sup>109</sup>

This observation would support another reading of Bender’s blackface-mask, one that suggests that it not only staged a popular racialized stereotype (whether it be the *Hosenneger* or the *Coon*), but also mocked what the stereotype’s dandy-esque costume stood for: urban modernity and a new social elite. Especially because the figure does not only show race specific motives but also class specific ones. The *Metropol-Theater* attracted an audience that was neither exclusively from the bourgeoisie nor from the working class. It rather constituted a ‘new social elite’ that was emerging in Berlin at the turn of the century. As historian Marline Otte suggests, this new audience used the *Metropol-Theater* as a public platform for its acts of self-fashioning. Going under the name *Tout Berlin* (French, for ‘All of Berlin’), it encompassed the newly rich as well as the impoverished aristocracy, the petit bourgeois as well as members of the royal family. Its cultural repertoire did not comply with the traditional repertoire of the bourgeoisie, but was rather defined by

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<sup>109</sup> This is supported by the study on black music in Europe of Rainer Lotz (1990), whose collection points to a large and regular presence of African-American performers in the German metropolises. According to the advert placements in the widely frequented German-speaking paper *Der Artist* more than one hundred black performers toured Germany in 1896 alone (Lotz 262).

its carefully staged and publicly performed life-style in terms of masquerade and transformation.

The duet between Mpundo Akwa and the cousin, for instance, describes the couple's lifestyle, as 'living belétage' and 'keeping equipage', as hosting five-o'clock-teas, attending high-society balls and wearing the latest fashion. The libretto of the duet presents a cousin that is not averse to Mpundo Akwa's proposition to marry him, but insists on getting a good look at his bank account first. The scene frames the cousin as a gold-digger and Mpundo Akwa as a kleptomaniac, who can only afford the expensive hotels in which the couple is staying because he is stealing the silver. The duet clearly played on the image of Mpundo Akwa as a criminal, as someone living beyond his means, and as a 'ladies' man' - similar to the public image that the trial in Hamburg the year before tried to establish. What is striking in this depiction of Mpundo Akwa is the similarity to other ethnic trickster-figures in that time: for example, the Jewish-marked Sally-figures from the early Ernst Lubitsch movies, which interweave social mobility with cultural identity politics, new modes of production and a lifestyle defined by consumption, as Peter Marx argues (306). Lubitsch represents these Sally-figures as driven in their actions by their libidinous character and their economic focus, and as successful in their art of persuasion, all characteristics that were also attributed to Mpundo Akwa in the course of his trials.

But Mpundo Akwa is not the only trickster-figure in this 'colonial cesspool'. So is the figure of the cousin. She lived under a false identity in the colony, and not just any false identity, but that of a baroness. Thus, similar to Mpundo Akwa, the cousin has also lived as an 'imposter', mimicking a cultural repertoire that was not that of her own class. That she is also filing a law-suit against von Puttkamer in the revue echoes Ann Goldberg's aforementioned point about the new association

between 'claim right' and 'equal rights' at the turn of the century, here signalling in the figure of the cousin as a plaintiff the burgeoning women's rights movement in Germany (Goldberg 11).

Beyond pointing merely to the colonial context, the performance thus also negotiated the social mobility in terms of class and gender, and can be read as a mocking critique of the new social elite, which publicly performed an appropriation of the cultural signs of the bourgeoisie, signs that were often borrowed from the global and colonial mass consumer culture. Against this background and drawing on Eric Lott's scholarship on blackface minstrelsy, I argue that Bender's blackface mask was "less a *repetition* of power relations than a *signifier* for them – a distorted mirror, reflecting displacements and condensations and discontinuities" (Lott 8). This reading of the *Metropol* revue positions the performance as part of a global network of colonial mass consumer culture,<sup>110</sup> in which elements such as the *Coon*, blackface, the *Cake Walk*, American Minstrelsy were being appropriated and adjusted to local audiences. The fact that the references of this repertoire were legible for a German audience indicates that those references must have circulated the theatrical spheres of Berlin already before 1906. This would mean that the repertoire of the *Metropol-Theater*, and most likely that of other popular theatre stages in Berlin, was not only influenced by the latest fashions from metropolises like London, Paris and New York, but also from the *Black Atlantic* (Gilroy 1995), and that

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<sup>110</sup> Kusser, for example, shows in her analysis of the scene the resemblance between Fritzi Massary's large ostrich-feathered-hat and the portrait of the famous *Cake Walk* dancer Aida Overton Walker from New York City, who had toured Berlin only months before the revue was staged and whose picture had been printed in different glossy magazines and newspapers all over Germany. It is thus not unlikely that her outfit and repertoire might have inspired the character and costume of 'the cousin'. The *Cake Walk* reference also surfaces in the particular posture in which both Massary and Bender are depicted on the postcard. Their arms stretched out, their bodies slightly leaned back and one of their legs lifted as if in the middle of walking, resemble the posture of *Cake Walk* dancers. The *Cake Walk* originated on American slave plantation, through which black slaves imitated and mocked the white slave holders. By the end of the nineteenth century it was appropriated by white performers and was mainly performed in minstrel shows. It also became a popular social dance in the metropolises of Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Berlin's theatres and ball-rooms were much less white and ethnically German than scholarship has so far suggested.<sup>111</sup> In this reading, the appearance of Mpundu Akwa on stage is framing a story from the German colonial project with elements from a repertoire of global colonial mass consumer culture.

A last issue presented by the revue through the story of Mpundo Akwa that needs to be mentioned is that of 'mixed-race-relations'. In allowing for Mpundo Akwa and the cousin to meet on stage - an encounter that never took place in real life - by bonding over the same enemy Mpundo Akwa and the cousin engage in a 'colonial duet', which carried the telling title 'Do you want to be my sweet Cousin?' [*Willst du mein Cousinchen sein?*].<sup>112</sup> As the title of the duet suggests, Mpundo Akwa proposes in the song that the cousin returns with him to Kamerun - this time as *his* cousin. Not only does the duet insinuate a romantic future between Akwa and the cousin, but also that resulting from this relationship could be a little prince "in black and white stripes".<sup>113</sup>

By 1906, when the revue was staged, the anti-miscegenation laws were already in place in the colony South-West Africa and the governors of German East Africa, Togo, New Guinea, Samoa, and Kamerun endorsed such a law also for their

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<sup>111</sup> Nonetheless, many of the black entertainers touring Germany would adapt their original repertoires to the taste or expectations of a white European audience. This could either mean to cater to a preconceived image of 'blackness' by including acts of blackface minstrelsy or performing the so called 'nigger songs and dances' or even to take up elements from a 'white' European repertoire. The changes in the repertoire of the Black Troubadours (a troupe that emerged from the famous Fisk Jubilee Singers) from mainly religious elements in the group's presentation to more and more folk songs, dialogues and burlesques is a good indication of that (Lotz 258).

<sup>112</sup> The song quickly became a popular music-hit entering in form of a record many German homes in the years after the revue was staged. Alfred Duskes, first German film producer, even made a short silent movie (*Tonbild*). *Tonbild* connotes a specific proceeding in early German cinema, in which the camera filmed the actors singing in playback to a record. When projected in the cinema, the sound of the movie would be synchronized with a gramophone. Those short movies [*Tonbilder*] mainly showed popular scenes from operas, operettas or revues. Alfred Duskes. 'Der Teufel lacht dazu: Willst du mein Cousinchen sein?' [1907], German Film Institute. <http://www.filmportal.de/video/willst-du-mein-cousinchen-sein>, visited 2 October 2016. The *Tonbild* of Duskes, however, does not show the figure of Akwa, but a duet between 'the cousin' and the governor Puttkamer.

<sup>113</sup> See libretto of the colonial duet in *Der Teufel lacht dazu. Grosse Jahres-Revue in Sieben Bildern*. Score for piano and voice. Text Julius Freund, music Viktor Holländer. Typoscript from 23 September 1906.

‘protectorates’. The rationale for banning interracial marriages in the colony was based on the fear of the alleged “dangerous effects of racial mixture on the purity of the white race”, as historian Tina Campt argues (*Converging Spectres* 328). After the anti-miscegenation law was installed in 1905, a principle known in the US as the ‘one-drop rule’ was pronounced in German South-West Africa in 1907, which rendered anyone with only one ‘native’ ancestor (‘one drop of black blood’) legally into a ‘native’ despite their existing legal citizenship (Wildenthal 2001). Whereas ‘interracial marriage’ was not legally prohibited in the metropole, it was strongly discouraged by discourses framing “sexual relationships between members of different races” as “unacceptable” (El-Tayeb, *Dangerous Liaisons* 45). It was especially young white women who were targeted by such ideologies of racial purity in the metropole. In the time of the peoples-exhibitions (*Völkerschauen*) stories about the inappropriate excitement of German women about the male performers in peoples-exhibitions had been circulating the newspaper depicting an outcry of the colonial press about these advances. These young German women were not only depicted by the press as highly susceptible to the presence of black men, but also as an example of the lacking ‘race-consciousness’ (*Rassenbewusstsein*) of the Germans. An article in the German colonial newspaper (*Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*) from 1909 even describes these relations between German women and black men as a ‘race scandal’:

It seems to be a widely spread nonsense, as the shameful memories about the colonial exhibition in Berlin 1896 prove, where white women and girls were chasing after Negroes from Kamerun and other colonies. Amongst these Negroes was also Friedrich, son of the notorious Herero chief Samuel Maharero, who turned in the eyes of the submissive woman-soul into a royal Highness, just like the ‘prince’ Akwa, whom only the court could put in his place, that much he had been pampered.

(...) the Negro boys in Africa shall know that between them and white girls exists a gap that they are not allowed to cross.<sup>114</sup>

What the article in the *Kolonialzeitung* signals is an imperial anxiety about the lack of control over these encounters. But it also indicates the popular status that certain African personalities from the German colonies apparently enjoyed in the metropole, including Mpundo Akwa.

On the popular stages, the ‘mixed-race-relations’ were a popular topic.<sup>115</sup> It is interesting to note that the combination of a white woman and a black man presented an alternative to the so called ‘colonial ur-fiction’ (Zantop 1999) depicting a white man in an erotic encounter with a ‘native’ woman, which stood metonymically for the conquest of foreign territory by a European power. In the *anti-ur-fiction*, the positions are reversed, which creates a double threat instead of a stabilising image for a hegemonic colonial discourse: not only does it pose a threat to the idea of ‘racial purity’, and thus to national identity along lines of race, but also to a patriarchal order challenged by the emancipation of women, who chose their own (sexual) partner.

In order to diminish the destabilising character of this trope, many of the pieces place the couples in a working-class milieu and depict the character as comical side-kicks to the serious protagonists. In these plays, German maids or waitresses fall in love with the black servants or footmen of white colonial agents returning home to the metropole. Their love-story builds a parallel plot to the main plot of the colonial soldier returning home to his (white) fiancée, often taking on a

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<sup>114</sup> Cit. in Kusser 389, transl. by me. *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 1909, vol. 26, no.36, p. 593-593.

<sup>115</sup> Also humorous postcards printed around 1900 images that crossed the boundaries of the *color line* and framed colonial encounters either as scenes of fraternization, child-like friendship or romantic/erotic encounters. The dream of colonial politics depicted as friendship and love affairs was, however, troubled with the increase of colonial wars and uprising after 1904 and depictions of the colonies now increasingly accompanied by the nightmare of colonial ambivalence and loss of control (Kusser 386).

more humorous and sexualized tone than the sober, patriotic main plot.<sup>116</sup> White women as part of the trope of mixed-race-relationship are in these plays usually never from the bourgeoisie or nobility. The fact that these relationships are depicted as class specific could also point to a bourgeois anxiety about the mobilising of new social classes, pointing to a fusion of workers and women's emancipatory struggles at the time with an increased presence and visibility of representatives from the colonies in the metropole.

This is different in the case of *Akwa* and the cousin, in which the two are not only literally challenging colonial hegemony by putting a former governor on trial, but through their relationship also making the white coloniser redundant. The white man in this example is thus literally replaced by the black man. Despite the fact that these popular performances showed the tabooed mixed-race relationships on stage, and in doing so made them to some extent 'discussable' and 'representable', the potentially anti-colonial critique in these popular performances was never one of taking a clear political stance for civil rights of marginalised people.

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What I have shown in this chapter through the case of the 'Akwa Affair', its manifestation in cultural and theatrical performances in the German metropole, is that colonial encounters were marked by a dynamic of negotiations and claims over rights and subject positions that resisted the attempts of fixing social and cultural positions in the colonial matrix of power. The case of the Duala, moreover, has shown that binary conceptions of coloniser/colonised, colonial power/resistance do not hold. Rather the relation between the Duala notables and the German colonial

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<sup>116</sup> *Kolonialpolitik* ['Colonial Politics'], 1907, Comedy in 4 Acts. By Ernst von Wolzogen; *Koloniales an Kaisers Geburtstag. Komisches Genrebild mit Gesang in 1 Act.* By Eduard Bloch; *Kabale und Liebe in Kamerun. Schwarz-weiße Kolonial-Pantomime mit Musik in 2 Bildern.* By E. Sédouard.

administration was an ambivalent one, in which the Duala representatives on the one hand signed the contract with the German merchants in their own economic interest, and on the other hand were the most fervent and outspoken critics of the practice of colonisation and exploitation that followed suit.

What the petitioning of Duala and of Mpundo Akwa, moreover, revealed is the legal paradox of metropolitan and colonial law which simultaneously included and excluded the African body within the national body politic. Through enacting the right to complaint, the Duala rearticulate themselves in other terms than those to which they had been assigned ('native'), namely as kings, sovereigns, chiefs, contract partners (and thus legal personas), and even as Germans. Their rearticulation of their assigned positions impacted the idea of Germanness and its alleged universal values in that it revealed what had been left out or repressed in those values, such as in ideas of 'equality and justice for all'. Mpundo Akwa took the ideals of the West at their word and measured them against the reality of the colonial politics in which they were embedded. The fact that the 'Akwa Affair' made it into the debates of the German parliament, was circulated by all of the major newspapers, and even made it into the annual revue of the Metropol-Theater, points to the strong perceptual dynamic between colony and metropole.

This dynamic will also be at the centre of the next chapter, in which I will explore the relation between theatrical and colonial order. I will do so with the help of the concepts of *Ruhe* (public peace) and *Ordnung* (order) and explore how they materialised in performative events of settler's amateur theatre societies and official colonial ceremonies. Moreover, I show through an analysis of performances by South African migrant workers in the German colony South-West Africa how the theatrical order was both complicit with and resistant to colonial segregation policies.

## Chapter Three

### Performing the Empire -

#### Spatial and Sonic Segregation in the Colonies

In July 1914, a letter arrived at the colonial district office of the small coastal town Lüderitzbucht in the former German colony South-West Africa asking the following:

With this letter I would like to ask for the permission of hosting a couple of white spectators at our dance event in the cinema hall this evening. To guarantee order, I will personally make sure that the latter will sit separated from the Coloureds as well as that the white spectators leave the hall once the event is finished and the dancing begins.<sup>117</sup>

The letter was written by a certain Mr. Herz, owner of the cinema in Lüderitzbucht. The request was authorized by the colonial district officer with the comment: “Approved until 11h. All Whites have to leave the cinema-hall by 11 o’clock”.<sup>118</sup> The event Herz was hosting was categorised as ‘entertainment for coloureds’ and usually excluded the presence of ‘white’ participants or audience. With its emphasis on ‘guaranteeing’ order by keeping the ‘white’ audience not only separated from a ‘black’ audience, but also from engaging in the post-performance social dance, Herz’s letter gives us important insights into the nature of colonial order, which seems to be supported or informed by the specific set-up of a theatrical order. Herz’s letter suggests that the colonial order was based on the division of bodies in space along racial lines. This could be provided by the order of the theatre, which is here understood as based on the division of bodies in space, and the distinction between

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<sup>117</sup> National Archives of Namibia (NAN). File BLU 74. L.10., transl. LS.

<sup>118</sup> File BLU 74. L.10., transl. LS.

auditorium and stage. In other words, the order inherent to the theatre's socio-spatial set up of those bodies that watch and those bodies that perform, allowed Herz to manage in space the bodies that had been categorised as different by colonial discourse and to thus 'guarantee [colonial] order'. It allowed this, however, only to a certain extent, because as soon as the performance was over, the theatre-order offered not only a clear division of bodies but also the potential for intermingling and contact. Here, 'when the dancing begins', the order of the theatre did apparently not comply any more with the intended order of the colonial discourse and the categorised-as-different bodies were separated by curfew, as the comment of the colonial district officer shows in that file.

I argue in this chapter, that these dynamics of distance and proximity expressed in the socio-spatial set up of the theatre and its concern about the division of bodies in space epitomise a tension characteristic to the colonial order manifested in the practices of spatial segregation in the colony. Here, in the theatre and in other performative events, the division of bodies in time and space could be rehearsed, displayed, or challenged in the colonial context and for the colonial order.

In the process of establishing a German settler community in South-West Africa, the desire to establish a specifically 'German' society in the colony required constant distinction from the indigenous 'native' world. This increasingly materialised after the Namibian War (1908) in the attempts to (spatially) segregate the white population from the black population. It was an attempt to create distance in order to secure order. But these segregation policies were less encompassing than the official discourse of the colonial administration and bourgeois enthusiasts would want us to believe. "[P]roximities, intimacies, and sympathies" between the German settlers and the African population regularly transgressed the segregation attempts (Stoler, *Race and Education* 153). On the other hand, the formations of 'mixed-race'

families and relations and an increasingly high number of white settlers that 'assimilated' to a lifestyle that was connoted as 'African' reinforced the alleged need for distance and policies of segregation in the eyes of the colonial administration.

Historian Birthe Kundrus (2003) has argued in her book *Moderne Imperialisten* ('Modern Imperialists') in this regard, that the establishment of a German settler community in South-West Africa was defined by two mutually interdependent fears: the fear of a strong 'African influence' on the German settlers, and the fear that the settlers lacked a strong enough sense of national identity to resist this influence (Kundrus 175). In the eyes of the colonial enthusiasts, one way of keeping the 'African influence' at a secure distance and strengthening the national identity of the settlers at the same time was through the transplantation of what was perceived to be 'German culture' to the colony, as Kundrus argues (175). It has long been recognised by historians that German colonial and foreign policy were to a large extent driven by the imperatives of prestige and "cultural self-fashioning" (Balme *Pacific*, 125). This self-fashioning was especially linked to the person of the Emperor Wilhelm II himself. Whereas Chancellor Bismarck remained sceptical about the establishment of colonies under German rule till the very end, it was especially with his resignation and the ascendancy of Wilhelm II to the imperial throne in 1890 that the German attitude towards the colonial enterprise changed noticeably.

It is thus little surprising that next to the celebrations of national holidays (Christmas) and it was through the annual celebration in honour of the Emperor's birthday that the settler community would display its 'cultural superiority'. The celebration of such a patriotic event served thus as a way to occupy the public space of the colonial cities, to stage 'German culture', and also publicly perform its hegemonic position towards the indigenous population. A growing scene of amateur

clubs and societies created exclusive ‘white’ spaces and offered new settlers orientation and modes of integration, while excluding Africans and other non-German whites. Those clubs and societies, amongst which were also theatre and literary societies, defined their task as strengthening the ‘patriotic feelings’ and the ‘race consciousness’ of the settlers, and thus put themselves into the service of the empire (Kundrus 178).

While the ‘right’ balance of distance and proximity between the ‘settler’s-world’ and the ‘native’s-world’ was easy to strike in those ‘white’ and private spaces of the clubs and societies, it was much more difficult to secure it in the public space of national celebrations and colonial ceremonies, where the settler community and the indigenous community would encounter each other. Public entertainments and ceremonies were thus always suspected of endangering the colonial order, in the eyes of the colonial administration. It is here, in this perceived potential danger, that the role of the colonial police and its relation to theatre becomes most prevalent. Like in the metropole, the colonial police’s task was defined as securing *Ruhe* (public peace) and *Ordnung* (order).<sup>119</sup> Historian Jakob Zollmann (2010) has shown in his monograph on the colonial police in South-West Africa that for the colonial rule the principle of ‘order’ represented the highest value. He quotes an order of the German Emperor from 1885, in which the latter asks his colonial commissioner Heinrich Göring “to assure *Ruhe* and *Ordnung* by all possible means” in the colony South-West Africa (cit. in Zollmann 33, transl. LS). Similar to the metropole, it was the police who would surveil and control the theatre in the colony.

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<sup>119</sup> It says in the famous Paragraph 10 II 17 of the *Allgemeines Landesrecht für die Preußischen Staaten* (ALR): “Die nöthigen Anstalten zur Erhaltung der öffentlichen Ruhe, Sicherheit, und Ordnung, und zur Abwendung der dem Publico, oder einzelnen Mitgliedern desselben, bevorstehenden Gefahr zu treffen, ist das Amt der Polizey.” In: *Allgemeines Landrecht für die preußischen Staaten. Von 1794*. Mit einer Einführung von Hans Hattenhauer und einer Bibliographie von Günther Bernert. 3., erweiterte Auflage. Luchterhand, Neuwied u. a. 1996; For more discussion of the task of the colonial police see Zollmann (2010).

Theatre historian Jan Lazardzig (2015) has discussed this relationship between theatre and the police for the context of the metropole also in terms of the compatibility of their discourses. He shows convincingly that the discourses of the theatre reformers and the theatre police of the eighteenth century on the power of theatre's effects (*Wirkungsvermögen*) and the need for control of theatre's effects (*Wirkungskontrolle*) go hand in hand. In the eyes of both, theatre reformers (Gottsched, Lessing, Schiller etc.) and police, the spectator was increasingly in need of being disciplined and 'civilised'. From circa 1800, the theatre was increasingly described in terms of its vulnerability to noise and distractions (Korte and Jakob 2012). Spectators would comment during the performance, talk to each other, whistle, and shout. Just as much the audience's taste "needed to be refined and its affects sublimated",<sup>120</sup> so was the audience's behaviour in need of being "cultivated" (Lazardzig, "Performing" 126). In practical terms, this materialised in an increase of rules and orders for both actors and spectators and in "the monitoring of effects and the regulation of affects", both through aesthetic discourse and police practice (Lazardzig, "Performing" 126).

The concept of *Ruhe*, with its double connotation in German of 'public peace' and 'silence', especially developed into a primary goal of policing activities in the later eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century, as Lazardzig posits. This particularly took place in relation to the task of securing order. It always appears in the eighteenth and nineteenth century police literature when the inner order of the state appeared to be endangered by tumult or disorder. *Ruhe* thus meant for the state: harmony, balance, and stability (Lazardzig, "Ruhe" 103). *Ruhe*, in other words, is the outcome of citizens behaving to conform to order in the public space.

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<sup>120</sup> According to Lazardzig, both theories of the police and that of eighteenth century theatre reform shared "the social doctrines of the Enlightenment and their artistic objectives" as a common point of reference, in that both understood the stage "as a pleasant school for virtue" for "moral education" ("Performing" 125).

The task of the police was to establish and maintain this *Ruhe* in relation to order. It is in this regard that *Ruhe* is defined by Lazardzig by its performative qualities (“*Ruhe*” 104). Whereas order can be fixed in writing, *Ruhe* materializes in behaviour - in the ‘right’ behaviour. What makes it ‘right’ depends on its relation to order. It is contextual and situational in its relation to order. *Ruhe*, Lazardzig concludes, is therefore the performative side of order (“*Performing*” 128).

Moreover, the task of the police in maintaining *Ruhe* and *Ordnung* can be understood as a preventative practice. Prevention aims at inhibiting an undesirable event from the future in the present, as Lazardzig points out (“*Ruhe*” 110). The police thus knows *Ruhe* only as the lack of *Unruhe* (disruption), safety only through the lack of crime and violence. Its preventative practices are thus based on a negativism which creates a constant feeling of danger and crisis from which the citizens ‘need’ to be protected. The lack of a positive objective leads thus to the potential of preventative practices to expand infinitely because it creates the latent danger it then needs to prevent (Lazardzig, “*Ruhe*” 110).

This becomes most clear when looking at the colonial context, in which discourses on ‘degeneracy’ and ‘racial hygiene’ framed both the ‘poor whites’ and the ‘natives’ as a latent danger for the desired state of *Ruhe* und *Ordnung*. In the discourse of colonial order, the idea of a ‘German culture’ was thus not only in need of a controlled ‘native’ body, but also of a disciplined settler body, one that could become the ‘carrier of culture’ (*Kulturträger*).<sup>121</sup> I argue in this chapter that the performance of *Ruhe* in the colonial context highlights the ways in which colonial order was based on notions of class and race. I do so by discussing different forms of theatre in the former German colony South-West Africa, through which I will trace the mechanisms and the production of colonial order in its relation to ideas of class

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<sup>121</sup> For a discussion of the term *Kulturträger* see Kundrus 2003.

and race: ceremonies, amateur theatre by the settlers, celebrations, ‘coloured performances’.

In the first part of this chapter, I will focus on the role theatre played for the establishment of a white, German settler community in South-West Africa. Here, I will focus on the negotiations of access towards public space through the establishment of amateur clubs and societies by the settlers. In the second part of this chapter, I will look at the genre of colonial ceremonies, in which both the settler community and the indigenous population took part. Here, I will show that *Ruhe* and *Ordnung* are not only exposed as middle-class values, but that they became categories of ‘race’ in the colonial context. In the third part, I will explore dance events by migrant workers from the Cape Colony in Lüderitzbucht. Through their resistance towards the allegedly all-encompassing colonial order and the negotiations of both race and access to public space, I show how fragile the colonial order and its segregation policies really were.

### Amateur Theatre Societies in the Service of Empire

The transplantation and implementation of ‘German culture’ from the German empire to German South-West Africa, its staging, rehearsing, and display, was accomplished to a large degree by a vivid scene of amateur clubs and societies. By the turn of the century, one could find in South-West Africa a mix of gymnastic clubs, choirs, war- and gun clubs, literary and also theatre societies.

Kundrus argues that these clubs and societies encompassed many different functions in the colony (177). They functioned as a manifestation of ‘German culture’ overseas, offered new settlers a point of orientation and identification and older settlers a range of ‘controlled’ entertainment. They functioned as tools to display colonial power in the territory of the colony, to ‘impress’ the indigenous

population, and became a popular symbol for the intended process of making South-West Africa 'German' (Kundrus 177). Societies and amateur clubs (*Vereine*) were a particularly useful medium for the transplantation and establishment of 'German culture' in Africa, according to Kundrus, as they were themselves a 'quasi-genuine German medium' (177). Collective activities, whether they be gymnastics or shooting, were postulated as particularly 'German' in the nineteenth and into the twentieth century (Kundrus 178). The medium of the *Verein* itself was thus an important element of a typical 'German culture'. Consequently, being part of any of these clubs meant that one would strengthen his or her sense of national identity.

It is in this regard that Kundrus compares the project of establishing a settler community in South-West Africa with Friedrich Schiller's idea of the theatre as a *moralische Anstalt* ('moral institution').<sup>122</sup> Kundrus writes: "Understood as a moral institution, the colonial project could offer the chance - at least that was the hope - to remember those 'true' German values that had been lost in the process of modernisation and to find back to national unity beyond all divisions" (Kundrus 181, transl. LS). The choice of metaphor is interesting for a theatre historian as the German colonies never established something like a 'permanent' theatre as Schiller had conceived it. Related to the question of what was actually staged in terms of theatre productions in the colony, it is thus almost an ironic choice of metaphor. Schiller's call for a 'standing theatre' to unify the German nation would thus not be realised in the context of the colony, a context in which the emphasis on national identity was so prevalent. However, in regard to Schiller's idea of theatre as a moral institution, with the power to discipline and educate its audience, the choice of metaphor is interesting and useful. Rather than stressing the similar *national* interests

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<sup>122</sup> The full title is *Theater Considered as a Moral Institution*, which was a speech Schiller held on June 26<sup>th</sup> 1784 in front of the German Society.

between Schiller and the ‘cultural pioneers’ in South-West Africa, I want to look at their compatibilities in terms of their understanding of order and audience discipline. Through that, I want to better understand the self-image and norms and value canon of the German settlers.

Rather than showing a prestigious and ‘permanent’ theatre institution like other European empires could,<sup>123</sup> the staging of theatre productions in the settler community of South-West Africa was ‘self-made’ and mostly took place on improvised stages, like the dining hall of a hotel, in the facilities of a restaurant, or at the city hall. The repertoire of the literary and theatre societies in the colony was mainly comical one-actors, farces, comedies, living images, and even self-written scenes often depicting situations from the colonial military. Often, these theatre evenings would consist of a short play or performed scene framed by a song or musical contribution. Here, the repertoire ranged from Mendelssohn’s *Midsummernight Dream* and the *Ave Maria* to military marching music and patriotic songs. Alongside performed scenes and musical contributions, the settlers would also sometimes recite self-written poems. The dramaturgy of these events is reminiscent of the structure of a revue or variety theatre with different ‘acts’ lined up one after the other.

An interesting exception to the above defined repertoire is posed by the announcement of a staging of the tragic comedy *Traumulus* (1904) by the theatre society of the small town of Swakopmund in December 1910.<sup>124</sup> *Traumulus* was a play written by Arno Holz and Oskar Jeschke, often considered as the avant-garde of the new wave of ‘naturalist’ theatre authors around 1900, and had become one of the

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<sup>123</sup> In South-Africa, for instance, a great number of European theatre buildings emerged already at the beginning of the nineteenth-century in the wake of Dutch, French, English and German settlements. As Joachim Fiebach (2015) argues, the theatre that had been erected in Cape-Town in 1801 is probably the first (European) theatre building that has been built in sub-Sahara Africa (225).

<sup>124</sup> The play is about a sexual indiscretion by a schoolboy and the consequent small-town gossip, which leads to his suicide.

most staged theatre plays in the German empire before the First World War. The local colonial newspaper of Skwakopmund announced *Traumulus* not only as a comedy “which every educated man needs to know” but also declared that “this is the most modern of all of our performances so far and shall be indicative for future theatre evenings in our town”.<sup>125</sup> The decision to include a modernist play like *Traumulus* on the repertoire, and the fact that this remained a rare case, signals what was actually understood as ‘German culture’ and what was not. As most of the settler colonies were riven by the tension of modernism and anti-modernism, it is likely that so was their idea of ‘culture’.

The colonies were understood as a chance for a new start for a ‘true’ German culture that had been endangered by processes of modernity and modernisation at home and yet, the settlers did not want to ‘lag behind’ the advancements in the metropole. While the ‘modern civilisation’ stood for a growing working-class, urbanisation, materialism, an increase in technology, a fragmentation of everyday life, and intellect amongst other things the idea of ‘culture’ resonated with education, aesthetics, idealism, harmony, meaning, bourgeois individuality, and love for freedom (Kundrus 286). The latter were threatened to be extinguished by the former and thus the colonial discourse often shows elements of a nostalgic and anti-industrial romanticisation of the life in the countryside. Much more often, however, the bourgeois colonialists stressed the harmonisation of modernity and tradition, of technique and culture, as Kundrus points out (286). One did not want to ‘fall behind’ in the colony in terms of technical innovation, and the sentiment in the colony was thus *anti-modern* while not being *not-modern*. The combination of technique and culture with a bourgeois habitus was, for many colonialists, the key ingredient for a successful colonisation. It was thus an attempt to re-enchant those values and

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<sup>125</sup> See article in the local newspaper *Südwest*, December 30, 1910.

elements of ‘German culture’ (as mentioned above) that were threatened with disappearance under the process of modernisation, while building on the technical innovation that modernisation had brought (like building a train through the desert etc.). It is in this respect, as Kundrus argues, that the ‘German modernity’ at large was also constructed to a large extent through the ‘colonial anti-modernity’ (286). That *Traumulus* made it into the repertoire of a provincial theatre society like that of Swakopmund speaks to the aspirations of the settler community to be as ‘modern’ as the metropole, while the fact that it remained an exception in the same repertoire speaks to the self-image of the theatre societies as serving the empire rather than being a platform for artistic experiments.

This shows in the fact that the different amateur clubs were most present when contributing with skits and scenes to official occasions like colonial ceremonies and celebrations, which often had a rather military and martial character. A local newspaper, for instance, applauds the theatre society of the small coastal town Swakopmund in 1911 for “putting itself for the first time into the service of the patriotic celebrations [of the Emperor’s birthday]”<sup>126</sup>. This idea that the amateur clubs were performing ‘in the service of’ the empire also echoes in the more official colonial discourse on the role of art for the colonial project. In this respect Colonial Secretary Dernburg lamented in 1907 that the task of art was,

to arouse in every man the best and noblest that lies within him to infuse sensation with consciousness, then it also has a great task in our colonies ... Art has a mission there to heighten the sense for the noble and the beautiful in a free and untouched world; writers, musicians, and artists of the German nation will perform a great service by fostering their ethical and aesthetical sensibility. (cit. in Short 106)

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<sup>126</sup> *Südwest*, January 31, 1911.

Notwithstanding the cynicism of his formulation ‘a free and untouched world’ during a time in which the Namibian War was ongoing, Dernburg’s “aesthetic pretensions” (Short 106) are interesting in so far as they are compatible with the self-description of the amateur clubs and societies themselves. As mentioned before, the amateur clubs and societies state in almost all of their statutes that their aim is to strengthen ‘patriotic feelings’ and ‘race consciousness’ amongst their members (Kundrus 178). That the members of these societies were exclusively white and German is proven by the fact that Africans were explicitly excluded from membership and that the inclusion of white foreigners would only be decided from case to case (Kundrus 178).

The speech of the Colonial Secretary, the local newspaper’s appreciation of the theatre society’s contribution to the colonial celebrations, and the self-description in the statutes all indicate that theatre played an important role not only for the popularisation of the colonial project in the metropole but was perceived as ‘serving’ the empire also in the colony. The prerogative of the clubs of strengthening ‘patriotic feelings’ and ‘race consciousness’ amongst the settlers and the idea that art should be at the service of the empire raises the question of what then actually was staged in the halls of the restaurants and hotels of the colonial cities. What and especially who was understood to be ‘German’ enough to have the power of strengthening the settler community’s distinctive markers of national identity and ‘race’?

As I have laid out in the introduction, archival evidence of theatre events in the colony are scarce. The reviews and reports that I found in the local newspapers are valuable for the research focus of this chapter as they alternate in their tone between the attempt to cover up the amateurism of the event and to point out the ‘pioneer spirit’ of those theatre enthusiasts. For instance, a reviewer of a theatre event in Swakopmund wrote about the event in the local newspaper that, “it was a

performance, which could only be outshone by professional actors on the stages of one of our larger German cities”<sup>127</sup>. Rather than comparing the failure or success of the event with other theatre events in the colony, the review compares the event to theatre events in the metropole. In his emphasis on the ‘professional actors’ at home, he establishes *via negativa* the amateurish character of the performance in the colony. Another review about the same theatre society but a different event stresses that “all the actors gave their best and this is a lot considering the remarkable great strength of this theatre society”.<sup>128</sup> The acting style of the amateur actors is described as “natural”, “robust”, and “brisk”,<sup>129</sup> adjectives that echo descriptions of the ‘ideal settler’ as “hardworking, healthy and modest” (Short 74). Another review describes the recital of a female settler as “simple and modest and nevertheless of great expression, so true and from the heart, that her audience was deeply moved”.<sup>130</sup> Notions like ‘authenticity’ and ‘modesty’ were perceived as characteristics of a ‘true German’ (Kundrus 283). Consequently, the description of controlled affects as an expression of constraint and discipline are often mentioned in relation to life in the colony. It also echoes in Kundrus’ summary of what made an ‘ideal settler’ in the eyes of the colonial bourgeoisie. He (sic!) has to be “educated, financially well-off, disciplined, with sublimated affects, white, German”, and married (Kundrus 283). The reviews show a similar ductus in describing the stagings of theatre plays by amateur theatre groups as in the description of other daily events in the colony. The director of the Colonial School of Witzenhausen, for instance, called potential young male settlers to a “difficult but beautiful life’s work as champions of Germandom, pioneers of culture abroad” (cit. in Short 73). Like the quote describing life in the colonies as ‘difficult but beautiful’, so do the reviews describe the act of staging a

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<sup>127</sup> *Südwest*, December 6, 1910, transl. by me.

<sup>128</sup> *Südwest*, January 31, 1911, transl. by me.

<sup>129</sup> *Südwest*, January 31, 1911, transl. by me.

<sup>130</sup> *Südwest*, December 20, 1910, transl. by.

play or displaying German culture as not always ‘smooth’ or ‘easy’, but as ‘beautiful’ in the sense of its ‘pioneer spirit’ of the ‘patriotic feelings’ that these amateur actors displayed. It indicates that the German settlers understood themselves to not only be ‘colonial pioneers’ but ‘cultural pioneers’ as well, in the sense that ‘culture’ and the staging of it mattered to the colonial project at large.

Rather than dismissing these theatre reviews as not relevant for the study of colonialism, I argue that these accounts of the small and self-organised theatre evenings, concerts, and other ‘cultural’ events can tell us something about the aspirations of what a successful settler community should look like and how the maintenance of a ‘German cultural identity’ in Africa should be assured. In other words, I argue that these reviews produced an image of a successful colonial project epitomised in a successful transplantation of ‘German culture’ to the colony. The larger point of the above mentioned description seemed to be that the settlers are acting on stage and off-stage, namely on the larger stage of the colony, with great success due to character traits like robustness and naturalness. If we want to believe the local colonial newspapers, ‘pioneers of culture’ not only encompassed the winning of land for farming and so forth, but also the assurance of ‘German cultural identity’ through the establishment of an amateur cultural scene in the colony. The repeated comparisons with the metropole in those reviews gives the idea that the settler community had to prove to an audience ‘at home’ that they were capable of remaining ‘German’ while living abroad. The image of a successful colonial project was established not only through the description of the amateur actors, but also the audience of such events was surveilled and disciplined in their behaviour in order to become an ‘ideal settler’.

This shows most prevalent in the reviews, that oozed with a bourgeois need for distinction and education of the ‘masses’, a sentiment that I have described in the

first chapter in drawing on John Philip Short's notion of 'colonial enlightenment'. One reviewer, for instance, complains about an audience in Swakopmund in the following words: "It is however a pity, we have to add, that it remained difficult to follow the pure and full tunes with the necessary attention, because one was distracted by shameless chatter."<sup>131</sup> In another review, a similar critique on the chatty Swakopmund audiences unfolds: "If only our Swakopmund audience could get used to remain in complete silence (*Ruhe*) while the music is playing, the pleasure of the audience would be even bigger. One should try it some time."<sup>132</sup> The frustration of the reviewer echoes Enlightenment ideas and ideals of sublimated affects and cultivated behaviour. As the aforementioned book-chapter of Lazardzig has shown, for the theatre reformers of the eighteenth century, *Ruhe* materialised in the aesthetic direction of affects and effects. It was in this regard that the audience's behaviour needed to be refined in order to produce a 'civilised and insightful spectator' (Lazardzig, "Performing" 126). Lazardzig discusses this concept of the ideal spectator by referring to Lessing, for whom

audiences are conceivable only under the condition of absolute silent attention. The new ideal is a civilized and insightful spectator: he who devotes his attention entirely to performance, who remains seated or stands quietly and peacefully, who gives himself over rapturously to the theatrical illusion such that text and performance can reach their full effect, who, if need be, produces a gentle tear of emotion or a delicate smile. (Lazardzig, "Performing" 126)

The German term *Ruhe*, as Lazardzig explains, can refer to both 'silence' and 'public peace'. It encompasses thus both sonic significations (keeping silent) and kinetic significations (keeping calm) (Lazardzig, "Performing" 126). I argue that in the example of the reviewer's frustration about the chatty audience, it is not necessarily

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<sup>131</sup> *Südwest*, December 6, 1910, transl. by me.

<sup>132</sup> *Südwest*, January 31, 1911, transl. by me.

only the sonic signification of *Ruhe* that the reviewer misses. Understood in its connotation with ‘public peace’, *Ruhe* signified colonial order and it was the settler’s task to uphold and maintain that order. A settler behaviour that stirred *Unruhe*, in whatever way, pointed to a possible danger to the status quo of colonial order. The frustration of the reviewer is thus not only targeted at the behaviour of the settlers as audience, but at the settlers as ‘carriers of culture’ (*Kulturträger*). A good ‘carrier of German culture’ needed to display character traits like restraint and discipline (Kundrus 283), character traits that echo Lessing’s above mentioned idea of the ideal spectator as ‘civilized’ and of sublimated affects. The discourse on the ideal settler and the *Kulturträger* was interwoven with two other discourses, that on ‘cultural degeneracy’ and on ‘racial hygiene’. I will briefly unpack both discourses in the following.

Notions of ‘cultural degeneracy’ had been circulating the discourses of turn-of-the-century Germany. The loss of morale and sense of purpose, homelessness, and ‘derootedness’ were perceived to be the dire consequences of the process of modernisation, industrialisation, and urbanisation, as many historians have pointed out (Nipperdey 1992; Osterhammel 2011). In the decay of what was perceived as ‘German culture’, the politically influential German bourgeoisie predicted the decay of the nation at large. The colonies were perceived by the same middle-class intellectuals as a new start, a possibility to return to a ‘true’ German culture, one that had not been influenced by modernity and modernisation. It is in this regard that we need to understand the framing of South-West Africa as ‘a second Germany’, a *Neu-Deutschland* (New Germany) overseas.

While some settlers saw themselves indeed as the ‘preservers’ of an allegedly endangered ‘German culture’, others perceived life in the colony as a new start for

themselves, far away from the regulations and restrictions of the German empire. The motifs of migrating to the colonies were thus not only economic, but often those Germans would leave their home-country based on a diffused idea of 'freedom' or 'adventure', as Short argues (66). Rather than coming from the same cultural and class-based background, "those who actually wished to leave for the colonies belonged to a heterogeneous mass of stenographers, clerks, mechanics, metalworkers, travelling salesmen, and artisans" (Short 66). While the "appeal of colonialism crossed lines of social class and geographical regions" (Short 66), the ideas and values of the colonial bourgeoisie remained the most influential. As Kundrus shows, the German *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated, liberal middle class) marked its claim to political and cultural leadership in and through the colonial discourse (285). It framed the lifestyle of the 'poor whites' as an endangerment to the socially constructed, racialised difference between Europeans and Africans.

What missionaries and civil servants from the colonial administration framed as 'cultural decay' or 'going native' was thus for some of these settlers an expression of a new order, "one, which they could not have lived in the same way back home" (Zollmann 273). Especially with the war against the Herero and Nama and a renewed attention towards the colonies by a metropolitan audience, the dream of starting a New Germany overseas "had instead given rise to a shocking, hybridized frontier culture of mixed alliances and social decay that threatened to contaminate and undermine the whole colonial order" (Short 72). In fact, at the turn of the century, the "image of a downward social spiral on the colonial frontier" was circulating the German public spheres: "Images of a debased settler population prone to violence, alcoholism, and crime persisted" (Short 71). This image of the German settler manifested most strongly in the question of miscegenation and in the law prohibiting

the so-called 'mixed-marriages', which was framed as a measurement of 'racial hygiene' (Hamann 277).

'Racial hygiene' was a particular colonial variation of the larger medical discourse on hygiene in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The discourse of hygiene was directed in the nineteenth century at the surveillance and regulation of social life. It was thought of as a public control of medically appropriate behaviour, which is underlined by the fact that before the word 'hygiene' was used it was common to refer to it as 'medical police', as sociologist Ulrike Hamann argues (242). Hence, in the discourse of hygiene, medical knowledge met with political practices. The target of these practices was 'the people' (*die Bevölkerung*). As Michel Foucault described it in his lectures on governmentality, the role of the sovereign to "make die and let live" changed to the role of the state "to let die and make live" (Foucault 278). The technology of this new kind of state power (its biopolitics) was the sustaining of the well-being and life of the people and the accumulation of knowledge about them. Through biopolitics, power-relations were conceived differently, biologically rather than politically (Hamann 204).

Within the colonial politics of the beginning of the twentieth century, these biopolitical measurements found their expression in the division of 'the people' into different groups, those whose life was to be protected, and those from whom the other group needed to be protected. The 'care' of the state was thus directed at one particular group, while the other was framed as a potential danger. Foucault has in this regard argued that a paradigm-shift took place in nineteenth century racism from a discourse of the 'war of the races' to a discourse on the 'purity of the races' (295). In the German context, this shift in race-discourses becomes most clear when looking at the war in South-West Africa, which was described by General von Trotha as a 'war of the races' (*Rassenkampf*). The war brought a 'sea-change' in which the

colonial relations were now considered through the question of which 'race' has to die for the other to survive. A letter by chief general Alfred von Schlieffen to the German chancellor von Bülow makes this most clear:

A cohabitation of blacks and whites will be difficult after what has happened, unless the former will be held in a permanent state of forced labor, meaning a sort of slavery. The race-war can only be resolved through the extermination or complete subjugation of one of the parties. (cit. in Hamann 205, transl. LS)

It was now, after the war, that the discourse of 'racial hygiene' and the idea of 'degeneration' as a threat to the 'body of the people' (*Bevölkerungskörper*) legitimised the interference of the state and a new level of colonial racism, in which the latency of war was incorporated. This latency manifested itself no more as a political threat (war, resistance etc.) but as a biological threat ('degeneration'). As opposed to the discourse of progress, which had used the 'care' for those left behind and their education as techniques for colonial rule, the discourse of 'race hygiene' with its biological metaphors of degeneration made the 'protection' of those who are not 'degenerated' the task of the state.

As Hamann argues in her study on the precarity of colonial order (2016), the focus of the hygiene discourse was not only the body, but issues of 'moral' and 'cultural identity' as well (179). In particular, the question of what constitutes 'whiteness' and how one could 'stay white' under the influence of the 'tropical' climate became a pressing issue of the 'race hygiene' discourse. The question of the 'chance of survival' of whites in the colony led to the question of their 'adaptability' in the colonies (Hamann 179). This, however, created an important problem for the idea of racial superiority of whites. The question of their adaptability presupposed the African society as the norm to which the white colonisers needed to adapt, while the African 'race' proved to have a long history of 'adaptability' in this logic.

Adapting to the colonial context meant losing ways of behaving and living as ‘white’ connoted (Hamann 179). The adaptation to the African context was in this regard framed with the aforementioned metaphor of ‘degeneration’ – or, in the colloquial term of the time, *Verkaffierung* (Hamann 180). ‘Degeneration’ was in this logic not an individual fate but meant a collective threat for the colonial hegemony and superiority of white Germans in the colony.

Ann McClintock (1995) has analysed the use of degeneration as a metaphor for the relation between the colonial administration and the colonised at the beginning of the twentieth century as the following:

Imagining the degeneration into which humanity could fall was a necessary part of imagining the exaltation to which it could aspire. The degenerated classes, defined as departures from the normal human type, were as necessary to the self-definition of the middle-class as the idea of degeneration was to the idea of progress, for the distance along the path of progress travelled by some portions of humanity could be measured only by the distance others lagged behind. (cit. in Hamann 277)

Interesting here is the phrase “imagining the degeneration into which humanity could fall”, as it resonates with the idea of prevention and precaution as discussed in relation to the task of the police. What McClintock describes here is the need for creating the threat of ‘a potential degeneration’ against which a white middle-class colonial settler community could build their self-definition. As a latent biological threat, rather than a political uprising, this degeneration lurks as a constant danger in the colonial context. ‘Racial hygiene’ in this sense became a tool to prevent this degeneration from happening. In other words, the discourse on ‘cultural degeneration’ constitutes the potential danger that the techniques of ‘racial hygiene’ could allegedly prevent. As a prediction of an undesired future, the discourse on ‘cultural degeneration’ produces the legitimacy for preventative actions in the

present, which were subsumed as measurements of ‘racial hygiene’. It created a permanent feeling of crisis by connecting a biological discourse (on ‘race’ and ‘racial purity’) with the social situation of the settler’s potential lack of ‘patriotic feeling’ and ‘race consciousness’. It formed “a complex hierarchy of social metaphors that carried considerable social authority” (McClintock 46) and played into the idea that creating a ‘new Germany’ overseas meant the difficult task of keeping this ‘new Germany’ from not becoming ‘corrupted’ by the foreign surroundings.

A ‘misbehaving’ audience, in the eyes of the colonial bourgeoisie, was not just a threat to the immediate enjoyment of a particular cultural event, but to the display of superiority as such. In the colonial context, being constrained and disciplined meant one was not running the danger of being influenced by the impact of ‘Africa’, that one could uphold a set of norms and behaviour that were considered to be particularly ‘German’, and, as I will show in the following, particularly ‘white’. It is in this regard that I want to argue that the idea of *Ruhe* gains a racialised signification in the colonial discourse, beyond its sonic signification and its kinetic signification in the metropolitan discourse: *Ruhe* (in both its sonic and kinetic signification) is a particular ‘German’ and ‘white’ state of being, while the indigenous population is often described as interfering with this state.

### Performing the Emperor’s Birthday in the Colony

The question in the following section will be how a colonial order was assured in moments where a spatial distance between the different-identified-bodies was not given, like in moments of public events, performances, or ceremonies. While these events, in which the German settler community, the colonial military, and other foreigners as well as the indigenous population would come together, could be defined in terms of their potential for interaction, intermingling and cross-cultural

encounters, the reviews of these events in local colonial newspapers emphasise and highlight ideas of *Ruhe* and order. They do so through emphasising the balance of distance and proximity between the different groups involved in their ‘eye-witness’ accounts. These accounts, as I want to argue, give us less an idea of what ‘really’ happened in these events than what was prevented from happening: the destruction of the colonial order, or a state of *Unruhe* (public unrest). In their descriptions of distance and proximity, the accounts echo the theatrical distinction of those who watch (the Europeans/whites) and those who performed (the indigenous participants/blacks) and by that racialising those positions.

For larger public parades and ceremonies, all the different clubs and societies would contribute with their particular repertoires. These colonial ceremonies, like that of the Emperor’s birthday, clearly echoed trends of national display in the metropole. In imperial Germany, two main forms of celebrating the nation and the empire became popular, as theatre historian Christopher Balme argues in his book *Pacific Performances* (2006). One was the excessive construction of monuments and statues, and another the celebrations of national events, such as the victory at Sedan or the Emperor’s birthday. An important function of these celebrations and monuments was what historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have referred to as ‘the invention of tradition’ (1992). Many of the public ceremonies and ritualistic actions of, for instance, the British monarchy, that claim to be old are in fact quite recent in origin and inventions of the nineteenth and early twentieth century as Hobsbawm and Ranger show. ‘Invented traditions’ are, according to the two historians, “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm/Ranger 1). It is in this sense that I understand the stagings of

colonial ceremonies in the German colonies. Far away from the motherland, the strategies of inventing tradition functioned as reinforcing national unity and political authority. In particular, the staging of large ceremonies and public parades became popular tools of staging the nation and colonial power in the German colonies. Balme even argues that ‘colonial ceremonies’ became a genre *sui generis*, as they differed in their dramaturgical strategies of balancing both political unity and cultural separation significantly from the same ceremonies in Germany (*Pacific* 142).

I will focus in the following on the particular colonial ceremony of the Emperor’s birthday. Through newspaper articles about the ceremonies, photographs, and leaflets, I will explore how the settlers negotiated this double function of political unity and cultural separation. Here, the fact that performances of the local population were integrated into the imperial protocol will play an important role, as well as the fact that all participants involved in the ceremony were both actors and spectators at the same time. In other words, in the colonial ceremony, the local population, European settlers, and colonial officials were performing for each other. The colonial ceremonies, with their potential for liminal encounters and hence potential for chaos and *Unruhe*, had to be carefully staged in regard to the division of bodies and spaces. Balme therefore argues that “[t]he performative genre of colonial ceremony, in which colonizer and colonized perform to each, albeit in highly disparate positions of power, can be studied as a formalization of the liminal and unpredictable performative encounters” (Balme, *Pacific* 123). The complex task of the colonial ceremony, in comparison to its European counterpart, was thus the celebration of unity in one shared space on the one hand, and the negotiation of racial and culture conflicts on the other. This will become clearest when looking closer at how these ceremonies were actually staged.

Colonial ceremonies, as Balme argues in his chapter on the flag-rising-ceremony in the German colony Samoa, allow us “to study the interrelationship between aesthetics and power”, which “manifests itself in the theatricality of cross-cultural encounters” (*Pacific* 135). Theatricality as a theoretical construct is particularly interesting in this context according to Balme, because of its “interactive, interrelational nature”: “Human actors in a broad range of activities are organised by means of staging procedures for perception by others. Understood in this broad sense, ceremony can be regarded as a particular form of theatricality” (*Pacific* 135). Moreover, in their theatricality colonial ceremonies differ in important ways from rituals. Colonial ceremonies do not require the transformative efficacy that a ritual usually entails. Balme quotes Victor Turner, who summarised this comparison as the following: “Ceremony indicates, ritual transforms” (cit. in Balme, *Pacific* 135) and argues that colonial ceremonies indicate through the display of signs, signs of national unity, of colonial authority etc. Nevertheless, as we will see in the following, those carefully chosen signs of the colonisers are met with another set of signs, namely those displayed in the indigenous performances. I will show that the theatricality of these events lay not only in the display of clearly denotable signs, but most often in the confusion over the display of indigenous performances from the side of the colonisers and in the framing<sup>133</sup> of those undecipherable signs as ‘chaos’ or ‘ugliness’.

The celebrations of the emperor’s birthday are a perfect case in point as they took place every year on January 27<sup>th</sup> in all of the German ‘protectorates’ and followed a similar ‘script’ every year. Considering its repetitive character, it is likely that all participants knew what to expect and hence knew their ‘position’ in the

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<sup>133</sup> As in the first chapter, I argue here for a colonial theatricality as a framing strategy that creates a clear distinction between the one who watches (and frames) and the one who is watched (and framed).

festivities. The allocation of positions played a crucial role in the maintenance of colonial order in these events. As I will show, the particular arrangement of all participants was a meticulous composition of bodies in space, always in the awareness of the double function that the colonial ceremony had to perform: creating the image of unity and assuring racial segregation at the same time.

As Balme argued for the case of Samoa, we can find both “general and specific principles” in the stagings of colonial ceremonies (Balme, *Pacific* 138). This holds also for the context of the other colonies and their festivities. The general principles are those concerning the programme of the ceremony and the division of space, which seemed to have followed the same logic in all the colonies and was repeated in the same manner every year. The specific principles concern the particular way in which indigenous performances were integrated in the display of German nationalism. This differed significantly in each colonial context and gives an insight into the cross-cultural relations of each colonial administration

A special edition in *Kolonie und Heimat*, printed in 1910, showed photographs from all the ceremonies of the Emperor’s birthday in all the different German colonies. The descriptions of the pictures tell us how each colony honoured the Emperor. The line-up reads:

- German ships in the harbour of Tsing-Tau flagged in honour of the Emperor
- Saluting in Duala
- Canoe-race of the Natives in Edea
- Boat-races on Lake Victoria in Muansa
- The ‘King’ of Ho with his entourage at the emperor’s birthday in Lome
- Governor Seitz at the parade in Soppo
- Wanyema women in dance attire in East Africa<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> *Kaisers Geburtstag in Ostafrika* [‘The emperor’s birthday in East Africa’]. *Kolonie und Heimat*, No. 10, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1910, pg.6.

The photographs and their subtitles indicate the staging of a large spectacle including both national symbols of German colonial authority, like ships, flags, and saluting, and an involvement of the different indigenous populations in the spectacle through visits of local authorities, or through performances like the dance of the Wanyema women depicted in that photograph. The pictures indicate that in almost all of the ‘protectorates’, both the local populations as well as the European settler population were taking part in the ceremony. Before I go on to explore the witness’ accounts of the ceremonies and their strategy of retrospectively inscribing them with order and public peace, it is important to describe what in terms of African performances the settlers actually saw and misread.

The mentioning of the Wanyema dances in the article points to a specific theatrical tradition in eastern Africa, namely the *Beni*-dances, i.e. the *Beni*-performances, also called *Beni-Ngoma*, which were part of the eastern African colonial popular culture. As Joachim Fiebach (2015) explains, the Beni Ngoma were specific East African artistic productions that emerged with the beginning of the colonisation of Africa and can be understood as a performative mode of negotiating the colonial situation (Fiebach 235). They first emerged around 1890 on the island of Lamu (Kenya)<sup>135</sup> and in the harbour cities of Mombasa and then made their way into the mainland and the cities of German East Africa (today Tanganyika). The Beni Ngoma encompassed dances, carnivalesque parades and agonal festivities lasting for several days, which played an important role for the different social groups of East Africa long into the twentieth century. As Fiebach posits, the name *Beni* is a Swahili-adaptation of the English word *band*, and thus points to a European reference. The Beni performances copied the militaristic drill of the European colonists in linear or

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<sup>135</sup> As Ranger argues, in its “region of origin Beni was co-existent with colonial rule. In Lamu, for example, the Beni associations first emerged in the 1890s, soon after the establishment of British control, and came to an end in the early 1960s with the achievement of Kenyan independence” (Ranger 9).

circular marching-choreographies, and included military-parade like processions and marching music as well as costumes inspired by German and British military uniforms (Fiebach 236). As Terence O. Ranger (1975) posits in his book *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa 1890-1970*, the essential feature of the Beni Ngmoa was “the attempt to reproduce the effect of a military brass-band, though the elaboration of this attempt might vary from provision of a full bugle, pipe, and drum detachment to the beating of a single big drum in some rural variants of the Beni” (5). But the music and the dances were only one activity of Beni members, as both Fiebach and Ranger show. Associations were built to organise both the Beni and the performances, as well as the associations imitated in their representations of the colonial powers England and Germany. The associations were built on a hierarchy of male and female officers “with elaborate ranks, uniforms, and titles of honour” (Ranger 5). It is important hereby to notice that the Beni-performances were embedded not only in a communicative-festive framework, but also in a competitive framework in which different clans and families engaged in potlach-like competitions with each other. They competed with each other in the decoration of the parades and the performances of the dances, as well as in the recitation of satirical and mocking poems. Ostentatious lavishness counted thereby as a sign of influence, power, and wealth.

As both Ranger and Fiebach stress, the Beni need to be understood as a performative response by people “in a transitional period” (Ranger 5), who developed existing dance and music repertoires through the new influences of the ‘colonial situation’ and the industrialisation of their respective countries further. Rather than understanding it merely as a reaction towards the colonization of eastern Africa, the Beni combined both an imitative character of European power as well as deep roots in pre-colonial dances and competitive modes. Competitive dance

associations have a long tradition in Tanganyika and Kenyan culture, which also possessed hierarchies of ranks and a display of military skills. “Thus many features of the Beni which struck outside observers as most obviously new and foreign were really inherited directly from coastal dance traditions”, as Ranger argues (18). The Beni thus also signal mechanisms of innovation within the eastern African (popular) culture.

That the Germans made use of this elaborate dance culture for their colonial ceremonies had been noted by different witnesses at the time. The German ethnographer Karl Weule wrote after his visit to German East Africa in 1906: “Where there are Germans there is music ... The Negro *has* to dance. As the German ... feels irresistibly impelled to sing, so the African misses no opportunity of assembling for an *ngoma*” (cit. in Ranger 35). Weule also mentions the existence of different brass bands in the colony, who would show off their repertoire and drill in front of visitors and German officials: “When the passengers from the *Admiral* presented themselves in the evening on the square in front of the club, the band turned out to welcome them and the playing was really remarkably good” (cit. in Ranger 35). This positive reception of the Beni performances, however, was rare. As the following analysis of the witness’ accounts from the celebrations of the emperor’s birthday will show, most often the European spectators received the *Ngoma* with mocking or even derogatory remarks. Rather than understanding the Beni as part of the repertoire of urban Swahili culture, the witness’ accounts integrated the performances into the dramaturgy and representation of the German empire in such a way that the Beni mirrored a functioning and competitive empire, based on a colonial order that displayed an adequate balance of distance and proximity between the European and the indigenous bodies. Respectively, most colonial settlers and officials did not understand the larger cultural framework of the

Beni nor their subversive potential, especially in regard to the Beni organization over large parts of the country, as Ranger notes: “However much the Beni dancers might ‘mimic’ the whites, this was a degree of co-ordination which Europeans had certainly not intended or expected them to be able to achieve” (44). In the following account I will unpack the ways in which the celebrations of the emperor’s birthday in the different colonies included the performances of the local population, without destabilizing the allegedly stable colonial order and hegemony.

The set-up, or dramaturgy, of these celebrations seemed to have been always the same. The day of the Emperor’s birthday always started with a Catholic and a Protestant Mass. It was then followed by a military parade on the main square of the colonial city, the market square, or in front of an official building of the colonial administration. This is one of the most formalised moments of the ceremony, as everyone is assembled in one space and is allocated his or her specific position, not only in space but also in relation to each other. From the different accounts of the ceremonies it shows that people were divided into two larger groups, military and non-military, as well as into smaller sub-groups along racial and ethnic lines. A description of this opening ceremony in the colony East Africa in 1910 reads as the following:

On the market square the police Askari were positioned, in front of which stood the guards, while the Arabs, Indians, Greek, Italians, and the other Coloureds were divided into different groups on the square. After all Europeans were assembled the station chief gave a cheer for the emperor, then the salute of the Askari was taken, and a black group of children under the conduct of a Suaheli teacher sang the song

*'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz'*<sup>136</sup> in such an earsplitting manner, that a dog broke out to wail.<sup>137</sup>

Here, not only do the specifically allocated positions of each one attending become most clear, but also the fact that the German colonies were much more international than usually accounted for. The common binary of coloniser and colonised as the only two parties in the colonies is proven inadequate by this description. It indicates a much more complex system of racial hierarchies that went beyond the simple distinction 'black' and 'white', but also points to hierarchies within the European settler community as well as within the local population: 'the Arabs' were as similarly 'local' as the 'natives' but enjoyed a different standing. Also the Askari,<sup>138</sup> an important part of the colonial military force in East Africa particularly, speak to this international image.

The Askari were recruited as mercenaries for different European colonial troupes mainly from Egypt, Sudan, and Mozambique, and the myth of the 'loyal Askari' became a powerful tool of colonial propaganda in Germany after the First World War.<sup>139</sup> The presence of the Askari in the opening ceremony of the emperor's birthday is thus not to be underestimated. It needs to be understood as a dramaturgical choice which displays the German colonial project as a successful 'civilising mission'. But more than that, the presence of the Askari also meant police

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<sup>136</sup> With the constitution of the German empire in 1871 had *Heil Dir im Siegerkranz* been declared as the emperor's anthem. While not being a national anthem, it had nevertheless as similar symbolic importance and was performed at all official national ceremonies.

<sup>137</sup> *Kaisers Geburtstag in Ostafrika* ['The emperor's birthday in East Africa']. *Kolonie und Heimat*, No. 10, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1910, pg.6., transl. by me.

<sup>138</sup> The German administration relied on the 'Askari' for everyday policing and administration and the Askari became thus the most visible agents of colonial rule in German East Africa. Many of the Askari also made use of their mobility and authority over other East Africans in order "to further both their interests and those of the colonial state" (Berman et al. 15).

<sup>139</sup> The myth of the 'loyal Askari' emerged especially after the First World War, in which the Askari had fought for the German military in the colony East Africa against the British troops. The myth goes that the Askari were crying when the colonial rule of the Germans came to an end in 1918. Stories of the 'Askari Loyalty' served after the First World War as propaganda for colonial revisionists and for framing the German colonial project as a humane undertaking in which Germans and Africans were fighting side by side.

presence and thus the display of colonial authority in an event that always carried the potential to break out into chaos in the eyes of the colonialists.

In another account, from the same festivities but in the former colony Togo in 1908, this opening ceremony is described in almost the same way but with an important difference.<sup>140</sup> Here, after all the Europeans and the ‘native soldiers’ were assembled in front of the courthouse, twenty-one ‘chiefs’ from the surrounding region entered the assembly one after the other, followed by their entourage and their own music band. Each ‘chief’ had his own entrance and was allocated his own position on the square, opposite to the Europeans. While the witness account of this event focuses meticulously on every detail of the attire, the music, gestures and mimicry of the ‘chiefs’ and displays a certain sense of admiration and curiosity for the theatricality of the ‘chiefs’ entrance, the writer also refers to the music of the indigenous ironically as “beautiful music” that “could make people go crazy” and concludes that the conglomeration of twenty-one indigenous music bands “trying to outperform each other” was a ‘pandemonium’.<sup>141</sup> The description of the entrance of the indigenous authorities as ‘noise’ rather than music echoes the aforementioned description of the children’s choir in East Africa as ‘earsplitting’ and as making ‘a dog wail’. Other reports also refer to the ‘natives’ as ‘noisy’, as “singing in screaming dissonances”,<sup>142</sup> and as bringing ‘noise’ and ‘spectacle’ to the streets of the colonial city in the morning of the celebration.

‘Noise’ as the opposite of *Ruhe* is in many of the accounts of the ceremonies attributed to the indigenous population. The edition of *Kolonie und Heimat* from January 1910 even framed noise in racial connotation by stating, that after the city

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<sup>140</sup> *Kaisers Geburtstag in Togo* [‘The emperor’s birthday in Togo’], *Kolonie und Heimat*, No. 10, January, 1908, pg. 3.

<sup>141</sup> *Kaisers Geburtstag in Togo* [‘The emperor’s birthday in Togo’], *Kolonie und Heimat*, No. 10, January, 1908, pg. 3.

<sup>142</sup> *Kolonie und Heimat*, 30.01.1909, No.10, pg.5.

had woken up, “noise and spectacle broke out on the streets immediately, without which the Negro cannot work nor celebrate”.<sup>143</sup> What these examples show is the attribution of certain sonic and kinetic categories to race. The category of ‘blackness’ was linked to ‘noise’, ‘spectacle’, celebrations, ‘drums’, ‘games’, and to ‘pandemonium’ and ‘disturbance’ of silence. This strategy of attributing the production of *Unruhe* to blackness becomes even clearer when we look at the context in which those reports mention the production of *Ruhe*. Almost all of these articles start their description of the celebrations from a state of silence and public peace, which is then broken through by the entrance of the indigenous peoples into the colonial city, and almost all of these articles end their description by pointing out that silence and public peace has reappeared: “By 7 1/2h was the site of celebrations and its buildings already covered in deep darkness and silence (*Ruhe*). Deep and still peace everywhere (...).”<sup>144</sup> *Ruhe*, as a sonic and kinetic state, is thus established in this colonial discourse as the ‘normal’ state, while *Unruhe*, displayed through the appearance of a celebrating, dancing, and singing indigenous crowd, is framed as an interruption of the latter. This interruption is moreover framed as an exception, because of the celebrations of the emperor’s birthday, and the articles make sure to stress that this interruption of the normal *Ruhe* is a controlled interruption. The control is presented through the mentioning of the Askari force as well as through the paternalistic tone of the articles, turning the *Unruhe* of the indigenous participants into something that the European settlers are able to perceive as such and thus are able to tolerate.

Another important strategy to show the control that the colonists had over the interruption of their *Ruhe* was the reference to the spatial set up of the ceremonies,

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<sup>143</sup> *Kolonie und Heimat*, 30.01.1910, No.10, pg.6.

<sup>144</sup> *Kolonie und Heimat*, January 1908, No. 10, pg.3.

and here especially all reports mention the distance between the differently racialised groups. While the description of the particular set up of the morning military ceremony indicated this already, it becomes even more clear in the descriptions of the afternoon programme. In the celebrations in East Africa the local population engaged in competitive sports-games as well as in a repertoire of children's games: boat-races, tug-war, sack-racing for the boys, and running games with water-buckets on their heads or fetching coins out of buckets full of flour for the girls. This echoes the aforementioned agonal festivities of the Beni, although they are not recognised as such in the settler witness' accounts.

In the account from East Africa in 1910, it is mentioned that while the 'native' population was engaging in boat races on Lake Victoria, the Europeans were "watching the race from the pier".<sup>145</sup> Also the aforementioned 'Arabs' and Sultans were watching "in some distance", "eager not to miss this unusual spectacle".<sup>146</sup> Here, again, a clear distinction between spectators and performers is drawn in that the 'natives' are engaging in a race that is allegedly staged (as the word 'spectacle' indicates) for the pleasure of the audience, which is indicated as consisting of Europeans, Arabs, and the Sultans. The "unusual spectacle" is unusual in the eyes of the reporter, because of the behaviour of the 'natives', who 'usually' would not display this amount of eagerness and competition but are, according to the reporter, 'usually' lazy and unambitious.<sup>147</sup> Which, in regard to the long tradition of competitive forms of performance culture in eastern Africa, is based clearly on ignorance. From the colonists' point of view the rowing, racing, and competing 'natives' displayed the discipline and potency of the German colonial workforce. The competitive character of these games is thus not understood as a subversive

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<sup>145</sup> *Kolonie und Heimat*, No. 10, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1910, pg.6.

<sup>146</sup> *Kolonie und Heimat*, No. 10, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1910, pg.6.

<sup>147</sup> *Kolonie und Heimat*, No. 10, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1910, pg.6.

negotiation of the colonial situation but rather as a synecdoche for the competitive character of the European colonial project between the different European empires. Considering that the settler community in both Togo and East Africa not only consisted of Germans but of other European nationalities as well, the competitive games signalled Germany's competitiveness as an imperial power to the other European guests in these ceremonies and thus 'imperial difference'. Moreover, as most of the games were part of a repertoire of German children's entertainment and could have probably also be found at festivities in the metropole as well. One could thus argue that the games provided "entertainment value [for the Europeans, LS] on account of [their] mimicry of European practices" (Balme, *Pacific* 132). The engagement of the 'natives' with a European repertoire of children's games provided the German spectators with bemusement and, as the tone of the article suggests, a feeling of cultural superiority because the repertoire was recognisable as 'German' yet the 'native' children were clearly failing in staging this repertoire properly. Which in this double effect of recognisability and distinction can be understood as serving the prevention of the two imperial fears, being impacted by an 'African influence' and lacking in 'national- and race-consciousness'. Alternately, as a combination of the image of the 'German father' - whose strict rule also included patronising gesture - with the old *topos* of 'Bread and Circuses'.

While the engagement of the indigenous children with the German game-repertoire is described in a rather paternalistic tone, so are the adult Africans when they see the colonial city in full attire for the festivities for the time. The newspapers report of 'curious' and 'surprised' 'natives' who are 'in bewilderment' inspecting the flags and buntings that decorate the colonial city on the emperor's birthday. Those are the few times that the indigenous population is described as the ones watching while the empire (the colonial city) is performing for them. The 'amazement' about

the festive decorations can be read as an epitomized ‘amazement’ about the empire at large. Here the colonised are depicted not only as ‘civilised’ but as ‘in awe’ of the alleged cultural superiority of the German colonisers. In that respect, it is important to note that contrary to Balme’s analysis for the Samoan celebrations, in the accounts from the other colonies, we do find rather derogatory descriptions of the indigenous performances that were part of the colonial ceremonies. The report about the celebrations in East Africa in 1910, published in *Kolonie und Heimat*, for instance, repeatedly refer to the different indigenous dances with which the celebrations were rounded off, as “extremely un-aesthetically”, “horrendous to watch” and “very unpleasant”.<sup>148</sup> It is thus not only a sonic *Unruhe* that is attributed to the indigenous performances within the colonial celebrations, but also a visual one.

The account of the celebrations in Togo in 1908 close with the remark, that “the splendid festivities with their ‘peaceful and cordial course of events’ and their ‘complete and sincere attendance’ offered a worthy example for similar ceremonies in the motherland”.<sup>149</sup> The stress on the peaceful course of events emphasises also the potential for violence and chaos that these cross-cultural encounters posed for the colonial order in the eyes of the colonists. The remark that the attendance was ‘complete and sincere’ seems to be directed to an audience ‘at home’. ‘Complete’ attendance shows unity and indicates that the ceremony was successful in its function to establish internal unity. Unity (among the white settler community) was also an important element to express the superiority over the indigenous population in numbers. The mentioning of a ‘sincere’ attendance is interesting as it suggests that its opposite could have also been the case, that there was a potential for an ‘insincere’ or ‘fake’ attendance, echoing a discourse of ‘anti-theatricality’.

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<sup>148</sup> *Kolonie und Heimat*, 31.01.1910, No.10, pg.8.

<sup>149</sup> *Kolonie und Heimat*, January 1908, No. 10, pg. 3.

The articles in *Kolonie und Heimat* are full of comparisons between the colony and the metropole (as the title of the paper already suggests ‘Colony and Home’), assuring its readers the ‘authenticity’ of German culture in the colony, or even arguing that German culture in the colony is even more German than in Germany. The fact that the newspaper *Kolonie und Heimat* was also read in the metropole also points to how much the imperial metropole depended on the representation of the ‘other’ for the establishment of its own identity. Pratt argues that this “reverse dynamic” (4) is a habitual blind spot of the metropole. It blinds in that it creates in its imperial centre “an obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself. It becomes dependent on its others to know itself” (Pratt 4). Putting German culture on display, through events like the aforementioned colonial ceremonies, made the settler society a society of representation and thus inherently theatrical. One could go so far as to argue that this might have been a basic principle of the colonial settler societies: living in constant comparison to the imperial society in Germany one had to prove both one’s ‘Germanness’ and one’s resistance towards ‘African’ influences.

I have shown in this part that colonial ceremonies were an important means to stage colonial power in the public space. They had the function of unifying the settler community as well as of ‘impressing’ the indigenous population and remained completely ignorant to the cultural and political depth and impact of the performance repertoires (Beni Ngmoas) unfolding in front of their eyes. The ceremonies performed the double-function of assuring cultural and racial segregation while in the same time performing cultural and racial self-assurance for the European settler community. This mode of integrating a cultural repertoire with subversive potential into a display of colonial strength and racial hierarchies was, however, less easy in the case of the dance performances of the so-called ‘Capeboys’ in South-West

Africa. I want to close this chapter with a brief discussion of the presence of African migrant workers from the Cape Colony in South-West Africa and how their cultural repertoire and self-image challenged racial hierarchies within the German system of colonial rule.

### The cultural repertoire of the ‘Capeboys’

As the first part has shown, an alleged white superiority is harder to display in a social proximity than from a spatial distance. Sociologist Ulrike Hamann (2016) has shown, in her study on the precarious character of colonial order, how much the construction of a German culture in the colonies was based on spatially diminishing the freedom of movement of black people, on establishing ‘white spaces’, in which encounters between blacks and whites were highly regulated. Especially after the war against the Herero and Nama, the praxis of spatial segregation became an important tool of colonial rule in South-West Africa, as became the idea of ‘race’. The regulation of space and the focus on race informed each other in important ways in the former German colony in the early twentieth century. It is in space, as Hamann argues, that ‘race’ becomes a social praxis in the first place. It is in space that it gains a materiality that it lacks in scientific discourse (Hamann 270).

Jakob Zollmann (2010) argues in his study on the colonial police, that the question of colonial order was a question of access to and control of space. It was in space, in the management of who had access to public space, that colonial power manifested, as Zollmann argues (9). This manifested most clearly in the practices of cultural and racial segregation that became more and more prominent after the Namibian war in 1908. The colonial cities were divided into the ‘European city’ and the ‘native quarters’. ‘White spaces’ were established through the restriction in freedom of movement of the black population. The ‘native’ population needed to

wear badges and were restricted in their movement by curfews and the need for permits. This growing emphasis on segregation in South-West especially in the years after the war indicates a shift in colonial rule and discourse. While the idea of the ‘civilising mission’ had been based on a rhetoric of cultural superiority of the German colonial power and the ‘white man’s burden’ to ‘educate’ the ‘native’ population in the colony, in the years before the First World War the emphasis shifted now from ‘civilizing’ to ‘separating’.

While conceived as spaces for a white German audience, colonial performance spaces remained, however, less homogeneous than might have been intended: dance-halls were rented out for events run by ‘natives’ and in some dance events a white audience was allowed to watch a performance hosted by black performers, as Herz’s letter, which I quoted in the beginning, has shown. What the negotiations and correspondences around theatre-sites show is that the colonial administration had an interest in managing the question of who was allowed to watch whom, and who was not allowed to dance in the same space with whom.

Specifically, the policing of these performance spaces through practices like curfew and censorship mirrors the fragility of colonial order. As Stoler has argued: “In the end, there was no panoptic imperial state but only a partially realized range of efforts to specify the use of and access to public space” (*Race and Education* 10). This regulation of (public) space and the fragility of the panoptic imperial state will be explored in this part through examples of theatre sites, where a black population was entering into as white connoted spaces of performance.

The file ‘on amusements’ (*Lustbarkeiten*) in the National Archive of Namibia, from which I gleaned the letter by Herz, holds more letters asking for permission to host dance events or rent out spaces ‘for coloureds’, some signed by Herz and some by his predecessor Friedrich Knacke. A recurring request by Herz

and Knacke in the years 1913 and 1914 is the question of whether they may rent out their cinema hall to a so called 'Capeboy' by the name Diclui for hosting a 'dance event' (*Tanzvergnügen*). 'Capeboys' was the name for migrant workers from the British Cape colony, who had come to Lüderitzbucht after diamonds had been found in the small coastal town of South-West Africa in 1908. The diamond boom attracted an increasing number of migrant workers from different countries and other colonies, especially from the British Cape. The 'Capeboys' represented the largest number of African workers from outside of the German 'protectorate'. The number of the 'Capeboys' for the whole territory of South-West Africa increased from 1,247 in 1909 to 6,439 in 1911 and decreased again to 2,089 in 1913 (Zimmerer, *Deutsche Herrschaft* 228). The workers from the Cape made up 80 to 90 percent of the whole 'non-native coloured population' of the German colony. Other 'foreigners' came from West Africa, the German colonies Kamerun and Togo, as well as from India and the West Indies (Zimmerer, *Deutsche Herrschaft* 228). Compared to the Cape Colony, which had been under British rule since the beginning of the nineteenth century and had a significant white population of mostly Dutch and English people, German South-West Africa had only been under German rule since 1884 and became Germany's only settler colony only after 1900. Even in 1913, only 14,000 white settlers were living in German South-West Africa. The discovery of diamonds gave not only the town of Lüderitz, which consisted in 1905 of only 5 houses, a major boost. It also gave the otherwise economically disappointing German colonial enterprise an important source of income in its last days of colonial rule.

The requests of Herz and Knacke to let the 'Capeboy' Diclui host dance events in their cinema hall were all approved by the colonial district office. The correspondence between the cinema owners and the colonial district office gives the image that in 1913 and 1914 weekly (sometimes even twice a week) dance events

‘for coloureds’ hosted by Diclui had been taking place in the cinema hall of Knacke and Herz. Considering that by 1913 and 1914 the colonial towns and cities were highly segregated and considering the colonial discourse on ‘race consciousness’ and the establishment of ‘white’ cultural spaces, the fact that Herz and Knacke were able to rent out their cinema to ‘coloureds’ is in this sense remarkable.

But in March 1913 the mayor of Lüderitzbuch wrote a letter of concern about these dance events to the colonial district office. The mayor states in the letter that “the municipality is principally against renting out buildings that lie within the district of the city and within the ‘development plan’ to ‘Coloureds’”.<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, the mayor stated that the municipality had decided “to give the permission for holding entertainment- or sportive-events of similar sort to Europeans only”.<sup>151</sup> The mayor’s decision points to what Zollmann has described as the ‘enforcement of order in space’, meaning that colonial order materialised most obviously in space (Zollmann 23). For instance, the segregation of living spaces became one of the characteristics of the functioning of colonial order in South-West Africa. It was the task of the colonial administration, and here especially of the police, to enforce this concept of segregation and thus of colonial order, as Zollmann posits: “The police and its ‘grip’ proved to be a ‘local instrument to the infrastructure’, such that it was described as typical for the police and its ‘social task’ to assure ‘order’ in the German empire” (220, transl. by me).

But the regulation of colonial space in this sense, with its strict separation of white and black spaces, was less successful than intended. The so called *Eingeborenenwerften* (‘natives’ dock-yards’), which were built by the colonial administration to have better control over the different populations, especially over

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<sup>150</sup> File BLU 74 L.10, National Archives of Namibia (NAN). Transl. by me.

<sup>151</sup> File BLU 74 L.10, National Archives of Namibia (NAN). Transl. by me.

their encounters, were less easy to control than assumed. Also in terms of our aforementioned imperial desire for *Ruhe*. As Zollmann shows for the example of Windhoek, where right after the war the first larger *Eingeborenenwerft* was built, the act of segregating the Africans from the Europeans did not bring the desired public peace and order with it. He shows in his analysis of the police files that complaints about the behaviour of the dockyard-inhabitants, especially in regard to noise (or in regard to the absence of *Ruhe*), were made regularly. A police sergeant complained about ‘natives’ that had been ‘loudly singing’ at 4.30h and even after a police warning continued ‘to play the harmonica’ (cit. in Zollmann 247). The chief of the district administration Boesel, however, objected, that singing ‘could not be easily prohibited’, especially so because ‘on holidays and in full-moon-nights’ dances were performed in the dockyards (Zollmann 247).<sup>152</sup>

In 1913, the discourse about a stricter control of the ‘natives’ gained more and more force. The means for a *Eingeborenenkontrolle* (control of the ‘natives’) until then had been the introduction of passes and the surveillance through the police (Zollmann 248). The secretary for ‘native affairs’ Bohr, for instance, campaigned that year for a prohibition for white people to enter any of the dock-yards throughout the colony and throughout the whole day.<sup>153</sup> This was already the case in Okahandja, Omaruru, Grootfontein, and Bethanien, but not in Windhoek, nor, as our case of Knacke and Herz has shown, in Lüderitzbucht (Zollmann 248). From 1905 on, it had been forbidden for Europeans to visit the dockyards in Windhoek by night. Here, especially concerns about sexual relations between Europeans and Africans had been an argument for prohibiting Europeans to enter the dockyards as well as the recurring

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<sup>152</sup> But not only the *Werft* caused complaints about *Unruhe*. A constant source of nightly noise production was also the office of the colonial administration, where German civil servants engaged in nightly parties paid similarly to the Africans on the *Werft* little attention to a need for *Ruhe* (Zollmann 248).

<sup>153</sup> Zollmann also shows that a legal definition of what constituted a ‘Werft’ did not exist, nor of the borders between Werft and city that were not to be trespassed (Zollmann 229).

issues of alcohol. Vice versa, Africans had to be in the dockyards between 9 o'clock at night and 4 o'clock in the morning. Those who were caught during these hours in the city without a permit could be punished, even with jail-time (Zollmann 229).<sup>154</sup>

Although a clear colonial order based on racial segregation had been established by 1914, it was not as all-encompassing as the discourse of the colonial administration would have us believe. As Zollmann's study has shown, Africans as well as Europeans refused in many different ways the attempts of the colonial administration to regulate their contact in terms of time and space completely (239). Also, the archival file 'on entertainment' shows that Knacke and Herz only partly followed the concerns of the mayor and the regulations for racial segregation. While the files show that they continued to hold 'dance events for coloureds' in their cinema hall long into the 1914, they also started to hold dance events outside of the European city in the premises of the *Eingeborenenwerft* of Lüderitzbucht. An official warning from the district office in February 1914, addressed to the owners of the *Kinohalle*, a Mr. Herz, proves that events of 'dance entertainment' were held in the 'natives' dockyards':

In the last weeks, Coloureds, who have attended the dance events organized by you at the *Eingeborenenwerft*, repeatedly ignored the curfew by which they were supposed to

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<sup>154</sup> The spatial 'centralisation' of the 'natives' outside of the 'European city' was justified by the colonial administration with reference to the maintenance of order and, as well, with reference to hygiene (Zollmann 228). Godwin R. Murunga (2005) has argued that the discourse of hygiene and the "racialisation of disease", was a typical colonial justification for spatial and racial segregation in almost all African towns. It linked the process of racial segregation "to the process of normalizing the white image, pathologising black and setting up black people as a danger to whites" (Murunga, cit. in Zollmann 222). Sociologist Annette Dietrich has shown in her study on the construction of race and gender in the German colonies (2007) how intertwined the discourses on a 'white' German culture and that on hygiene were in both the German empire and in its colonies. She shows that the struggle for the establishment and maintenance of a German culture in the colonies corresponds with the socio-hygienic discourses in the empire at the turn of the century, in which bad housing conditions, health conditions, and working conditions were framed as the source for cultural degeneracy and decay (Hamann 179). The hygiene discourse of the empire targeting the working class and the hygiene discourse in the colony targeting the 'native' population show thus parallels in that both groups are associated with dirt, sexual promiscuousness, and laziness (Hamann 179). Dietrich thus shows how the German self-image of the diligent worker in fact originated in the discourse of the bourgeoisie, attributing those workers (colonial or metropolitan) who had to do the heavy labor with laziness (Hamann 180).

be in their quarters. Because this led to multiple punishment of the Coloureds we ask you,

1. To install announcements in the dance hall, in which all attending are made aware that if they live in the city and they do not have a pass from their employer with them they are committing a felony if they stay longer than the curfew allows it,
2. To make announcements in the dance hall asking all natives to leave the venue at half 10 and all Capeboys at half 11.<sup>155</sup>

The letter ends with addressing the police officer in charge, ordering him to control whether or not these requirements will be followed with the following words: “Pol. Sgt. Georg Francke, the dance-hall owners on the *Eingeborenenwerft* are asked to act according to the abovementioned points. It is your task to make absolutely sure that these regulations are followed strictly in all the dance-halls, in which dance events for coloureds are hosted.”<sup>156</sup>

Also on the letters of Herz and Knacke we can find in every corner the added comment ‘nothing to complain about’ (*Nichts zu beanstanden*) suggesting that a police officer had visited the event and added his comment to the file afterwards. This indicates a similar police censorship practice as in the metropole, where also police agents would visit the performances to control whether or not the approved scripts that were sent in two weeks earlier were followed. While in the case of the dance events the act of handing in a script is redundant, it nevertheless needed the act of asking for permission to hold these events in the first place. While a similar police concern could also be observed for the colonial ceremonies and their potential for liminal encounters, I could not find any indication of police censorship in regard to the amateur performances of the theatre societies and literary clubs. In those spaces

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<sup>155</sup> File BLU 74 L.10, National Archives of Namibia (NAN).

<sup>156</sup> File BLU 74 L.10, National Archives of Namibia (NAN). Transl. LS

connoted as white, a police presence was less necessary than in those spaces which were less clearly racially categorisable, or even more so, in the space in between, the trespassing of the two, as the emphasis on curfew shows.

The curfew installed by the colonial administration for the dance events in the *Kinohalle*, based on a distinction between ‘natives’ and ‘Capeboys’, indicates that in the eyes of the colonial administration the migrant workers from the Cape would fall into a different racial category than the indigenous population of South-West. It shows, in fact, that racial categories were constantly in the making (and unmaking), and less stable than the colonial discourse based on ideas of racial hierarchy would try to suggest. The fact that the Capeboys were allowed to stay an hour later at the dance event could thus indicate a difference in freedom of movement, however minimal it might seem. Also, the fact that in the permission requests for the dance event it was a Capeboy hosting the event might indicate their different status amongst the whole group of African workers. Nowhere in the file it is indicated that a ‘native’ (*Eingeborene*) was holding a public event or a dance. Performances of the indigenous population of South-West Africa are only named in the manner of ethnographic reports.

The differentiation between ‘Capeboys’ and ‘natives’ in terms of curfew is an important indication of the potential conflict that the presence of the ‘Capeboys’ posed for the colonial rule in South-West Africa. Historian Ulrike Linder suggests in her study on *Transnational Movements between Colonial Empires* (2009) that while German businesses and especially the new diamond industry were in urgent need of an influx of migrant workers and encouraged more lenient regulations for the new workforce, the German administration was opposed to a massive immigration of particularly Cape workers for the simple reason that the British Cape colony had a different - and, according to the German colonial administration, too lenient - policy

concerning its African and mixed-raced populations.<sup>157</sup> As Lindner shows, “[b]efore 1900, the black and so-called ‘coloured’ population had met with a relatively liberal attitude at the Cape (...) At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as in many other African colonies, racial policies became more important in the Cape Colony and racial tensions grew” (4). The African migrant workers moving from the British colony to the German colony brought an ‘outsider’ perspective towards the much stricter racialised system of German colonial governance. As Lindner shows in her discussion of different court cases and filed complaints, the workers from the Cape regularly questioned the strict demarcation lines between white and black. It was particularly the Capeboys of a mixed ethnic background, labelled by the German administration as *Bastards* or *Mischlinge*, that questioned the segregation policies of the German colonial administration. This was the case, as Lindner explains, because the so-called ‘coloured migrants’, “were used to a more self-confident behaviour than the African population of the German colony”. They “had been raised in societies where race segregation was not foregrounded as much as in German South-West Africa” (Lindner 11).

The different treatment of African individuals from German South-West Africa and the Cape Africans was even detected by the British consul who expressed his astonishment about the pay-gap between the two populations in the following comment: “German Protectorate natives receive a maximum of 20/- per month and their food as wages. It is a puzzle to me how long they will continue to work at this rate side by side with our natives who get 60/- per month and better food” (cit. in Lindner 9). While the difference in wages and the difference in curfew indicate a

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<sup>157</sup> ‘Colouredness’ became one of the racial categories in 1950 under the apartheid-era Population Registration Act: “The act defined a coloured citizen as someone who was neither ‘Bantu’ nor ‘White’ (...). It not only oriented colouredness as something that was diagnosed by a process of elimination but also bound it between to ‘racial’ categories – ‘Bantu’ (i.e., black African) and ‘White’ (i.e., European settler) – that the apartheid government imagined as somehow stable, fixed, and authentic” (Davids 90).

slightly different treatment of Cape workers and indigenous workers from the German colony, the ‘Capeboys’ lodged several complaints against their German employers with the help of the British consul – a juridical privilege that was not given to the indigenous population in the German colony. Considering the increasingly strict regulations against mixed-marriages in the German colony, a growing mixed population through the influx of Cape workers in itself posed a threat to the desired racial purity of the German colony by its colonial order. On top of that, were Cape workers questioning the strict demarcations between white and black in the German colony. Some of them even managed to change their racial status through proving European descent with the help of the British Consul turning over night from ‘coloured’ into ‘white’, as Lindner could show. The material changes that this change of racial status included prove how far the segregation system in the German colony reached. Those workers were offered higher positions in their workplace, higher wages and were allowed to live in the European settlements and thus leave the ‘natives’ dock-yards’.

It is obvious that those ambiguities were seen as highly problematic by the German colonial administration and as “highly disturbing for the self-definition of the Germans as colonizers” (Lindner 13). The solution was a limitation to the residency of Cape workers in the German colony to one or two years and racial measures prohibiting the immigration of ‘coloured’ couples and ‘coloured’ women to avoid the increase of a mixed-race population. This also echoes in how and where the ‘Capeboys’ were allowed to perform in the colony.

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I argued in this chapter, that the socio-spatial set up of the theatre and its order, which I understand as manifesting in the particular division of bodies in space,

epitomises a tension characteristic to the colonial order manifesting (amongst others) in the practices of spatial segregation in the colony. Here, in the theatre and in other performative events, the division of bodies in time and space could be rehearsed and displayed in the colonial context and for the colonial order. But as the witness accounts of settlers and colonial administrators of colonial ceremonies in the colonies show the order of the theatre also bore the potential for challenging the colonial order, for encouraging contact and intermingling. The case studies that I discussed in this chapter allowed me to show that colonial order was not only accomplished through military control, but also through the division of bodies and subject position in space and especially in public space. In this regard, I discussed the role theatre played for the establishment of a white, German settler community in South-West Africa and for the idea of a 'German cultural identity' in the empire more general. I showed how the establishment of amateur theatre clubs and societies by the settlers negotiated the access to public space in the colony by excluding Africans from these societies. The analysis of these amateur theatre societies offered an insight into the German aspirations of what a successful settler community should look like and how the maintenance of a 'German cultural identity' in Africa should be assured, namely through a successful transplantation of 'German culture' to the colony.

The genre of colonial ceremonies, on the other hand, performed a double-function: they were an important means to stage colonial power and imperial unity in the public space of the colony but ran the danger of undermining a colonial order based by encouraging contact and intermingling of the settler and the indigenous population. I have shown how both sides negotiated this balance of proximity and distance. Through a discussion of the concepts of *Ruhe* and *Ordnung*, which appear frequently in the colonial discourses of spatial policies and the regulations of contact

between the two populations, I have argued for a certain compatibility between the image of the ‘ideal spectator’ in late eighteenth century theatre discourse and the image of the ‘ideal settler’ in the discourse of the colonial police. The presence of migrant workers from the Cape Colony in Lüderitzbucht and their self-positioning within the German colonial order have highlighted the constructedness of both the racial hierarchy of the German colonial enterprise as well its spatial segregation policies.

Whereas the last three chapters have focussed on historical case studies of colonial theatricality and modes of representation, the next chapter focusses on contemporary modes of representing, remembering, and redressing the colonial past in the theatrical public sphere(s) today. Here, I scrutinise the promises and pitfalls of the theatre’s role in the historical remembering of Germany’s colonial past and put a particular emphasis on analysing the construction and negotiation of the position of the spectator in these performances.

## Chapter Four

### Ambivalent Alignments –

On the politics of representing, remembering and redressing the colonial past in the German theatrical public sphere today

The year 2004 marked the centennial commemoration of the Namibian War (1904-1908) and the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the so called “Africa Conference”,<sup>158</sup> which is today considered as the official beginning of German colonialism. The conference in 1884 had been held by Bismarck, the German chancellor at the time, who invited the representatives of the twelve major European powers as well as a representative from the US to Berlin to divide up the African continent amongst them. Anti-racist activist groups, grass-roots initiatives, cultural institutions, and refugee relief organisations used the year 2004 to intervene in the “public amnesia” (Kössler 2006) in Germany concerning its colonial past and bring Germany’s colonial history back on the table of public debates on the proper commemoration of colonial history.

One project that stood out that year was the organisation of the “Anti-colonial Africa Conference”, a critical reference to Bismarck’s conference 120 years earlier. The anti-colonial ‘conference’ encompassed more than merely a conference on the history of German colonialism and its implications today, but also provided a conceptual roof for other initiatives, like demonstrations under the banner “Apologies and Reparations for Colonialism”, anti-colonial city tours through Berlin, the laying of a stone commemorating the victims of the genocide in 1904, and the

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<sup>158</sup> As Ulrike Hamann argues, the importance of this conference is uncontested in the scholarship of German colonialism (13). It is perceived as the initial event for the distribution of the African continent amongst the largest European nations and the groundbreaking of the European expansionism into Africa in political and juridical terms. For an in-depth discussion of the conference see Förster et al. 1988 and for a critical and postcolonial reading of it see Arndt et al. 2010.

drafting of a petition for changing street names in Berlin that commemorate colonial perpetrators of war crimes. In its conception and execution, the anti-colonial conference was largely based on the leadership and agency of African activists, academics, and artists, and thus forestalled a German navel-gazing as it had happened in other events critically commemorating German colonial history, as some journalists have argued. It moreover stood out as it linked the colonial past to its ongoing impact on the present. For instance, the anti-colonial conference pivoted its political demands not only around a stronger public awareness and acknowledgement of the colonial crimes that had been committed during the colonial era under the German flag, but also lobbied for a shift of the German government's foreign policies regarding Africa and immigration. Some of these demands were to end the trade with weapons, to end Germany's involvement in warfare in Africa, and to provide an open-border policy for all African refugees. The debates, events, and petitions that emanated from this anti-colonial Africa conference were thus as much concerned with the past as with the present, and in fact argued that without 'working through' the colonial past, racist politics and neo-colonial policies will continue to flourish in the present. Bismarck's "Africa Conference" offered the perfect image for this critical gesture of explaining the present through the past, because "all signature countries of the Berlin Africa Conference of 1884 take political responsibility for the consequences of their colonial policy in Africa", as the mission statement of the anti-colonial conference argued.<sup>159</sup>

In addressing the question of how the colonial past should be critically commemorated in the twenty-first century, the members of the anti-colonial conference offered clear propositions: a memorial for all victims of the 1904

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<sup>159</sup> For the mission statement see "Trotz alledem!", 2014, [trotzalledem.bplaced.net/zeitungen/30/aufruf.pdf](http://trotzalledem.bplaced.net/zeitungen/30/aufruf.pdf)

genocide shall be erected, a permanent exhibition on Germany's colonial history established in the German National History Museum, and the topic of colonial history shall become a mandatory subject in Germany's school-curriculum.<sup>160</sup> Demands that intervene in the national narratives and national modes of commemorating, adding disavowed aspects to that hegemonic interpretation of the past.

While the collections of Germany's ethnographic museums were under scrutiny, especially in the wake of the protests around the re-establishment of the Hohenzollern castle in the middle of Berlin with its *Humboldt Forum* housing Berlin's ethnographic collection, the theatre and its practices of representation received little attention. This changed drastically in the year 2011, when two incidents of so called 'blackfacing' practices sparked vociferous protests. In two major German theatre institutions, theatre makers had applied the practice of blacking up white actors with make-up and provoked a public discussion of the colonialist implications of theatrical practices today. Similarly vehemently protested was the performance installation *Exhibit B* by South African theatre maker Brett Bailey, which was staged in Berlin only a couple of months after the blackface controversy had sprung.

While the last three chapters addressed the relationship between theatre and colonialism mainly through historical case studies, this chapter investigates the promises and pitfalls of representing, remembering, and redressing the colonial past through means of theatre and performance today and in a German theatrical public sphere. I therefore investigate in this chapter the politics of historical remembering in

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<sup>160</sup> However, none of the demands have been met so far. A statement from the German government with regard to the request of including colonial history into the official commemoration politics of the German state says: "The Federal Government sees no need for an overarching national concept in the commemoration of the colonial past." Federal Government, 2009. Drucksache 16/12203 – zu Kolonialismus, Rassismus und Migrationspolitik vom 26.03.2009, Berlin: 3. Translation by me. See also Hamann pg.10.

the interstices of a larger German public sphere, and the formation of a theatrical public sphere. The protests against the practices of blackface, as well as against the performance installation *Exhibit B*, bring anew to the table the question of the position that the institution of theatre can take and play in society, in this case against the background of Germany's 'colonial amnesia' (Kössler 2015). The conception of the spectator position is crucial for an understanding of the promises and pitfalls of a critical engagement with the colonial past in performance and theatre, as I want to argue in this chapter. I will analyse some of the more outspoken audience reactions, like the protests against blackface and against *Exhibit B*, as well the dramaturgy of the audience experience through the elicitation of a specific affect, namely through the affect shame, as it has been the case in *Exhibit B*. I will argue that for an institution like the theatre, a critical examination of its own modes of production and representation is crucial for engaging in a critical representation and negotiation of the colonial past. In order to forestall the reproduction of a binary in subject positions based on the positions of victims and perpetrators, I introduce the figure of the 'implicated subject' (Rothberg 2014) and argue that the question of implication, rather than the evocation of shame in the subject position of the perpetrator, can solicit not only a critical negotiation of the colonial past, but an ethical positioning from which the demand for justice and redress can be formulated.

### *Bühnenwatch* and Dramaturgies of Entanglement

Theatre historian Christopher Balme situates the theatrical public sphere in his book *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (2014) there where the closed circuit of a primarily aesthetic reception of a performance is broken open and an engagement between theatre and the larger public sphere becomes possible. He argues that the theatrical public sphere is defined by three interlocking functions of the theatre in the larger

public sphere: “as an interlocutor via its plays and productions; as an institution where it may be the subject of debate; and as a communicator where it harnesses various media channels to broadcast itself and its messages” (Balme, *Public Sphere* x). Especially in Germany, where most of the larger theatre institutions are subsidised by the government, institutionalised theatres need to be understood as public institutions and as part of different public spheres. As a concept, the public sphere almost never refers to an actual space but rather connotes “a set of rules enabling debate and discussion to occur” (Balme, *Public Sphere* ix).

The concept of the public sphere has been most famously articulated by German sociologist Jürgen Habermas in his study *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (1962), in which he described the development of a bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. He described this public sphere as being based on universal access and reasoned debate. Critique of his concept surfaced especially with the appearance of the English translation in 1989, targeting most of all the normative, idealised and exclusive character of Habermas’s understanding of the public sphere as well as its blind spot to the multiplicity of public spheres and especially to so called counter-public spheres. Many critics argued that the public sphere Habermas was describing never existed. In this regard, sociologist Michael Warner argues in his book *Publics and Counterpublics* (2005) that contrary to Habermas’s concept of the public sphere as consisting of reasoned debate, counter-public spheres “may involve (political) positions, affective intensities, assertions of value or truth, in short, may contribute to the multiplicity of poly-vocal opinions circulating in ‘the’ public sphere” (see Reinelt 20). Drawing on Warner, theatre scholar Janelle Reinelt (2011) critically points out the Eurocentrism of Habermas’s conception of the public sphere and its deep roots in the theorisation of bourgeois behaviour during the

Enlightenment period. Understood as a historical study, Habermas's conception gives an account "of new forms of communicative deliberation that emerged in England in the 1700s and on the European continent over the next century", as Reinelt admits (16). When, however, generalised as a philosophical treaty or universal theory, it blurs its own Western roots. Reinelt is, moreover, critical of the exclusivity of Habermas's concept and points out that "in the bourgeois public sphere of modernity, [...] women or those with no property" were not included (Reinelt 17). In other words, Habermas's "invocation of an idealized equality" in his concept of public sphere is flawed, because this equality "has not and does not now manifest in the composition of the historical Western public sphere", as Reinelt argues (17).

The lack of equality and the question of how equality is linked to the politics of representation had also been at the centre of the so called 'blackface controversy' in 2011 in Berlin, as I will discuss in the following section. The first performance under scrutiny was a staging of the play *I am not Rappaport* by the American playwright Herb Gardner in Berlin's *Schlosspark Theater* end of 2011. The theatre had advertised the play beforehand with a poster depicting the white German actor Joachim Bliese in blackface in the role of the play's black character Midge Carter. Anti-racist activists confronted the management of the theatre with the fact that the practice of 'blacking up' white actors has a history in racist practices of representation.<sup>161</sup> The theatre's response was that the black make-up was used because the theatre had been unable to find a black actor 'apt' enough to play that

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<sup>161</sup> Blackface or blackface minstrelsy, as Afro-German theatre scholar Joy Kalu explains, "describes a practice that goes back to nineteenth-century American minstrel shows and formed part of vaudeville performances well into the 1930s. Here, white performers painted their bodies black to portray black characters in sketches that showed them in a stereotypical and derogatory manner" (Kalu 2012). However, the history of minstrelsy blackface also holds examples of black performers and show troupes. "These black performers, too, generally performed in blackface and were forced to continue this colonially-influenced structure of representation. Their stereotypical embodiment of *blackness* was therefore by no means more authentic or more authentically staged than that of the white performers" (Kalu 2012, emphasis in original).

role. The theatre, moreover, rejected the accusation of racism by positing that the casting of white actors for the role of black characters has a long tradition in Germany and that every actor should be able to play any kind of role regardless of race, gender, age etc. The activists fused their political agendas, and established the collective *Bühnenwatch* ('Stage Watch'). It understands itself as a network of black and white activists protesting and pointing out racist practices in German theatres. The collective is an interesting phenomenon in itself, in that it is unprecedented in the German context of theatre and performance art. Since then, *Bühnenwatch* has organised protests, discussion platforms, and press releases on racist incidents in German theatres and in the public sphere in general.

The activists pointed out in regard to the theatre's answer, that this kind of casting politics applies in Germany only for white actors. Whereas white actors are cast in any kind of role regardless of ethnicity, race, age, or gender, the same does not count for black actors, who are usually cast for black roles only. The lack of black roles in the German theatre repertoire, on the other hand, is subsequently used as an excuse by the institutions for not having more black actors in their ensembles. Beyond the aesthetic choice of blackface, *Bühnenwatch* thus pointed out that the German theatre landscape might have a more structural problem in terms of representations not only on the stage, but also within the organisation of the theatres. A larger presence of actors of colour in German ensembles could also help to forestall the reproduction of clichés in the representation of otherness by members of the white social majority, as some activists argued (see Kalu 2012).

In the same year, *Bühnenwatch*'s critique was further fuelled by the choice of the African-American playwright Bruce Norris to cancel the performance of his play *Clybourne Park* at the *Deutsches Theater* in Berlin, because the theatre had cast a white actress for the role of one of the black characters. When at the same theatre,

however, two white actors appeared in the staging of the play *Unschuld* ('Innocence') by German playwright Dea Loher and theatre director Michael Thalheimer in blackface masks, the controversy reached another level. *Bühnenwatch* activists organised an intervention in the theatre space, in which 40 people stood up in the moment the blackface scene occurred and ostentatiously left the theatre space. Outside the theatre, the activists distributed leaflets and explained to a mostly white German audience the historical implications of a practice like blackface. In the weeks after the protests, public debates were held in the theatre between the activists and the team of the theatre, and German theatre critics debated the question vividly in the newspapers and online.

As theatre scholar Joy Kristin Kalu argues in her article "On the Myth of Authentic Representation: Blackface as Reenactment" (2012), the controversy can be summarised in two main standpoints: the blackface critics asked for the offensive dimension of the practice to be acknowledged and for more black actors to be included in German ensembles, while the blackface apologists repeated their demand for unrestricted artistic freedom, including the representation of otherness, even if this would potentially be hurtful for spectators. Other blackface apologists argued in the defence of blackface as an allegedly critical tool of theatrical representation that "the casting of black actors in black roles made little sense, as this inversely implied that black actors were limited to those roles, thus discriminating against them once again" (Kalu 3). At stake in the blackface controversy was thus a very basic question of the politics of representation. Kalu stresses in her analysis of the staging of *Unschuld* that a practice like blackface does not need to be abolished from the theatre stage as such. As a form of critical repetition, the usage of blackface masks could lead to a re-signification of the historically racist practice, and thus "add new meanings to performances and thereby undermine conventions" (Kalu 4). She sees

this critical usage of blackface, for instance, realised in the performance *The Emperor Jones* by the Wooster Group (1993). While *Unschuld* showed in its application of the minstrelsy mask a similar critical and deconstructive potential (the black make-up is, for instance, clearly exposed as masquerade and dissolves throughout the two-hour long performance exposing the white performer's body underneath it), it becomes problematic when combined with the embodiment of the black character through ape-like movements and gestures. In this combination, the blackface mask loses its self-reflexive potential and dissolves into a racist cliché, according to Kalu (5). The foreign character is stigmatised by this embodiment as the ultimate other and represented "by an unbridgeable difference" (Kalu 6). The recourse to a cliché in the embodiment of difference is remarkable, in that a racial hierarchy is not only "represented but *created*" on stage and has repercussions for the larger and shared space of the theatre including the auditorium (Kalu 6). This brings the question with it, who is supposed to be the recipient of this racialised hierarchy. It points, as Kalu argues, to the fact "that the people responsible either counted on an audience composed as of homogeneously white members" and that the racialised hierarchy would thus not offend anyone, or, far worse, "that the racist offensiveness towards a minority was clearly calculated and deemed inconsequential" (Kalu 6).

What Kalu's critical analysis shows is the importance of the spectator position - who is assumed to be watching - in the analysis of the politics of racial representations, an observation that will also figure prominently in the course of this chapter. Kalu sees an initial solution to the cliché-based representation of otherness, if German theatres would stop representing otherness "as more foreign than it is in the daily lives of most of the audience members" (7). Then, "the self and the other could actually be painted in more subtle shades than in black and white" (Kalu 7).

This blind spot of more established theatre institutions like the *Deutsches Theater* and the *Schlosspark Theater* is countered by a number of smaller (in terms of budget) performance productions from the German independent theatre and performance scene. Here, what is noticeable in the more critical theatrical engagements with the colonial past and its repercussion of the present is that the question of the spectator-position, as described by Kalu above, is often highlighted and becomes part of the artistic material of the performance. These performances are as much invested in offering a critical access to German colonial history, as they are in providing a postcolonial aesthetics in their productions. Afro-German theatre maker Simone Dede Ayivi, for instance, investigates in her performance *Performing Back* (2015) the question of what the commemoration of Germany's colonial past could look like from a black perspective. The performance presents her journey through Germany in which she visited specific sites which had and have a particular connection to forms of colonial display, like sites of former *Völkerschauen*, colonial monuments, or museums. Ayivi posited in an interview that she is concerned with making critical performances about the colonial past that avoid merely explaining the history of colonialism and its violence to a white audience (Ayivi 2015). Instead, she aims at reaching an audience that shares her everyday experience of structural racism.

This is a larger trend in recent literary and dramatic productions by Afro-German playwrights and performers. Their critiques on everyday racism “expose the linguistic and perceptual traces that perpetuate racialized patterns of exclusion” (Sieg 255). That these patterns are difficult to challenge, as performance scholar Katrin Sieg argues, is due to the fact that “the exoticization and commodification of racial difference are often embraced as evidence of ‘post-racial’ (i.e. non-harmful) relations” in Germany today (255). But it is also due to the fact that for many white

Germans the notion of 'race' is either associated with Nazism or with the socio-political issues of the United States. As the language of race and racism has been officially effaced from discourses of German policy, science, and the law, after the Second World War many white Germans understand issues of race and racism to be 'solved', in other words, to be non-existent.

Besides the work of Afro-German playwrights, the work of mixed collectives based in Germany show a particular critical investment with the politics of perception and the relation of perception and representation to colonial forms of display. Performance collectives like the Berlin based ensemble FLINN WORKS or the Bremen based company Gintersdorfer & Klaasen consist of performers and makers that are self-identify as Afro-German, white German, of colour, or African and produce their work both in Europe and in Africa. For instance, in 2016 FLINN WORKS produced a performance on German colonial history in collaboration with theatre makers from Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, which had been a former German colony. Their production *Maji Maji War (1905-1907)* not only displays the history of Tanzanian resistance against German colonial rule, but does so by centring the fact that this event is perceived differently in German and Tanzanian history. Rather than claiming a new view on the history of colonial resistance, they highlight the view itself and the hegemony of a European perspective on historical events. Rather than catering to a homogenous audience, their performance highlights the question how the story of the Maji Maji War can be told in the first place and how to do so not only from the different cultural and geopolitical perspectives of the makers but also for both audiences, in Tanzania and in Germany.

A similar example is offered by the performance *Black Bismarck (2012)* by the theatre collective *andcompany&co.*, which is also based in Berlin and consists of self-identified white German, Afro-German, and Belgian performers. The

performance pivots around the question of the ‘white gaze’ and the hegemonic position of “overly privileged under-pigmented”<sup>162</sup> Germans in discourses on colonialism and commemoration. Starting from the aforementioned “Africa Conference” in 1884, the performance uses the figure of Bismarck’s ghost to point out the ways in which Germany is still ‘haunted’ by its colonial past. In a kind of performance-lecture-format, the performance explores the colonial traces in the city of Berlin, in form of street-names, monuments, and ethnographic objects. However, it also includes more ephemeral colonial remains in the form of colonial nostalgia and revisionism, manifesting in contemporary pop-music exotifying Africa, Africa motto-parties, and holiday-resorts in East Germany running under the name “Neu-Afrika” (New Africa).

Rather than reproducing images of violence, the performance pivots around questions of visibility and invisibility with regard to issues of race, for instance, the idea of a neutral and therefore invisible position of the ‘white gaze’. In that sense, a postcolonial investigation of colonial traces in Berlin throughout the performance is embedded in the theatre’s own production mode of representation, of rendering some positions and perspectives more visible than others. It is telling that all of these performances are based in the independent scene or are produced by theatres like *Ballhaus Naunynstrasse*, which dedicates its repertoire and resources almost exclusively to issues of migration and postcolonial conditions. Rectifying this marginal status of postcolonial aesthetics and theatre by Afro-German artists, both in terms of financial funding and in terms of public attention, is therefore high on the agenda of the *Bühnenwatch* activists.

What these examples of contemporary performances engaging with German colonial history show is a trend of not only depicting scenes from the colonial past,

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<sup>162</sup> This is what white people are called in the performance, “Überprivilegierte Unterpigmentierte”.

but always also critically reflecting on the theatre's modes of production and the politics of representation, whether it be in building mixed ensembles or in challenging the presumption of a homogenous audience. The performances mentioned above thus manage to engage issues from a theatrical public sphere with issues at stake in a larger public sphere, something that the productions of *Unschuld* and *I'm not Rappaport* clearly failed to do. Contrary to the more established theatre institutions thus, manage the theatrical engagements with colonial history to engage questions of aesthetics with political questions of representation and participation (for instance, the number of theatre makers of Colour represented in German theatres and the question of role casting). They highlight that “decolonization hinges on historical remembering and on the critical working-through of the patterns of perception, repertoires of feelings and habits of thinking and knowing that shored up European superiority long after the empire had fallen” (Sieg 252).

What the protests of *Bühnenwatch* have moreover shown is the formation of a counter-public sphere, one that is able to point out through the example of the theatre and its politics of racialised representation how much the larger German public sphere is formed along lines of class, race and gender. Understood as a counter-public sphere, *Bühnenwatch*, as Balme argues, not only pointed out “an underlying culture of discrimination that even politically sensitive theatre artists found difficult to engage with” but also “brought home to the somewhat hermetic world of the complex and often self-referential German theatre system that racial issues were virulent in the system itself” (Balme, *Public Sphere* 172).

## *Exhibit B* and Dramaturgies of Shame

Many of the arguments around the politics of racialised representations were also invoked in the protests against the performance *Exhibit B* by South African director Brett Bailey, which was shown in Berlin in 2012 in the frame of the prestigious German theatre festival *Berliner Festspiele*. The performance installation consists of twelve *tableaux vivants* staging live performers and depicting scenes of past colonial atrocities and recent crimes against humanity embodied by asylum-seekers from African countries. It played between 2010 and 2012 in different European countries, as well as in Russia and South Africa and has been partly co-produced by major European theatre festivals like *Edinburgh International Festival*, *Kunstenfestivaldesarts Brussels*, *Holland Festival*, *Wiener Festwochen* and *Berliner Festspiele*.

When staged in Berlin in 2012 in the frame of the festival *Foreign Affairs*, which is part of the prestigious German theatre festival *Berliner Festspiele*, *Exhibit B* sparked vociferous protests from anti-racist activist groups in the German public sphere. The protestors in Berlin argued that the performance objectifies black people by presenting them silently and motionless for the gaze of a white audience, and by that reproducing rather than critically deconstructing the historic format of the ‘human zoo’, a format which had been popular during the colonial era. Curators and theatre directors who had either co-produced or programmed *Exhibit B* in their venues defended the show against these charges, by arguing for its critical approach towards Europe’s colonial past and its empowering stance towards racism in the present (Sieg 2015). Subsequent protests occurred also in Paris and London, where the performance installation was shown in 2014, leading in the case of the Barbican Centre to the cancellation of the show before the opening night. Statements by the performers, published online and in the major newspapers, challenged the protestors’

charge that black performers had been exploited for the benefit of a white theatre director, in that they talked about their personal experience and motivation for participating in the performance and said that they had found this experience empowering. One of the performers of the London show, Stella Odunlami, told the BBC after the decision of the Barbican to cancel the show: “The protestors have censored and silenced me” (Odunlami 2014). As performance scholar Katrin Sieg argues, their testimonies troubled the stark polarity in the public debates between “aggrieved minority communities charging bourgeois public institutions and media with racism against white professionals in the European art world who resist any call to wider public accountability” (Sieg 251).

Throughout the performance<sup>163</sup>, the black performers are standing or sitting on small isolated stages or plinths in complete silence and completely motionless, sometimes for up to 45 minutes. They are surrounded by actual material objects like measuring tapes, chains, skulls, or stuffed animals referencing nineteenth century anthropometric tools and technologies of racial science. Whereas some tableaux depict scenes of violence from Europe’s colonial past, like the genocide of 1904, others represent more recent examples of racialised scenes of violence and crimes against humanity. The latter tableaux stage refugees and asylum seekers from African countries, some displayed with measuring tape around their arms and legs and accompanied by their biographical and biometric data, thus linking the techniques of nineteenth century racial science to contemporary strategies of controlling and monitoring migration into Europe. In the example of the tableau *Survival of the Fittest #1* the performer is strapped to an aeroplane seat, her hands

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<sup>163</sup> In the description of the performance I will rely on the version I saw in Amsterdam in the context of the *Holland Festival* in 2013. The focus of the larger analysis of this performance, however, will be on its staging in Berlin.

and legs handcuffed and a piece of tape placed over her mouth. The text in front of the tableau reads as follows:

Mixed media: aeroplane seats, Nigerian woman, packing tape, cable ties, spectator/s etc.

Name: Adamu, Semira

Date of birth: 1978

Date of death: 22 September 1998

Place of birth: Nigeria

Country of entry into Europe: Belgium

Religion: Muslim

Status: Refugee

Cause of death: Suffocated with a pillow while resisting deportation by Belgian police officers on a Sabena Flight from Brussels to Lagos.

The story of Semira Adamu, a woman from Nigeria who had been suffocated by two Belgian police officers, not only really took place but had also gained intense public attention in Belgium at the time. It is thus a case that is recognisable to at least a Belgian and Dutch audience, in that case. The strategy of revealing the violence of the colonial era and the ongoing violence in a post-colonial context is thus personalised in the performance through the story of victims who might already be known to the spectator, but also through issues that touch on local pressing issues of racism and crimes against humanity.

In the performance in Amsterdam, for instance, the first tableau that the audience would see was one depicting an asylum-seeker wearing a sweat-shirt with the slogan 'Zwarte Piet is racism' on it, referencing a local struggle against a racist Christmas tradition of blackface in the Netherlands that had gained strong momentum in the year *Exhibit B* was shown in Amsterdam. The performance thus

clearly attempted to not only draw a visual and formal link between scenes of racialised violence in the past and in the present, but also included local issues of racism in the installation. This also shows in the fact that at the end of the performance installation, the audience would find written statements of each performer saying why he or she decided to participate in the performance and what their personal experience with everyday racism is.

The local connection also features in the fact that in each city in which *Exhibit B* was shown, Bailey cast local performers in a mix of professional and amateur actors, as well as a mix of citizens and non-citizens (asylum seekers). He also chose very specific venues for his installation. In Berlin, for example, *Exhibit B* was shown in the old water towers in *Prenzlauer Berg*, in Brussels in the monumental *Gesu* church, and in Amsterdam in *Loods 6*. All of these venues share a link to a history of violence in one way or another. The water tower in Berlin had been used as a concentration camp in Nazi Germany, the abandoned *Gesu* church in Brussels has become the home of a community of about 90 illegal immigrants coming from different non-European countries to Belgium, and *Loods 6*, the venue of *Exhibit B* in Amsterdam, was the arrival and departure hall of the Dutch Royal navy sending ships out to the colonies.

Brett Bailey, the figure at the centre of the controversy around *Exhibit B*, has been described as “one of the most important writer/directors in post-apartheid South Africa” by theatre critic Anton Krueger (cit. in Sieg 251). Bailey had been concerned with questions and ideologies of race and ethnicity already in his previous works, and has included diverse cultural sources and spiritual practices in his performances. The statement of actor and director John Matshikiza shows that this also did not always go without critique in South Africa. Matshikiza argues that “to be a white man dabbling in black territory is still taboo – to both sides” (cit. in Sieg 251). Most

of Bailey's performances are site-specific works and shown in spaces that are charged with political, cultural, or historical meaning in relation to the topical issues that the performances address.

Considering the written statements of the performers at the end of the performance testifying to the empowering feeling that this performance had given them in addressing historical and contemporary forms of racism, as well as considering Bailey's coming of age in post-apartheid South Africa, where truth-telling plays an important role for processes of restitution and redress (see Cole 2010; Hutchison 2013), the charge of reproducing the format of the 'human zoo' and of objectifying black bodies as well as of hurting local activist causes weighs even heavier, as Sieg argues (252). A critical investigation of both the charges as well as the aesthetic strategies of the performance seems all the more important. I therefore ask in the following section how far *Exhibit B* might have indeed fallen into the trap of reproducing rather than deconstructing colonialist forms of representation. I will start with the comparison of *Exhibit B* to the colonialist format of the human zoo.

*Bühnenwatch* argued that the performance reproduced the historical format of the 'human zoos' in that it subjected the black performers into the role of objects of white inspection. Their homepage-text reads as follows:

The imagery of the production 'Exhibit B' is following a colonial racist tradition: The exhibition of Black people and People of Color. Despite claiming his seemingly anti-racist intentions, Brett Bailey reproduces the idea of Africans as objects, serving purposes of entertainment, comfort or, in this case, the education of white people. (Bühnenwatch 2012)

Brett Bailey, on the other hand, described his project as a critical investigation of racist traditions of representation, as the following synopsis on the homepage of his company *Third World Bunfight* shows:

a human installation that charts a river of racism running through European ethnographic displays and human zoos, and the scientific racism that spanned the later 19th and early 20th centuries, and the current policies towards African immigrants in Europe.<sup>164</sup>

One could thus argue that *Exhibit B* differs from the historical ‘human zoos’ in that it turns on colonial history itself in the exhibition. Foreign people or cultures are not on display, as in the historical ‘human zoos’, but their strategies of display and representation are.

As Sieg argues in her article “Towards a Civic Contract of Performance: Pitfalls of Decolonizing the Exhibitionary Complex at Brett Bailey’s *Exhibit B*” (2015), the tableaux of the performance present exhibits in two senses of the word: “on the one hand, they present evidence to indict historic crimes against humanity (...), [o]n the other hand, many evoke distinct exhibitionary conventions from the history of the museum” (Sieg 252). Those conventions are depicted in references towards the curiosity cabinet, ethnographic dioramas, or glass cases for the display of human remains. Arguing against the accusations of the *Bühnenwatch* activists that the performance is not anti-racist enough to function as a critical investigation into Germany’s colonial past, Sieg contends that *Exhibit B*, nevertheless, does approach anti-racist empowerment. However, as Sieg points out, this occurs “in ways that clearly diverge from those that currently dominate German plays and performances dramatizing the experiences of the Afro-German minority” (251), as the aforementioned example of Simone Ayivi’s performance *Performing Back* has shown. What then are the ways that differ in the dramaturgical conception of *Exhibit B* to the other theatrical engagements discussed?

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<sup>164</sup> See for the Web Site of Brett Bailey’s company see [thirdworldbunfight.co.za/exhibit-b/](http://thirdworldbunfight.co.za/exhibit-b/), accessed 8 September 2013.

Sieg argues that *Exhibit B* offers also a double approach towards the colonial past similar to the aforementioned performance, namely in that it critically engages with both the evidence of historical violence as well as with the technologies of the imperialist exhibitionary complex. It thus combines historical remembering with a critical analysis of patterns of perception, feelings and ways of knowing. However, *Exhibit B* differs in one element crucially from those of the other and aforementioned performance projects, and that is in its construction of the spectator position, as I want to argue. How crucial an understanding of this position is shows the question of one of the *Exhibit B* performers from the show at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, which he posed in an interview with *The Guardian*: “How do you know we are not entertaining people the same way the human zoos did?” (O’Mahony 2014). A closer look at the format of the historical human zoos might be helpful to approach what might be an answer to that question.

The display of foreign people in colonial exhibitions, fairs, circuses, and theatre had been highly popular throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century in Europe. Travelling troupes performed in the European metropolises as well as in smaller villages and reached “millions of visitors curious about purportedly uncivilized peoples” (Sieg 253). Impresario and zoo director Carl Hagenbeck played a crucial role in the popularity and multiplication of the genre of the ‘human zoo’, an umbrella term which historian Pascale Blanchard suggests for the different forms of displaying foreign people in nineteenth century Europe. Hagenbeck’s *Völkerschauen* (‘peoples exhibitions’) gained great success in the 1870s, partly because they “combined show with science” (Purtschert 515). While German anthropologists and ethnographers, like Rudolf Virchow and Felix Luschan, vouched for the authenticity of the people on display, they were allowed access to the foreign performers and allowed to perform examinations on them. Entertainment thus benefitted from

science in that the label of authenticity helped to transform “living foreign peoples” into “professional ‘savages’”, as cultural theorist Sadiya Qureshi (2011) has argued in her book *Peoples on Parade* (4). On the other hand, the scientists profited from the entertainment business in that their “most desired research objects – specimen of different human races” were delivered “right to the doorsteps of the academic institutions” (Putschert 515). The genre of the human zoos thus also reveals that entertainment and science were strange bedfellows at the turn of the century, which is particularly important in explaining the development and popularity of the concept of ‘race’ and racist forms of representation at that time. Beyond providing a playground for scientists, human zoos were also seen as an ideal platform to teach a wider German public about human development. Impresarios like Hagenbeck clearly profited from this public perception of his exhibitions as a venue for education and research, as it helped them to draw a larger audience, especially from the bourgeoisie whose scepticism towards mass consumer entertainment formats could be countered by the aura of science and enlightenment. Because of their enormous popularity, these people-exhibitions have been described as marking the transition from a scientific to a popular racism at the turn of the century. Rather than performing colonial propaganda, the human zoos have traded on “racial stereotypes and primitive fantasies that transformed foreign bodies and acts into pleasurable objects of scopophilia”, as Sieg argues (253).

What is important for the discussion of *Exhibit B* in the light of the historical human zoos, is that the human zoos have “honed a way of looking at the bodies of racial Others” that has proven more difficult to dismantle than the workings of colonial administrations (Sieg 253). It is this gaze that is, in my opinion, at the centre of the controversies around *Exhibit B*. It clearly differs from the dramaturgies of the human zoos. The ethnographic exhibitions were built on a dramaturgy of scenes

from everyday life (cooking, cleaning the hut, nursing the baby) and more theatrical scenes of dances and rituals. The experience of a visit to such a ‘peoples show’ was thus rather more akin to a theatre visit than looking at displays in the museum. Contrary to the liveliness of the human zoo, *Exhibit B* builds on silences and motionless *tableaux*. As spectators, we were asked to enter the performance installation one by one and to remain in complete silence throughout the whole visit. The room of the installation was filled by the sound of a choir from Namibia, singing a range of songs composed by Namibian composer Marcellinus Swartbooi.<sup>165</sup>

However, *Exhibit B* resembles the historical format of the human zoo in one crucial point, “namely the display of live bodies of performers of colour”, as also Sieg admits (Sieg 2015b:254). Anthropologist Karel Arnaut and performance artist Chokri Ben Chika also build their critique of *Exhibit B* on this point in their article “Staging/Caging ‘otherness’ in the Postcolony” (2013). Drawing on Hal Foster’s claim of an ‘ethnographic turn’ in the arts (1995), Arnaut and Chika argue that *Exhibit B* applied anthropological techniques akin to those popular in the colonial era and to that of the human zoos. They especially take issue with two technologies they consider as elementary predicaments of the historical human zoos that they see also in *Exhibit B*. Those technologies are referred to by the two authors as ‘staging’ and ‘caging’: “The ‘staging’ refers to the fact that human zoo subjects are supposed to perform their stereotypical selves, stylise their own cultural habits and ‘technique du corps’. (...) caging had material and discursive dimensions, ranging from a double barbed-wire fence to naming the enclosure a ‘village’” (Arnaud and Chika 667).

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<sup>165</sup> The members of the choir are ‘staged’ as ‘singing heads’ in a tableau called ‘Dr. Fischer’s Cabinet of Curiosities’. Visible for the audience were only the heads of the singers, placed on a white linen cloth on a long table as if cut off from the bodies. The text in front of the tableau explains, that, “Eugen Fischer (1874-1967) was a Professor of Anatomy, and the rector of the Berlin University during the Third Reich.” It is mentioned that his pseudoscientific theories of racial hygiene laid the ideological foundations for the justification of the Holocaust and that he has developed these theories in the concentration camps the German government built in former German South-West Africa.

One of the consequences of the staging and caging, according to Arnaut and Chikha, is the immobility of the human zoo actors (as in the historical example of the human zoos). This immobility is in stark contrast “with the mobility of the visitors [of the human zoo, LS] as ‘virtual’ world travellers, as well as their agility (...) as progressing moderns” (Arnaut and Chika 668). *Exhibit B*’s dramaturgy of space allows the spectator to physically move back and forth and in between the tableaux while the performers are being fixed in exactly these tableaux. Or, on the macro-level of the performance travelling throughout Europe, it is the installation and its director that travels, while the performers are recruited locally and hence also remain after the show at the place they have been recruited from, instead of travelling along with the installation to other European cities in order to ‘tell’ their stories.

The issue of mobility and immobility can also be discussed in relation to time and especially with regard to the concept of coevalness, which has been crucial for the processes of decolonising the field of anthropology. Coevalness refers to ‘shared time’ and points to a reciprocal construction of knowledge production between ethnographers and their subjects. Historically, human zoo actors and their cultures on display were staged as ‘out of time’, as “removed from the present of the spectator” and were thus denied coevalness (Arnaut and Chika 670). Anthropologist Johannes Fabian is famous for his critique of the denial of coevalness. He advocated for the field of anthropology to overcome its own implication in colonial techniques in making coevalness and inter-subjectivity the basis for all anthropological encounters, and to “undermine the ‘distancing conceptual apparatus’ of imperialism/colonialism” (Arnaut and Chika 666). The most prevalent example of imperialism’s ‘distancing conceptual apparatus’ was the format of the human zoo. Hence, in order not to reproduce the logic of this apparatus, a project like *Exhibit B* would have to create a sphere of coevalness, which Arnaut and Chika do not see as given in the

performance because agency is not equally distributed between performers, directors, and spectators. They base their argument on the fact that for Fabian, language constitutes the basis for building a coeval inter-subjectivity. Language, however, is not given to the silenced performers. From a performance studies perspective, however, it seems like an overly hasty judgement to conflate non-speaking with non-agency. Many of the performers in *Exhibit B* are professional performers, who have trained their bodies for years to communicate in non-verbal ways, and recent scholarship in theatre and performance studies has stressed the power of the body to restore and transmit knowledge from the past (Roach 1996, Lepecki 2010, Taylor 2003).

It is also in this regard that Bailey's argument that his performance was not reproducing but rather deconstructing and criticising the format of the human zoos, on the grounds that the black performers are returning the gaze of the audience, is dismissed by Arnaut and Chika. *Bühnenwatch* similarly dismisses the practice of looking back as "nothing new", but rather as something that "has always been part of resistance strategies."<sup>166</sup> This is indeed an important point, as the critical scholarship on human zoos and imperial forms of displaying foreign people has stressed the danger of framing the performers in these displays as merely victims or passive. Rather, scholars have emphasised the agency of the performers in the exhibition, without diminishing the structural violence and racism inherent in the displays. One of the dangers of *Exhibit B* thus lies in linking blackness to passivity and victimhood, as its critics have pointed out. They do not just question whether 'gazing back' is a powerful enough tool, but question the dramaturgical choice of trusting the conflation of the historical spectator's position with today's spectator position:

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<sup>166</sup> See "Our Position", 2012.

What makes one distinguish between a) a (reproductive) display of a half-naked black woman subject to a gaze of a contemporary spectator who is defined as ‘white’ and ‘ex-colonial’ and his/her gaze as exploitative, and (b) a (critical) display of an icon of colonial exploitation of (half-) naked women by white colonisers and their exploitative gaze? (Arnaut and Chika 676)

Arnaut and Chika’s conclusion is that in the end it is the bourgeois spectator in the exhibition that “instrumentalises alterity for [her, LS] own purpose” (678). Besides the fact that much of the dramaturgical and aesthetic choices of *Exhibit B* do not resemble the format of the historical human zoo, its construction of spectatorship along emotional lines of shame is problematic, as I will argue in the following section.

The ‘confusion’ between ‘then and now’ that echoed in the aforementioned question of one of the performers (“How do you know we are not entertaining people the same way the human zoos did?”), between a colonial format like the human zoo and its supposedly post-colonial critique, lies not only at the heart of the critique on *Exhibit B* but evokes larger questions on the promises and pitfalls of historical representation. Historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot, for example, has argued in his book *Silencing the Past* (1995) that “[t]he value of a historical product cannot be debated without taking into account both the context of its production and the context of its consumption” (Trouillot 146). Therefore, according to Trouillot, the time that “elapsed” between the demise of colonial atrocities, like genocide for example, and its representation in works of art today plays a crucial factor in historical production. Given this, it becomes clear that “[t]he crux of the matter is the here and now, the relations between the events described and their public representation in a specific historical context” (Trouillot 147). An important factor for historical production, according to Trouillot, is “retrospective significance”

(144).<sup>167</sup> What Trouillot means by that is that “historical production is itself historical” (Trouillot 145). In other words, considering the “relations between the events described and their public representation” in their specific historical context, ‘the past’ is debunked as “a fixed reality” and so is the myth that the knowledge it transmits is “a fixed content” (Trouillot 147). The issue that our relation towards the past is itself a historical issue, means that it is formed by the present and engages us “as witnesses, actors, and commentators” (Trouillot 151). In Trouillot’s example the audience reaction plays a crucial understanding for understanding the impact that the representation of a history of violence has on the present. Also in *Exhibit B* the question of the context of its production and consumption is crucial. The audience in *Exhibit B* is very carefully curated. As mentioned before, the performance demands silence of its audience, it stages one-on-one encounters, and prevents spectators from taking pictures. The dramaturgy of the audience is a call for full attention and a careful encounter between spectator and performer.

In an interview with theatre scholar Anton Krueger, Brett Bailey was asked to reflect on his reception of the European audience attending his performance. He said: “A lot of people are crying when they come out, people are very moved, people like to sit quietly (...) The emotions that people mention are feeling ‘disturbed’, and feeling ‘shame’. Shame comes up a lot” (Krueger 2013). Krueger responded to this observation with an observation of his own: “I suppose that as emotions go it’s not a very popular one. It’s not something you might want to use as the logline to sell your show: ‘Come and be ashamed. Feel guilty’” (Krueger 2013). He goes on: “And yet,

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<sup>167</sup> In the introduction to his book, Troillot discusses in depth the different approaches towards history and historical production, which I cannot repeat here in its full extent, but allow for room for a shorter quote: “Some, influenced by positivism, have emphasized the distinction between the historical world and what we say or write about it. Others, who adopted a ‘constructivist’ viewpoint, have stressed the overlap between the historical process and narratives about that process. Most have treated the combination itself, the core of the ambiguity, as if it were a mere accident of vernacular parlance to be corrected by theory. What I hope to do is to show how much room there is to look at the production of history outside these dichotomies that these positions suggest and produce” (Trouillot 4).

because it's so beautiful, people have this aesthetic experience as well. So they have, if one dare call it an almost 'richer' experience of shame, a curious mixture of shame and beauty." (Krueger 2013). In other words, the audience is not only described as having all the same response towards the performance, but the mixture of an emotional and an aesthetic experience (shame and beauty) becomes, according to Krueger, a selling point of the performance, a 'rich' experience.

The description of the audience experience implies that the feeling of shame is turned into a 'rich' experience for the audience rather than provoking an ethical response from them. While I will unpack this question of audience response more in the following section, it is also important to note that both Krueger and Bailey define *Exhibit B* through the idea of a collective experience of guilt. It is not one person that feels it, but apparently *an* European audience. The emphasis on the collective experience of one emotional response also points to Bailey's South African background and more recent artistic engagements with apartheid. Or, one could argue that Bailey is essentialising 'his' European audience through the experience of shame. This echoes my own experience of the performance I saw in Amsterdam, in which I was quite unexpectedly approached by Bailey telling me that it was "ok to feel ashamed" and that "everyone feels it." Arnaut and Chikha share an experience similar to mine in their visit to *Exhibit B* in Brussels which they describe in their article as a "heavy atmosphere of shame, guilt and mourning" (Arnaut and Chikha 677). Even *Bühnenwatch*'s paper against the performance mentions 'shame' as part of an artistic means, in that they predict that the performance "will purge feelings of shame in white people, but there is no analysis of sources and mechanisms of racism, so there is no fostering of a critical discussion" (Bühnenwatch 2012).

Balme argues for an inclusion of affect in relation to the conceptualisation of the theatrical public sphere. He posits that a performance is affective when its

“intensities spill out of the auditorium and intervene in and engage with sensitive social discourse” (Balme, *Public Sphere* 15). This spillage can manifest in forms of scandals or protests, which engender “an interaction between the theatrical and the wider public sphere” (Balme, *Public Sphere* 15). In order to analyse the constitution of a theatrical public sphere in the light of this ‘spillage’, Balme utilises agonal theories, which argue for “the inclusion of aesthetic-expressive and affective modes of expression and action including physical acts in a theory of the public sphere” (Balme, *Public Sphere* 10). In drawing on Chantal Mouffe’s theory of antagonism, Balme argues for an understanding of a ‘theatrical public sphere’ as building on “an extended concept of ‘agonism’ with its emphasis on emotion and affect without forgoing more rational modes of dispute” (Balme, *Public Sphere* 11).

In order to properly analyse the interaction of *Exhibit B* with the larger public sphere as manifested in the protests of *Bühnenwatch*, the inclusion of affect and repertoires of feelings seems thus useful. In this regard, it is particularly interesting that Krueger stated, that shame is not popular, that shame is an ‘unpopular’ feeling. Considering the amount of European festivals that have already hosted the performance, it could be called a ‘popular’ or ‘successful’ production (at least in terms of its marketing success, the protest against the performance might testify to a differ picture). The production of shame thus does not decrease the (market) value of the performance and, one could conclude, should thus neither decrease the experience in the performance. Hence, while Krueger characterises ‘shame’<sup>168</sup> as an

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<sup>168</sup> While Krueger conflates the terms shame and guilt in his comment (“come and be ashamed. Feel guilty”) and thus implies that they are actually interchangeable, the scholarship on affect draws a clear distinction between the two. Trauma theoretician and critic of the affective turn Ruth Leys (2007), for example, notes a broader shift in literary criticism and philosophy “away from the ‘moral’ concept of guilt in favour of the ethically different or ‘freer’ concept of shame” (Leys 7). Visual anthropologist Jennifer Biddle’s (1997) offers a similar account on the difference between guilt and shame: “Guilt is an affect associated more with formalised rules and norms. One is guilty of doing or not doing some *thing*. Reparation and retribution belong to the structure of guilt because of its activity oriented causation, and activity oriented potential resolution” (Biddle 230). Shame, on the other hand, is “less

‘unpopular’ feeling, I would argue the opposite: shame is *so* popular that it operates as a key factor in the construction of spectatorship in *Exhibit B*.

However, many critical voices argued that black audience members in the performance are merely confronted with an image of their everyday experience of racism – a mirroring and not, as Krueger, claimed a ‘rich’ experience. Political theorist and activist Joshua Kwesi Aikins criticized in that regard in the after-show talk of the performance in Berlin that the performance ignores the political context in which it intervenes, namely Berlin and the perspectives of its black citizens (Philipp 2012). Black British artist Selina Thompson, who saw *Exhibit B* during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, hits a similar nerve in her blog, reflecting on her experience as a spectator in the performance, when she asks: “I wish to know what this piece has for me. If I am not someone who can be made to feel guilty by this work, what does it have to say?” (Thompson 2012). Regarding the question from Thompson Bailey’s and Kruger’s assumption that ‘everyone’ feels shame or guilt in the performance is thus clearly flawed. What then is it that shame performs with regard to the politics of representation in the presentation?

Cultural theorist Sara Ahmed takes on this question in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) in that she critiques the assumption that affects attach in the same, open way to every body. Instead, Ahmed argues that emotions are not only relational themselves, but also constructed by power relations. As an example, she quotes Audre Lorde’s recalling of an experience on a bus and an affective response of the other people on the bus to her own blackness:

When I looked up the woman is still staring at me, her nose holes and eyes huge.

And suddenly I realise that there is nothing crawling up the seat between us; it is me

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identified with specific rules and more generally concerned with the very boundary between self and other”, according to Biddle (231).

she doesn't want her coat to touch. The fur brushes past my face as she stands with a shudder and holds on to a strap in the speeding train .... Something's going on here I don't understand, but I will never forget it. Her eyes. Her flared nostrils. The hate (Lorde cit. from Hemmings 561).

The example of Lorde's experience shows, according to affect theorist Claire Hemmings, that rather than attaching to everyone in the same way, affect "places bodies in spatial relation along racially defined lines" (Hemmings 562). This supports Ahmed's argument that all "emotions are relational" (Ahmed 8). She offers an alternative model to the autonomy model of affect, namely a model of the 'sociality of emotions' (Ahmed 8). This model allows her to look at emotions as the very effect "of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place" (Ahmed 10). In other words, emotions are not something that 'we' have, but something 'we' are shaped by, that constitutes a 'we' in the first place, and something that shapes 'our' contact with others. Given this, feelings do not reside *in* a subject or an object, but "are produced as effects of circulations" (Ahmed 10). In order to find an answer to the question what shame *does*, or rather what it *performs*, Ahmed suggests focusing on the "exposure of past wounds" as one factor of understanding better how shame operates (Ahmed 16). If I started out using Ahmed's premise, that all emotions are relational, it becomes clear, in the discussion of shame, how important it is to ask what this 'relationality' precisely entails. How does shame align *others* with *other others* and what are the possible consequences of these affective alignments?

In her writings on questions of reconciliation in Australia, Ahmed shows with respect to a wide range of cultural texts, how easily the pain of others becomes appropriated by other others in the exposure of past wounds: "an appropriation that

transforms and perhaps even neutralizes their pain into our sadness”, as Ahmed contends (21). She makes a clear distinction between the one who *has* pain and the one who *feels sad about* that pain. This is where the *ambivalent* alignment of shame lies, according to Ahmed. While in feeling sad about someone else’s pain, I am aligned with the other person, but in the same time, this alignment can be marked by an unequal relation of power and appropriation of pain. It is the ‘aboutness’, according to Ahmed, that ensures that the victim’s feelings remain the object of the reader’s feeling: “The circulation of objects of emotion involves the transformation of others into objects of feelings” (Ahmed 21). The exposed wound is transformed into an identity and cut off from the history of injury. The fetish of the wound implies that pain is represented as an effect of a history of harm, rather than “*the bodily life of that history*” (Ahmed 34). In witnessing colonial violence and injustice, those who witness, according to Ahmed, “are aligned with each other as ‘well-meaning individuals’” (Ahmed 109). The collective act of witnessing the injustice of the past includes the experience of shame, as a nation or – as I want to argue, as an audience. Shame, as a mechanism for recognition and reconciliation, thus might offer a form of reconciliation as self-reconciliation, “for restoring a pride that is threatened in the moment of recognition, and then regained in the capacity to bear witness” (Ahmed 109).

In his study on the production of shame in postcolonial literature, *The Event of Postcolonial Shame* (2011), historian Timothy Bewes makes an interesting remark on the moment that ‘postcolonial shame’ occurs. He argues that “colonial power is materialized in the asymmetry of perception” (Bewes 6). This asymmetry manifests in “the transparency of the (white) body as the bearer of ‘universal’ values, and the opacity of the (black) body as surface for the production of such values, or an obstacle for to their dissemination” (Bewes 6). This asymmetry of perception that

has its roots in colonial relations of perception, of looking and being looked at, of subject and object, is what the protestors of *Exhibit B* have charged the performance with. But Bewes argues further that it is “[w]hen that symmetry is dislodged or inverted, the temporal discrepancy between the two regimes of perception is manifest as shame” (6). The strong presence of the affect shame in the audience experience of the performance would thus, following Bewes’s argument, testify that *Exhibit B* did not reproduce the colonial relation of perception, but rather inverted it. However, Bewes also stresses that shame is not an ethical response and warns similarly to Ahmed against the negative affect of shame. He attests that the elicitation of shame runs the danger of turning a narrative of responsibility and complicity “back into a narrative of redemption that ‘saves’ the very individual it seems to indict” (cit. in Rothberg, “Ensnared” 378). Far from being a mark of ethics, “shame is understood as compensatory: a kind of ethical bad conscience that is oblivious, ultimately, to the degree to which it too facilitates justice” (Bewes 36).

Rather than focussing on the promises and pitfalls of the affect shame in regard to a critical negotiation of the colonial past, Rothberg is concerned with historical subject positions and the question of who relates in which ways to a violent past like that of colonialism. He sees a reconceptualisation of these subject positions as highly necessary and suggests broadening the narrow binary of victim and perpetrator with the notion of the ‘implicated subject’ (Rothberg 2014). This is necessary because the victim-perpetrator imaginary “leaves out of the picture a large and heterogeneous collection of subjects who enable and benefit from traumatic violence without taking part in it directly”, according to Rothberg (2014, par.1). The implicated subjects, on the other hand, describe “the indirect responsibility of subjects situated at temporal or geographical distance from the production of social suffering”, as Rothberg posits (2014, par.3). As a concept, the ‘implicated subject’

thus helps to foreground “the conditions of possibility of violence” in the first place, and to suggest “new routes of opposition” (Rothberg 2014, par.2).

Considering Brett Bailey’s artistic coming of age in post-apartheid South Africa, this Western conceptualisation of implication, as a mode that forestalls white people’s self-reconciliation in the experience of shame and when faced with the violent histories of colonialism and slavery, could also be discussed in the light of African moral value systems like that of *ubuntu*, which are currently revisited by scholars and activists in their potential as tools for restorative justice (Eliastam 2015). Ubuntu literally means ‘humanness’, as legal scholar Thaddeus Metz, and expresses that “human beings have a dignity by virtue of their capacity for community, understood as the combination of identifying with other and exhibiting solidarity with them” (532). Or as Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999) has explained, the meaning of Ubuntu is that “a person is a person through other people. It is not “I think therefore I am”. It says rather: “I am human because I belong”. I participate, I share”” (cit. in Eliastam 2).

Understanding the spectator position of *Exhibit B* in this sense, as a process for both audience and performer of acknowledging each other’s humanness, could allow for a process of reconciliation that avoids the self-conciliation of a white audience. This reading resonates similarly in Sieg’s warning against understanding criticism merely in terms of intellectual-property claims and argues for a diversification of the position of the ‘author’, who voices a critical position towards a colonial past and its ongoing effects in the present. This diversified position of the critical author includes the spectator as well as the performer, and brings “several potential ‘addressers’ of grievances” (Sieg 263) to the fore. It would thus allow for a collective form of reconciliation. This reading of *Exhibit B* comes closer to the ethics of *ubuntu* as a principle of the interconnectedness of human society (Eliastam 2) and

could also be understood in Rothberg's sense as introducing a notion of implication that challenges the victim-perpetrator binary. In arguing that the inclusion of the position of the spectator in the list of 'evidence' signals her position as a witness, Sieg attributes to *Exhibit B* the potential that Rothberg sees in the figure of the implicated subject as foregrounding the conditions of violence as such and suggesting new routes of opposition. She argues that the position of the witness "points to her [the spectator, LS] ambiguous positioning as part of that which is indicted and must be changed, and as the addressee of grievances who must take responsibility for that change, who will no longer tolerate other's violation on her behalf" (Sieg 263). In this construction of the spectator as witness, *Exhibit B* presents, according to Sieg, the potential for rehearsing a 'civil contract of performance', a space in which citizenship is "enacted as the making of emergency claims" (Sieg 261).

While I do agree with Sieg that the comparison of *Exhibit B* to the historical format of the 'human zoo', as charged by its critics, is untenable, I remain critical about the emphasis on the affective experience of shame in the construction of the spectator position. I argue that this audience dramaturgy weighs heavier in the end in that it in its elicitation of a cathartic feeling in the spectator, a feeling of being able to transcend the pain represented, to *move on*, provides for a white liberal audience a form of self-reconciliation, a comfortable way of 'working through' the past without having to take responsibilities in and for the present. The fact that the performance rather reinforces than renegotiates essentialist positions on race, ethnicity, victim and perpetrator, forestalls the potential for a critical theatrical engagement with the colonial past that foster ethical positions from which to redress the repercussions of this past in the future.

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I want to close this chapter by drawing on some thoughts on the political impact of art that Walter Benjamin formulated in his seminal essay *The Author as Producer*. Here, Benjamin argues that in order to understand the impact of a work of art, one needs to ask whether the work of art is in accord with the relationships of production of its time or not. Drawing on Benjamin, I argued in this chapter that the promises of theatre's politics of historical remembering rely on how its performances stand not only "in relation *to* the modes of production of a period", but how they "stand *in* them" (Benjamin, emphasis in original, 2). I focused in my analysis especially on *Exhibit B*'s binary dramaturgy of spectators and performer, white and black, perpetrators and victim, which runs the danger of eliciting the experience of self-reconciliation in the white audience, rather than suggesting new routes of opposing the conditions of violence and racism. Drawing on the work of Ahmed, Bewes, and Rothberg, I argued that a stronger emphasis on different forms of implication through which the heterogeneous audience of *Exhibit B* is constructed, would have forestalled the charge of reproducing colonialist modes of perception and representation.

I have shown how the notion of implication figures in many smaller (in terms of funding, not importance) performance projects dealing with the colonial past today. In my discussion of those performance projects, I have highlighted that the critical and political potential of these performances lies in the fact that they engage with the colonial past not only on a topical level, but most of all by foregrounding the problematics of perception and of questions of spectator-positions (assuming a heterogeneous audience rather than a homogenous white educated middle-class audience, as Bailey apparently has).

The protests of the *Bühnenwatch* Collective, as I argued in this chapter, have constituted an important counter-public sphere within the German theatrical public sphere, and have opened up discussion of aesthetics to socio-political questions of participation and representation. By that, they have shown both the promises and pitfalls of a theatrical politics of representing, remembering, and redressing the colonial past in the present. The case studies discussed in this chapter have shown the importance of a critical engagement with the theatre's own modes of production, its repertoires of feeling and politics of perception, before a critical engagement with the history of colonialism can unfold its full implication and potential for a heterogeneous audience with multiple spectator positions.

## Conclusion

When I visited Namibia for archival research in August 2016, I would stroll the city of Windhoek before and after my visits to the National Archive on the lookout for visual traces of the German colonial past in Namibia's city landscapes. One of these walks brought me to the newly established Independence Museum in Windhoek, which had been designed by North Korean architects in best socialist-realist aesthetics and since 2014 tells the national history of Namibia as a struggle for independence. From the roof-terrace of the museum I spotted the bronze equestrian monument (*Reiterdenkmal*), which had not only been the symbol of German colonial rule in Namibia for over a hundred years but had also been formerly standing there where now the museum stands.



Fig. 1: View from the Independent Museum onto the equestrian statue and the monument of the young African couple. Source: private photograph, Lisa Skwirblies.

The German rider and his horse stand removed from their original place now hidden from the public eye in the inner court-yard, with their backs turned towards the city

of Windhoek. The removal of the German colonial equestrian monument is mirrored with the establishment of a new monument. In front of the old fortress, the statue of a young African couple in similar socialist-realist aesthetics as the museum, clenching fists and looking into the future of their country, now greets the passersby.

Capturing both the colonial rider and the young couple in one photographic framework shall stand here symbolically for the question with which this research project began: the question of the ways in which the colonial past still bears on the present, on our modes of representation and our patterns of perception. It, moreover, symbolizes the attempt of this dissertation not to follow a linear narrative of colonial history, but to think the concept of history as cyclical or spiral, in which past, present, and future are impacting, informing, and challenging each other. Just as the rider monument did not vanish from Windhoek's urban memory landscape but was merely removed from its hegemonic position and is thus still present in the shade of the young couple, the colonial past still bears on a colonial present.

On my way down from the roof-terrace, I was stopped by a local visitor, who rightly identified me as a tourist and told me quite agitatedly that the Independent Museum did not represent Namibian history 'properly'. "This is not history, this is propaganda", the man said. But what kind of representation really does represent history 'properly'? As Michel de Certeau writes in his book *The Making of History* 1975: "'The making of history' is buttressed by a political power which creates a space proper (a walled city, a nation etc.) where a will can and must write (construct) a system (a reason articulating practices)" (6). The construction of a national museum housing 'articulations' of a national narrative of history clearly constitutes such a 'making of history' buttressed by political power. The man's skepticism about the legitimacy of the exhibition to call itself 'the history of Namibia' is thus more than valid. But de Certeau also states, that history is not only objects in the archive or

the museum, but history is what is done with these objects or rather what is done to them (Hutchison, *South African* 4). In this regard, an announcement I found at the entrance of the museum provided an interpretation of 'Namibia's history' not through objects in the museum but through the *absence* of certain objects from that museum: "There are no skulls and human remains exhibited here", read the announcement. Not tangible traces but the lack of them represent history in that case.

Someone had taken the decision that human remains should not be part of the public display of the Independent Museum and thus not function as representations of a national history. As I understood later, the decision not to exhibit the human remains in the Independence Museum had been taken by the descendent-community of those individuals to whom the skulls and human remains belonged. The remains and skull had been repatriated from Germany to Namibia in 2011. The descendent-community had made their decision against the curatorial plans of the Namibian government. Their decision can thus be understood as an act of reclaiming their history from the government controlled memory politics by reclaiming the humanity of the remains over their display as museal objects. The announcement of the museum, on the other hand, functioned as a cautioning of the expectations of those visitors who understand the repatriated human remains as historical evidence and as belonging into a museum of a national history of independence, as Werner Hillebrecht from the National Archives of Namibia explained to me. Pondering over the paradox that the absence of the skulls from the museum seems to tell more about the current state of memory politics in Namibia than if they had actually been exhibited in the museum, I wondered how that same announcement installed in German museums would read: "There are no skulls and human remains exhibited here *anymore*"?

Both the deconstructed rider and the repatriation of human remains testify to an entanglement of German and Namibian memory politics. In particular, debates on colonial mass crimes and the ways in which they should be accounted for and commemorated have featured prominently in the past two years in the memory politics of both countries. However, as historian Reinhart Kössler (2015) argues, the debates about the genocide from 1904 have largely been asymmetrical, in that “[t]he means available to the descendants of the genocide victims to give voice to their cause are seriously inferior to the possibilities open to the German Government simply to ignore the victims or deal superficially with their demands” (1). While the German Government officially acknowledged the attempted extermination of the Herero people as genocide in June 2016, an official apology has thus far failed to be issued. The exclusion of members from the Herero community from the bilateral negotiations between the German and the Namibian government, yet another form of absence, adds further to this picture of a starkly asymmetric memory politics. A group of Herero and Nama activists took this matter to court in the beginning of 2017 and filed a lawsuit at the Federal Court in New York against the German government.

“Remembering and commemorating the colonial war have become essential elements of the restoration process that the Herero society was undergoing since 1908”, as ethnographer Larissa Förster explains (*From* 177). Communal forms of commemoration present also an important counterweight to the official narratives and memory politics of the nation-state. Commemoration, as Kössler posits, “refers to a potentially more inward-looking form of jointly and systematically reproducing memory” (5). It keeps memory contents alive and can foster recognition of human right violations, such as genocide (Kössler 5). It serves as ways to articulate the viewpoints of these communities but also as a means for communal reconstruction.

An important annual commemoration practice takes place on the 'Red Flag Day', which is celebrated by the different Herero communities every year in August. The celebrations originated from the reburial of Samuel Maharero's remains in Okahandja, on 26 August 1923. Maharero, who has been the Paramount Chief of the Herero in the battle against the German colonizers, died in exile and when his remains were returned to Okahandja in 1923 this marked the beginning of the commemoration practice and the restoration process of the Herero community. The different Herero families commemorate on the 'Red Flag Day' their chiefs and ancestors. As these commemorations are undertaken on ancestral land, which had been privatized and sold under German colonial rule, the commemorations can also be seen as a re-appropriation of this land, as well as an act of consolidation of a fractured society (Kössler 17).

But the commemorations also continue to reveal the legacies of German colonialism and genocide. This was particularly the case in August 2016, when I, alongside many other tourists, attempted to visit Okahandja and the 'Red Flag Day'. However, for the first time since 1923, the commemorations had to be cancelled, due to stark divisions between two of the main Herero groups.<sup>169</sup> Those had been fighting over questions of access to the ancestral land, which is today in the hands of the Okahandja municipality. Both sides claim sole access to the sacred place where the ancestral fire should be lit during in the commemoration celebration. Here, in the non-event, in the absence of the commemorative celebrations, due to colonially informed patterns of land distribution, the still forceful impact of the past on the presence became most palpable to me. Here, in the face of the still graspable consequences of colonial policies and genocidal practices, in the face of what had

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<sup>169</sup> The disagreements had been taken place between the Maharero Royal House of chief Tjinaani Maharero and the Herero Traditional Authority party of paramount chief Vekuii Rukoro.

been done to the people of these communities I found traces of colonial history that usually remain omitted from the archival and museal display of material documents.

Historiography's story "is given as a staging of the past", posits de Certeau (9), and by that not only points out that every product of writing is a product of fiction, a story, an interpretation, but also attributes a certain amount of theatricality to the act of that writing. A theatricality that he describes as a 'staging of the past' and that manifests in the act of distancing oneself, as a historian, from the material one describes, or rather one interprets, as de Certeau critically observes. In that sense is also this dissertation, in which I aimed to investigate the theatricality of a particular past and of a particular ideological and imperial power structure, a product of theatricality and "nothing more than the play of the fiction that it constructs" (De Certeau 11).

In that sense, writing these last lines at the end of a long and intensive process of research feels less like a conclusion than a point of self-reflection. Many of the questions I posed to myself did not get answered in the process of this project and many most likely never will. However, the driving question of this undertaking has clearly been the question of how to do historiography, of how to write about a past without re-inscribing the epistemological violences of circumscription, definition, categorization. The struggle of negotiating my own role as a historiographer, my own position and *positioning* towards the individual and collective experiences, narratives, and lives I touched upon in my writing, has accompanied every written word of this dissertation. Nevertheless, I will recapitulate in the following paragraph some of the findings and ideas of this dissertation.

With this dissertation, I have investigated the nexus of colonialism and theatre in the German empire between 1884 and 1914. I introduced the concept of

colonial theatricality and discussed through it the extent to which theatre and colonialism in the turn-of-the-century German empire have been productive of each other's orders, knowledge formations, and truth claims. Through the concept of colonial theatricality, I suggested a methodological framework that allows for an investigation of the empire's 'micropolitics', its performative practices and cultural repertoires, which can tell us more about the workings of the empire's macropolitics. It is in that sense that I pointed out the importance of understanding empire beyond its territorial, administrative and military strategies, namely in its cultural manifestations and especially through its 'representational machineries', like that of the theatre.

What I managed to show throughout the course of this dissertation is that the nexus of theatre and colonialism does not only materialise in the representation of the colonial project on stage, but that in some cases their discourses and disciplining practices intertwined also offstage. More than a site of representation, the theatre offered the colonial project its order of perception, techniques of disciplining the body, and a spatial logic of distance and proximity between those bodies which watch and those bodies which perform. In other words, beyond the appearance of the colonial project as a topic on stage, the interdependence of theatre and colonialism can also be detected on a deeper-seated level, namely in the dynamics of 'showing' and 'seeing', which I referred to in this dissertation as 'colonial theatricality'. I thus argued in this dissertation that theatricality, understood as a mode of perception and representation, does not only provide a particular mode of order and orientation, but a mode of order and orientation that is to some extent akin to and supportive of the operations of colonial discourse and colonial knowledge formations.

Reading the colonial archive both against and along its grain has, moreover, allowed me to show both the productivity of imperial rule and order and its

contradictions and fractures. The research focus of this dissertation is based on the conviction that in order to achieve deeper-seated epistemological shifts in the critical commemoration, recognition, and redress of colonial history in Germany today, one needs to critically investigate historical forms of representation and patterns of perception to be able to detect and deconstruct their recurrences in the present.

I have suggested in the introduction that with this thesis I intervene in a gap in the historiography of nineteenth century German theatre. This gap manifests in the fact that most scholarly work discusses the history of theatre in the German empire within its European borders or in its impact on the foundation of the German nation-state (1871), but rarely in its relation to the foundation of the German colonial empire (1884). Consequently, the conceptualisation of this research project started from the question, what a historiography of German theatre would look like once we would take into consideration that German history did not “unfold solely within the boundaries of the nation state” (Conrad 2010). I therefore suggest with this dissertation a new framework for theatre historiography, in which not only the colonial project but also the colonies, their inhabitants and their resistances, figure into our understanding of a ‘theatrical modernity’ in the German empire, a modernity that is indissolubly linked to coloniality.

Rather than understanding the German colonial enterprise to have taken place ‘elsewhere’, I showed the impact that it has had on the understanding of a German national and imperial identity, and on the formation of legal categories like citizenship, along the lines of race, class, and gender. I have also showed the genocidal effects that German colonisation had on those communities subjected to its rule and the epistemological violence that was produced in its name and that still impacts both societies, the former colonisers and the formerly colonised, in manifold and deeply troubling ways.

I investigated in the four chapters of this dissertation a rich set of performances that the German empire brought forth on and off the theatre stage. In the first chapter, I discussed, how a new and burgeoning popular theatre scene in the German empire embraced the colonial topic in very different ways. Some used the colonial topic to point at inner German problems, others catered to a bourgeois desire of colonial enlightenment. Through the focus on the representation of the Namibian war and the first German genocide in 1904 on the metropolitan stages, I investigated especially the epistemological consequences that the theatrical framing strategies have had for the war and all the implicated subjects, and showed that although the term genocide was only coined in 1945, discourses and representations of extermination circulated the German public sphere long before that.

The second chapter investigated the case study of the ‘Akwa Affair’ and its manifestations in cultural and theatrical performance in the German metropole. Here, I have shown that colonial encounters were marked by a dynamic of negotiations and claims over rights as well as over subject positions both in the metropole and in the colony. Moreover, I argued that these claim-rights resisted the attempts to fix social and cultural positions in the colonial matrix of power. The petitioning of the Duala as well as the court-cases of Mpundo Akwa had revealed the legal paradoxes of metropolitan and colonial law, which simultaneously included and excluded the African body within the national body politic. I have shown through the discussion of the ‘Akwa Affair’ how formative the voices from the African colonies have been for legal decisions in the metropole, and how a citizenship law was passed in Berlin that was greatly influenced by the debates and negotiations of what and who counts as ‘German’.

In the third chapter I showed that despite the fact that the German empire never established a permanent theatre in its ‘model colony’ South-West Africa, I

showed that there was nevertheless a vivid theatre scene, upheld by the settlers and their amateur clubs. Here I have discussed how the discourse of eighteenth century theatre reformers on *Ruhe und Ordnung* was compatible with a discourse of the colonial police on public peace and order, and how the image of the ‘ideal spectator’ from the eighteenth century was akin to that of the ‘ideal settler’. In the discussion on colonial ceremonies I have argued that they performed a double-function, of staging colonial power and imperial unity, and therefore that were in need of balancing the right level of proximity and distance between the settler and the indigenous populations.

The fourth and last chapter, provided a critical investigation with contemporary cases of theatrical engagements with the colonial past and its repercussions for the present in Germany. I focused in this chapter especially on the different ways in which the spectator position was constructed or negotiated. Through a discussion of recent protests against racialised representations on German theatre stages, in the wake of which the collective *Bühnenwatch* was formed, I have highlighted the political potential of performance projects that engage with the colonial past not only on a topical level, but that also problematise the theatre’s modes of production in the present. Here, I have discussed examples that questioned the assumptions of a homogenous white and middle-class German audience and highlighted instead the issue of how to tell and stage the history of colonialism as an ‘entangled’ history and for an audience that exceeds the binary of black and white, European and African, or victim and perpetrator. In my analysis of the performance installation *Exhibit B* by Brett Bailey, I have highlighted the problematics of an audience dramaturgy that reinforces this binary through the affect production of shame that fosters a process of self-reconciliation in a white audience.

What I hope has become clear throughout this dissertation is that I do not aim to produce a new ‘truth’ about the phenomena of colonialism/coloniality and theatre/theatricality, but to intervene in the ongoing conversations and struggles of addressing and redressing the past in the present and to contribute to an interpretation of the colonial past that reinvigorated questions on the politics of representation and our patterns of perception in the present. I have done so by scrutinising the role that theatre and performance played for the German empire’s colonial formations, orders, and truth claims, as well as for its anxieties, ambivalences, and breaches.

## Abbreviations

LA – Landesarchiv Berlin (‘State Archive Berlin’)

BA – Bundesarchiv Berlin (‘Federal Archive Berlin’)

HH – Hamburg Staatsarchiv (‘Hamburg State Archive’)

NAN – National Archive of Namibia

DKG – Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft (‘German Colonial Society’)

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File HH 111-1 Senat, CL VII, Lit.Lb., No.28a2, Vol.110, Fasc.24.

This file holds a copy of the petition of the Duala and newspaper clippings about Mpundo Akwa's trials in Hamburg

### Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde (Federal Archive Berlin):

File BArch R1001 4435

This file holds the petition of the Duala and the letters of Mpundo Akwa

File BArch R1001 4457/f.

This file holds the letter of Scholz and Mr. Ibrahim Kachala to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

File BArch R1001/4300.

This file holds newspaper clippings about the Duala and the court-hearings of Mpundo Akwa

### Landesarchiv Berlin (State Archive Berlin) / Police- and Censorship-Files:

File A.Pr. Br. Rep. 030-05 Th. 714.

This file holds all censorship documents of the *Metropol-Theater*, as well as a large collection of newspaper clippings of the *Metropol-Theater*

### National Archives of Namibia:

File BLU 74. L. 10

This file is called *Lustbarkeiten* ('amusements') and holds the letters of Herz and Knacke.

File A.005. Private Accessions

This file holds the diary of Liebig, M. *Humoristische Erinnerungen aus Südwest Afrika als Kolonial Truppler 1893.*

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1884 - 1914

*Berliner Lokalanzeiger*

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*Hamburger Nachrichten*

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