



PROJECT MUSE®

The Genocidal Gaze

Elizabeth R. Baer

Published by Wayne State University Press

Baer, R..

The Genocidal Gaze: From German Southwest Africa to the Third Reich.

Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/56612>

Introduction

Here . . . are black men standing, black men who examine us; and I want you to feel, as I, the sensation of being seen. For the white man has enjoyed for three thousand years the privilege of seeing without being seen. . . . Today, these black men have fixed their gaze upon us and our gaze is thrown back in our eyes. . . . By this steady and corrosive gaze, we are picked to the bone.

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE | *Black Orpheus*

There is a certain sense in which vision amounts to colonization.

JOHN NOYES

After the genocide of the Herero and Nama people in the German colony of Southwest Africa between 1904 and 1907, the surviving indigenous men, women, and children were subjected to forced labor. Some of these forced laborers worked in the confines of a concentration camp; others built railroads or worked as miners; and many were farm laborers for the German settlers. Such laborers, in all locations, were frequently subjected to brutal floggings with a *sjambok*, a kind of whip made of heavy rhinoceros hide. Floggings had been commonplace prior to the genocide and were one of the atrocities, in addition to rape of indigenous women, land and cattle theft, and murder, cited by Herero as causes for their rebellion.¹ Photographs of these beatings were taken by the military and sent home as postcards.

Farm laborers were particularly vulnerable to unwarranted punishment, which was often administered by the local police at the direction of the farmer; those doing the flogging were sometimes themselves Herero.² Just as often, the farmer took it upon himself to administer the flogging without pretext; the law required that such floggings be limited to no more than twenty-five lashes at any one

time and that women be spared such beatings; both of these regulations were routinely flouted. The custom of such floggings came to be called *Väterliche Züchtigung*, or “paternal chastisement” (Silvester and Gewalt, 204), a shocking euphemism when one learns about the damage inflicted on the victims. “Flogging . . . came to our people more regularly than their meals,” stated a Herero headman (Silvester and Gewalt, 135).

One Ludwig Cramer, a farmer with a large number of forced laborers, offers a particularly gruesome and infamous example of cruelty and murder under the auspices of such “paternal chastisement.”³ He almost always selected women as his targets. In 1912, he flogged two pregnant women with impunity, both of whom miscarried. Using as an excuse his desire to learn more about supposed poisons hidden by his laborers, Cramer, with the assistance of his daughter Hildegard, beat a woman named Maria all evening until she fell unconscious; the beating was resumed the following day. Brought to the hospital a week later, she had wounds infested with maggots on her back, on her face, and on her breasts. A photograph of her back that appeared in the 1918 Blue Book reveals the horrifying extent of these wounds. She never recovered and died six months later. A similar fate was suffered by a woman named Auma, in her late fifties, who was sent to the Cramer farm as a replacement for the women Cramer had killed. She too was flogged unmercifully and died two weeks later.

Because the floggings were made known when the women were brought to hospital, Cramer was accused in court of assault and battery of eight victims, seven of them female. Such a trial was an anomaly; Germans could usually punish their laborers without fear of reprisal. Cramer’s initial sentence of imprisonment for a year and nine months was appealed and downgraded to four months plus a fine of 2,700 Marks. The judicial system, such as it was, was rigged against indigenous people: the corroborated evidence of seven indigenous people was required to outweigh that of one white man (Silvester and Gewalt, 93). Imperial Commissioner Theodor Leutwein declared, “Beating to death was not regarded as murder; but the natives were unable to understand such legal subtleties” (Silvester and Gewalt, 204). And that is the crux of the matter: the perception of the Africans was that they were subhuman, could be treated as ignorant children, or worse, as animals. This attitude and the resulting violence were openly acknowledged by Governor Theodor Seitz in a circular of warning sent to magistrates in 1912, only because Seitz feared another rebellion: “It is, therefore, in the best interests of the whole white population if those who indulge in an orgy of violence against the natives *in the belief that their white skin gives them the right to perpetrate* the most revolting crimes are brought to

justice” (Drechsler, emphasis mine, 235). Racist attitudes, passed from generation to generation, that give license to exterminate: that is the *genocidal gaze* which is the subject of this book.

The Study of German Genocides of the Twentieth Century

Since its inception in 1961 with the publication of Raul Hilberg’s two-volume *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Holocaust Studies as a field has undergone several shifts, in what one might describe as a widening gyre. The field began, appropriately, with a focus on the victims, particularly the Jewish victims, then expanded to include study of the perpetrators. By the late 1980s, after a period of significant resistance to such an approach, scholars began to incorporate insights about gender difference. Then the field widened again, once more against stiff resistance, this time to make links with the growing field of Genocide Studies. Now scholars are beginning to integrate the concepts and vocabulary of Postcolonial Studies in their efforts to understand the Shoah. Much-needed attention is being given by scholars to the transnational aspects of genocide. This new approach sits at the intersection of Holocaust Studies and Postcolonial Studies; it promises to be richly rewarding by widening yet again the vocabulary and theory with which we talk about the Holocaust, beyond the boundaries of Europe, to include earlier and related genocides committed in Africa.

German colonialism (1884–1919) has come under particular scrutiny as a possible source for grasping how the *racial/racist hierarchies* implicit in imperialism are connected to Nazi ideology. The Germans committed the first genocide of the twentieth century in German Southwest Africa (GSWA: the country we now call Namibia) between 1904 and 1907. Though the word had not yet been invented, genocide, in the terms subsequently defined by the United Nations Convention on Genocide, was clearly intended as the infamous pronouncement of German general Lothar von Trotha reveals: “I finish off the rebellious tribes with *rivers of blood and rivers of money*. Only from these seeds will something new and permanent be able to grow.”⁴

Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller’s pioneering anthology, *Genocide in German South-West Africa: The Colonial War of 1904–1908 and Its Aftermath*, was published in German in 2003 and in English in 2008. Many such studies have followed, creating a new direction in Holocaust and German historiography. Tracing a link between German colonialism and the Holocaust in terms of racial ideology and methods of extermination has come to be called the “continuity thesis.” It, too, has been a source of controversy, having been first suggested

by Hannah Arendt in 1951. During the 1960s, a young Marxist historian from East Germany, Horst Drechsler, gained access to the colonial archives, recently returned from the USSR where they had been taken at the end of World War II. His resulting account of German imperialism was one of the first critical studies published in Germany; his work implicitly draws connections between imperialism in GSWA and the Third Reich. Other scholars began to use this linkage as the premise for their own work. For example, Mahmood Mamdani noted in the introduction to his history of the Rwandan genocide, “There is a link that connects the genocide of the Herero and the Nazi Holocaust to the Rwandan genocide. That link is *race branding*, whereby it became possible not only to set a group apart as an enemy, but also to exterminate it with an easy conscience.”⁵

The marking in Germany of the 100th anniversary of the 1904 genocide brought that genocide out of the shadows. The term “German *Sonderweg*” (“German ‘special path,’” a term that has wider application in German history) is used by Zimmerer rather than “continuity thesis,” but he leaves no doubt as to his adherence to such a thesis: “The genocide in German South-West Africa is significant as a prelude to the Holocaust . . . it cannot be denied that there are actual structural similarities . . . the common factor is the readiness to exterminate certain groups of human beings. Finally, it is the breaking of the ultimate taboo, not only to talk or write about extermination of entire peoples but to put it into action, which was first carried out in the colonies and then took its most radical form in the Holocaust, which links the genocides.”⁶ Though some of the essays in the anthology take a less vehement view, the gauntlet had been thrown down.

Yet wholesale acceptance by historians of the continuity thesis has yet to arrive, as evidenced by a 2011 anthology that contains an instructive introduction and essays arguing in nuanced detail for and against the continuity thesis.⁷ Prominent among the essays supporting “discontinuity” are those by Birthe Kundrus and Kitty Millet. The former notes the “fleeting” era of German colonialism and the variation in governing policies among its several locations—in Africa, Samoa, and China—as evidence of the lack of a totalizing impact; she also questions the notion that German imperialism was more violent and extreme than that of Great Britain and France.⁸ Millet’s focus is the necessity of a distinction among victim groups: “The Nazis did not see the Jews as a species unto themselves—a group to be colonized—but rather as an aspect of the environment that had to be removed”; the continuity thesis, she argues, is problematic as “victimization becomes generally interchangeable.”⁹ In a sense, what Millet argues here is the difference between the imperial gaze and the genocidal gaze: between viewing

victims as a subhuman “species” and viewing them as “an aspect of the environment” that simply needs to be removed. Careful study of the language of General Lothar von Trotha and others in GSWA, however, affirms the German focus on annihilation of the Herero and Nama.

Thus, use of the continuity thesis must be grounded in careful definition. In *The Genocidal Gaze*, I follow the threads of shared ideology and methodology in both the genocide of the Herero and Nama, and in the Holocaust. That is, I read the texts of both the colonial era and the post-Holocaust period to demonstrate that such concepts as racial/racist hierarchies, *Lebensraum* (living space), *Rassenschande* (racial shame), and *Endlösung* (final solution) were deployed by German authorities in 1904 and again in the 1940s to justify genocide. Although it is not always noted, the Third Reich was a colonial empire; not only did Hitler colonize eastern Europe but the Nazis savored a hope that their African empire would be returned to them as a result of their imagined victory in World War II. I note the use of shared and systematic means of degradation and killing—concentration camps, death camps, intentional starvation, rape, indiscriminate murder of women and children—in both instances. I demonstrate how texts—letters, memoirs, photographs, postcards, novels, newspapers—conveyed this ideology from Africa to the German public and created an acceptance of the genocidal strategies employed in GSWA, an acceptance that creates a readiness for Hitler. The genocide in GSWA made the Holocaust “imaginable” (Zimmerer, “War, Concentration Camps,” 60). But I do not claim the events in GSWA have a direct causality where the Holocaust is concerned. The loss of World War I, the dire economic situation of the Weimar Republic, the centuries-old curse of antisemitism, the “science” of eugenics, and, of course, Hitler himself take precedence as causes of the Holocaust.¹⁰

Despite the serious attention historians have given to this topic, no full-length monograph in English has been devoted to manifestations of such “continuity” in fiction, memoir, or the visual arts. *The Genocidal Gaze*, then, is an original intervention in the growing body of literature that endeavors to demonstrate the ways in which perception of the “other” ineluctably links the genocide of the Herero and Nama with that of the Nazi Holocaust and thus expands the understanding of this connection into new areas of study: “The debate about ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’ between German colonialism and the genocide of Nazi Germany has to reflect on and move beyond existing structures of established historiographic boundaries” (Langbehn and Salama, xiii). It is a truism in Holocaust Studies that the historians have taken the lead in the field; disciplines such as sociology, literary studies, philosophy, psychology, and geography

have followed. The complexity of Holocaust and Genocide Studies demands an interdisciplinary and transnational approach.

The Genocidal Gaze

Artistic representation engages its audience through narrative perspective, and a key to many postcolonial texts is the notion of the imperial or colonial gaze as a trope of perspective. The notion of the gaze has been a staple of both feminist theory and postcolonial theory since it was first suggested by Laura Mulvey to analyze how women are objectified by the male gaze in cinema.¹¹ The colonial, or imperial, gaze, E. Ann Kaplan's phrase, describes the dominating look of the imperialist who assigns an inferior identity to the colonized.¹² The concept of the gaze is always concerned with power, as Foucault has shown.¹³ When the imperial gaze, prompted by racist hierarchy or by religious or ideological beliefs that engender a confidence in one's own superiority, evolves into a consideration of the gazed upon as inconvenient, as no longer deserving to live, the gaze can become deadly. How the imperial gaze creates or destroys identity, casts the gazed upon into captivity, and morphs into the genocidal gaze is central to the argument of this monograph. It, too, is a trope of perspective.

Scholars have used the concept of the gaze in various contexts, often to describe a negative gesture occurring in and defining an oppressive relationship. In postcolonial studies, Edward Said's notion of "orientalism" described a gaze, in this case of the colonizer upon the colonized, that resulted in viewing the colonized as an "exotic other" or its opposite, the "demonic other." Said's critics have taken him to task for the lack of gendered analysis and his use, like that of Foucault whom Said admired, of largely Western sources for his work.¹⁴ Another important contributor to the concept of the gaze in a postcolonial context is Mary Louise Pratt, whose book *Imperial Eyes* (1992) traces the ways in which travel writings of various explorers "create" the other.

Here, I introduce the concept of the *genocidal gaze*: the attitude of German imperialists toward the indigenous people of German Southwest Africa that is then perpetuated by the Nazis. While the male gaze and the imperial gaze privilege the gazer and denigrate the gazed upon, the genocidal gaze goes a step further: it provided the German imperialists with a rationale for their depredations on the land and the people of Southwest Africa. Where the imperial gaze has as its aim the control or even enslavement of the colonized, the genocidal gaze has as its aim extermination. Specifically, the genocidal gaze cast the indigenous people

in the position of being subhuman, of being *expendable*, a perspective that in turn permitted the Germans to achieve their goal of domination and exclusive possession of the land. Thus, the use of this trope both explains and demonstrates the lethal linkages between imperialism and genocide, between the genocide of the Herero and Nama and that of the victims of the Holocaust, and between German colonialism in Africa and that in eastern Europe.

The genocidal gaze serves as a metaphor for the repellent imperial ideology, founded on a racial/racist hierarchy, that Germans developed. Their perception of the Herero and Nama was conflated with a racist hierarchy, privileging German imperialists and dehumanizing indigenous people. They were perceived as barbaric, lacking any kind of civilization, history, or meaningful religion; in other words, they were bestial, easily disposed of, a nuisance obstacle to German settlement. A quotation from Gustav Frenssen's colonial novel is useful here. The German commanding officer in Africa tells the main character, Peter Moor, a soldier: "These Blacks have deserved death before God and man . . . because they have built no houses and dug no wells . . . God has let us conquer here because we are the nobler and more advanced people. . . . To the nobler and more vigorous belongs the world. That is the justice of God. . . . For a long time, we must be hard and kill but at the same time as individual men we must strive toward higher thoughts and noble deeds so that we may contribute our part to mankind."¹⁵ The aim of building a "New Germany" in Africa, of providing *Lebensraum*, of maintaining the purity of the German race, of utilizing land that is perceived to have lain fallow "justifies" the move from viewing the Herero and Nama as subhuman to viewing them as expendable.

In the later words of the Nazis who adopted many of these imperial perspectives—racist hierarchies, *Lebensraum*, *Rassenschande*, and *Endlösung*—Africans were *Lebensunwerten Lebens* ("life unworthy of life"). The genocidal gaze is an enabling gaze: it shaped colonial policy and gave German soldiers the moral justification, the "right" to annihilate, to "cleanse" the land and make it available for German appropriation. The texts we will examine in *The Genocidal Gaze* demonstrate the evolution of the imperial gaze into the genocidal gaze; Gustav Frenssen's colonial novel valorizes this deadly gaze as a tool of the German Schutztruppe; a post-Holocaust novel and a memoir by Uwe Timm critique the genocidal gaze and trace the arc of the continuity thesis; an art installation makes a further connection, to Apartheid in South Africa.

But "looking" is, of course, a two-way process and equally important as the gaze of the colonizer is the gaze of the colonized. This act of looking back, the

resisting gaze of the colonized, begins to recognize and restore agency to the victims of imperialism, specifically the indigenous people who have been colonized and targeted for extermination. Such a gaze upon the colonizer is a gaze of resistance and self-creation or re-creation: this African gaze is the subject of both the opening and closing chapters of *The Genocidal Gaze*. We look first at the voice of Hendrik Witbooi, a Nama revolutionary whose archive reveals his gradual recognition of the meaning of the genocidal gaze and his response to it. In the concluding chapter, a contemporary African novelist, Ama Ata Aidoo, uses the trope of the genocidal gaze to reveal that Germany is the twentieth-century “heart of darkness.” Scrutiny of the African gaze is crucial to this study: African voices have been silenced, lost, ignored, submerged in the discourse of genocides. While Aidoo, as we will see, has received considerable critical attention, very little has been written about Hendrik Witbooi, and what exists does not carefully parse his text, his voice; only after Uwe Timm’s *Morenga* was published did the Nama hero Morenga begin to receive long overdue accolades in Namibia. Resurrection of these voices—through archival documents and oral histories or imaginatively in fiction—contradicts stereotypes and misunderstandings and uncovers the suffering, courage, and honor of the Herero and Nama and their distinctive cultures.

Finally, the genocidal gaze *normalized* genocide. Writing and reading about the gaze is an act of mediation, a power dynamic that calls the *genocidaires* to account for their crimes and discloses their malignant convictions. Careful reading of texts and attention to the narrative deployment of the genocidal gaze—or the resistance to it—establishes discursive similarities in books written during colonialism and in the post-Holocaust era.

John Noyes uses the notion of the gaze in a place and time similar to what I explore here. He defines the gaze thus: “I will be arguing that when the colonizer arrives in a new territory the gaze with which he surveys it is an initial appropriation of space . . . the travelling looker and writer develops strategies for rendering the world habitable. This appropriating gaze also tends to establish the ways in which these spaces may be rendered productive.”¹⁶ Whereas Noyes focuses on the gaze upon space, my focus here is on the gaze upon the colonized. Yet Noyes’s notion that the appropriating gaze concentrates on making the land “habitable and productive” is key: one of the justifications that the Germans broadcast for their domination and eventual genocide of the indigenous people of Southwest Africa was precisely their failure (in German eyes) to use the land for the purpose of creating civilization.¹⁷ Let us turn, then, to a brief history of German colonization of Southwest Africa.

“Colonial Grotesque: German Rule in Southwest Africa”

The Germans came late to imperialism.¹⁸ France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Portugal had established colonies in the “Dark Continent” centuries before the Germans entered the “scramble for Africa.” King Leopold II of Belgium began gathering treaties with African chiefs in the late 1870s under a smoke-screen of philanthropy and through the agency of Henry Stanley. In 1885, Leopold declared the Congo Free State as his personal colony. He began to amass enormous wealth from importing ivory and then, in the 1890s, rubber. Some debate exists among scholars as to whether a genocide occurred there. Though the deaths of the colonized occurred from starvation, beatings, disease, overwork, and lowered birth rates as well as murder, the extermination was less systematic than that found in Germany’s colony in Africa. Nonetheless, it is estimated that the population in Congo was reduced by 60 percent and that the manner and magnitude of these deaths do meet the UN Convention on Genocide.¹⁹

German missionaries from both the Catholic and Protestant churches had been in southern Africa from the mid-1800s, but Chancellor Otto von Bismarck rejected the idea of colonies as too risky a financial investment and thus “had no interest in imperial expansion.”²⁰ A German private citizen, Adolf Lüderitz, set out for southern Africa in 1883 to purchase coastal land, with the purpose of establishing trade. In April 1884, Bismarck agreed to bring this land under the protection of the Reich. The following year, the Treaty of Berlin divided up the African continent; chunks of land were assigned to European countries with little regard for boundaries of ethnic groups or geography. By the 1890s, Germany had colonial holdings in today’s Togo, Cameroon, Tanzania, and Rwanda as well as in East Asia, Samoa, New Guinea, and various other Pacific islands. “After those of Britain, France, and the Netherlands, this was the fourth largest colonial empire at the time.”²¹

In his monumental study of German colonialism, *The Devil’s Handwriting*, George Steinmetz plumbs precolonial documents to arrive at an understanding of the image Germans held of Africans when they established their colonies. Though Germans may still have viewed Africa as the “Dark Continent,” many had read the studies of anthropologists, the reports of missionaries, the memoirs of travelers, and plays recounting African adventures (25).²² In short, the modern colonial state, such as that in German Southwest Africa, was constituted of “state institutions and practices that define, express, and *reinforce a cultural difference and fundamental inferiority of the territorial natives*” and native policies that are “the site at which the colonial state *identifies, produces, and reinforces*

the alterity that is required by the rule of hierarchical difference" (emphasis mine, 40–41). Such an existing and constantly reinscribed image of a racist hierarchy as applied to indigenous people in GSWA is the central springboard for the genocidal gaze.

After Chancellor Bismarck agreed to a Protectorate for the African holdings, Heinrich Göring was sent to Southwest Africa as imperial commissioner in April 1885. Göring's son, Hermann, was to be the future *Reichsfeldmarschall* of the Third Reich; he absorbed the racial hierarchies that created the genocidal gaze at his father's feet. Göring began immediately to pressure the chiefs of various ethnic groups to sign so-called Protection Treaties.²³ In fact, these treaties offered no protection and were often negotiated in such a way that the indigenous people were cheated out of their land. As more and more land was wrested from the indigenous people, two of the largest tribal groups—the Herero and the Nama—responded by resistance to these "Protection Treaties."

Armed combat between the indigenous people and the Germans began in a sporadic fashion, continuing for a decade. It is estimated that "by the end of 1903, 3.5 million hectares out of a total of 13 million had been lost" by the Herero to German settler colonialism and railroad construction.²⁴ As cattle herders, in a land with scarce water supplies, the Herero faced a future that would prevent them from continuing their traditional way of life, which, tragically, did occur as a result of the genocide, the concentration camps, and German appropriation of land and cattle.

In January 1904, the Herero rose in rebellion against the encroaching German military and settlers. They had some early successes in these encounters. But, after considerable planning and importing more soldiers, the Germans staged the Battle of Waterberg on 11 August 1904, a decisive victory over the Herero that intentionally forced those who had survived the battle into the desert, where thousands died of thirst and starvation. A guerilla war with the Nama followed, beginning in October 1904. The three men who served as leaders of their people—Samuel Maherero of the Herero, Hendrik Witbooi and Morenga of the Nama—will be the subjects of chapters in this book. Though the war was protracted until 1907, due to the savvy guerilla warfare waged by the Nama, the Germans eventually prevailed. Large concentration camps and a death camp were established in the aftermath of the wars, where forced labor, inadequate food and shelter, and disease resulted in yet more deaths. A genocide, though the term had not yet been invented, was committed; 80 percent of the Herero people and 50 percent of the Nama perished. While there are some scholars who maintain that the near extinction of these two groups in Namibia does

not qualify as a genocide,²⁵ the general agreement among historians is that “the German massacre of the Ovaherero in 1904 is widely recognized as the first genocide of the twentieth century.”²⁶

Imperialism and the Third Reich: What Are the Links?

The genocidal gaze, on the part of the Schutztruppe in GSWA and the Nazis during the Third Reich, which translated racist hierarchies into dehumanization and eventual extermination of victims, forged the connection between these two genocides: “It is easy to kill ‘subhumans’ or ‘nonhumans.’ Too many German settlers or officials of South West Africa thought of the natives as ‘baboons.’ . . . There was no moral or ethical penalty to be considered in the treatment of baboons” (Totten and Parsons, 37). We must examine not only the racial paradigms, terminology, and tactics of the military that were brought to GSWA but also trace the ways in which these ideas and ideologies were *transmitted to Germany* during the era of African colonization through language, literature, media, institutional memory, and personal experience. Dozens of compelling and intriguing details have been amassed by historians: German geographer Friedrich Ratzel developed the term *Lebensraum* in 1897 with the settler colonies in GSWA in mind, a concept later adopted by the Nazis to justify taking lands in eastern Europe.²⁷ “Colonial Namibian literature . . . exposed metropolitan Germans to a new form of racism in which non-Germans had the right to exist only in so far as they served Germans and in which some authors even endorsed extermination” (Madley, 436–37); *Peter Moor’s Journey to Southwest Africa*, the subject of chapter 2, is often named as an example of such literature. Several legal concepts, instantiated in law in the colony, then transfer wholesale to the Third Reich: the term *Rassenschande*; the restriction against interracial marriage; and the right under the law for settlers to whip African employees, called “paternal chastisement” as we have seen. “Genocidal rhetoric,” invented in the colony, such as *Endlösung* led to a growing acceptance in the Fatherland of the justification of annihilationist wars that clear land of subhumans or enslave them (Madley, 440–41). This goal is echoed in the *Vernichtungsbefehl*, or Annihilation Order, proclaimed by General von Trotha after the decisive Battle of Waterberg, when 80 percent of the Herero were either killed outright or driven into the Omaheke Desert to die of thirst. Copies of the order were published in Germany and publicly debated; eventually the order was rescinded and von Trotha recalled to Germany. But the damage had been done; Herero POWs were systematically killed; such an approach to waging war led to a new term, *Vernichtungskrieg*

(war of annihilation), appropriated by the Nazis, which equated victory with the extermination of one's enemies.

Though the British had used concentration camps in the Boer War, the establishment of camps in GSWA represents the first instance of a distinction between concentration camps (of which there were several in the aftermath of the genocide) and a death camp, a distinction reiterated by the Nazis. Shark Island was established near Lüderitzburg, on a windy, rocky island that could in no way sustain life. Here the prisoners were exposed to the raw weather and provided no shelter, were locked behind barbed wire, lacked hospital and toilet facilities, and were systematically and intentionally underfed. Women were raped by soldiers who had no restraints. Prisoners died by the thousands. Concentration camps were established on the coast below Swakopmund, in Windhoek, and in other inland locations. These functioned essentially as slave labor camps, as did Dachau, Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen, and any number of camps during the Third Reich. As with *Endlösung* and *Rassenschande*, the term *Konzentrationslager* (concentration camp) emerged at this time.²⁸

Finally, many personal connections can be found: men who functioned in the genocide apparatus in GSWA who returned to the Fatherland to take up similar roles in Germany. Or, in the case of Heinrich Göring, the first governor in Südwest Africa, the son becomes an early, ardent, and prominent Nazi, having been schooled in imperial ideology by his father (Madley, 450). Other Germans who had participated in the genocide of the Herero subsequently became devoted Nazis, shaping policy under Hitler on future colonization, race, interracial unions, sterilization, and so-called medical experimentation. An early manifestation of eugenics was the decapitation of Herero and Nama in Southwest Africa after the genocides; indigenous women prisoners were forced to scrape the skin from these skulls, which were then sent to Berlin for examination to “prove” that the skulls came from a subhuman species. Images of this atrocity were made into postcards, as were the floggings of laborers, and sent home to the Fatherland. Some of these skulls have subsequently been repatriated to Namibia.²⁹

Structure of the Text

The five chapters of *The Genocidal Gaze* provide readings of interdisciplinary texts, both contemporaneous to German colonialism and those appearing post-Holocaust. In studying such representations in letters, fiction, a memoir, and an art installation, the monograph interrogates the transnational perceptions/gaze

between Africans and Germans, and traces the ideological and methodological relationship between imperialism and genocide.

The focus of chapter 1 is Nama revolutionary Hendrik Witbooi, a chief of his people who struggled with the growing German presence in GSWA from the arrival of the colonizers in 1884 until his death on the battlefield in October 1905 at the age of seventy-five. Witbooi kept an archive of both his personal papers and the exchange of correspondence with German leaders as well as leaders of the Herero and missionaries. This archive reveals his articulate objection to German aggression, often cannily couched in the language of Christianity; he had been educated by Lutheran missionaries. Witbooi's gaze upon the Germans is unblinking and evolves gradually as he comes to *see* what the German objectives really are. Whereas he initially (and correctly) perceives their plans for the Herero and Nama to be relocation and forced labor—the imperial gaze—his interactions with the Schutztruppe and their treatment of the Herero make it clear to him that the gaze has become genocidal. He then leads his people in a guerilla war against the Germans, which is ultimately futile, and in which he dies. The decision to open this book with Witbooi's voice is an intentional effort to recover African voices, to honor them, and to understand how their gaze of resistance functioned before, during, and after the genocide.

Another African voice in the opening chapter is that of Jan Kubas, also an indigenous African and an eyewitness to the atrocities of the Germans during the war and genocide. He subsequently gave testimony to the British. “Words cannot be found to relate what happened; it was too terrible,” he told them. This chapter also analyzes excerpts from a memoir by a former British soldier who prospected for gold and diamonds in Southwest Africa, immediately after the war, from 1907 to 1914; his observations of the Germans as colonizers, their treatment of both the indigenous people and the Boers, and the death camp they established on Shark Island provide yet another lens with which to “look at” German imperialist behavior and ideology, and the links to the Nazi Holocaust.

Gustav Frenssen's fictional memoir, *Peter Moor's Journey to Southwest Africa* (1906, translated into English in 1908), the subject of chapter 2, is often called the quintessential German colonial novel. It is a first-person narrative, written as if by a German soldier participating in the Herero genocide; since Frenssen never traveled to Africa, he relied on accounts by men who had been there for his novel. The text, though unwittingly, reveals much about the genocidal gaze: the narrative is focalized through a fictional soldier, Peter Moor. How he views Africa and the Africans as he arrives on the “Dark Continent” models the racial hierarchies of the

imperial gaze; how his attitudes gradually change, to embrace the genocidal gaze in which he is instructed by the army chaplain and his superior officers, forms the substance of the novel. Frenssen applauds the exterminationist approach of the military. He also favors the vision of the German colony that would follow the “cleansing” of the land of “inconvenient” and “uncivilized” indigenous people. This vision ends by World War I, after which the Germans lost control of Southwest Africa, and instead becomes the blueprint for Nazi predations against eastern Europe, the Jews, and others deemed “biologically inferior.”

This chapter also reads Frenssen’s text to trace transnational links between imperialism and genocide. Examining various editions of the text, created for the general German reading public, for youth as well as Nazi soldiers, and for Namibian readers in the era of Namibian independence (post-1990), reveals the uses to which this profoundly racist text has been put in the service of various political ideologies. As evidence of the “continuity thesis,” Frenssen’s conversion in later life from Lutheran pastor to avid Nazi Party member is also examined. Colonial photographs, taken largely by German soldiers, that reveal as Frenssen’s book does how the genocidal gaze dominated and controlled the colonized are included in the text.

Frenssen’s smug approbation of the genocidal gaze is reversed in chapter 3 in which the juxtaposition of two books written by contemporary German writer Uwe Timm presents a searing critique of this deadly gaze. Timm’s work is also further demonstration of the usefulness of the “continuity thesis,” in this case for understanding late twentieth-century texts. Timm’s *Morenga* (1978), an account of the 1904–7 war focalized through the eyes of a German soldier, is an intertextual response to, and correction of, Frenssen’s *Peter Moor*. Whereas Moor comes to embrace the genocidal gaze as the “final solution” for the indigenous people of Southwest Africa, *Morenga*’s hero/antihero, Veterinarian Gottschalk, gradually realizes the horror of what the Schutztruppe are doing and his own implication in these crimes.

Timm, son of a Nazi soldier and participant in the student demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s, wrote this novel when Germany was still silent (or even self-congratulatory) about its colonial history. Timm asks: What is the connection between the violence of colonialism and the violence of genocide? How does silence about genocide, the failure to remember, to mourn, to reconcile, engender other genocides? How is the genocidal gaze of imperialism recapitulated in the Holocaust? Using fiction as well as excerpts from actual military reports, soldiers’ diaries, and the diary of Morenga, a leader of Nama guerilla forces in the war, Timm interrogates the ways in which nineteenth-century Germans

perceived Africans, how this contributed to the genocide, and how that genocide compared to, and contributed to, the Nazi Holocaust. While the latter has been publicly mourned, the death of the 80,000 Herero, an estimated 80 percent of the group, and 50 percent of the Nama has been called a “forgotten genocide” by Rene Lemarchand, and little exists in Namibia today to memorialize them.³⁰

In My Brother's Shadow is a memoir written by Timm twenty-five years later, yet it shares many of the same themes: the German history of violence and genocide, misguided German values. The text is at once an ambivalent tribute to Timm's brother, an SS soldier who died on the Russian front, a portrait of his father's adulation of this brother, and a philosophical interrogation. Tim writes both books in the tradition of *Väterliteratur*, the genre of accusatory novels and memoirs written by the children of the perpetrator generation to call into question the behavior of fathers that contributed to the Holocaust and their subsequent silence. While *Shadow* has been read as a text in this genre, *Morenga* has not, nor have the two texts been read together as protests against genocide. Subsequent to the publication of *Morenga*, Timm published *Deutsche Kolonien* (1986), a book of photos assembled from his archival research for *Morenga*. Like the novel, these photos reveal the genocidal gaze of the Germans through their cameras.

William Kentridge, a white, Jewish South African, created an art installation titled *Black Box/Chambre Noire* that first went on display in Germany in 2005. *Black Box*, the subject of chapter 4, incorporates early twentieth-century German colonial film clips, mechanized figures, music, photographs, newspaper clippings, and animation-like movements. The performance lasts twenty-two minutes and is encompassed within the frame of a small stage with curtains. The subject matter of *Black Box* is the 1904–7 genocide of the Herero people by German colonizers. Kentridge gestures in several directions: the work interrogates the genocidal gaze and German guilt, the silence surrounding this genocide, and *trauerarbeit*, Freud's term for working through grief. Kentridge draws symbolic links between this first genocide of the twentieth century and the Holocaust, initiated less than thirty years later. Kentridge (b. 1955) is also gesturing toward Apartheid; both of his parents were attorneys in the anti-apartheid movement and, it can be argued, the policies and ideology of Apartheid owed much to the Nazis.³¹ Much of the analysis of this installation piece focuses on Kentridge's exploitation of animation: *Black Box* moves beyond what Uwe Timm has accomplished in his critique to actually reenact the genocidal gaze through a palimpsest of colonial memorabilia, Nazi images, staged violence, and haunting music.

The final chapter of the book returns the reader to an African voice of resis-

tance, that of Ama Ata Aidoo, a late twentieth-century Ghanaian writer who has spent considerable time in the West. How is Germany perceived by contemporary African novelists? When the gaze is turned back upon the *genocidaires*, what is the impact on Africans? *Our Sister Killjoy, or, Reflections from a Black-eyed Squint* (1977), a title that draws attention to the concept of the gaze, provides responses to these queries. Literary criticism of Aidoo's work has focused on feminist readings whereas my reading occurs at the intersection of Postcolonial and Holocaust Studies. Such an approach unveils the contemporary African perception, and critique, of the genocidal gaze.

Though brief (134 pages), *Our Sister Killjoy, or, Reflections from a Black-eyed Squint* is challenging in that it includes several genres (a frequent feature of Ghanaian literature), unorthodox page formatting, and a shifting narrative voice; analysis of these structural devices focuses on how they suggest both the genocidal gaze of the Germans and the resisting gaze of the Africans. The novel is also highly intertextual, incorporating references to fairy tales, *Jane Eyre*, and historical events, as well as the defiant gesture of "writing back" to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. While a few scholars have noted this link with Conrad, none has made the connection between imperialism and genocide in Africa and the Holocaust in Germany that Aidoo is interrogating. Her novel thus provides a very useful case study with which to conclude the monograph.