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The Trophy and the Appeal: Colonial Photography and the Ghosts of Witnessing in German South West Africa

JB Brager

However the image enters / its force remains within / my eyes.

—Audre Lorde, “Afterimages”

The sentiment of the country has been appealed to, in describing the isolated condition of white families in thickly populated negro districts; and the charge is made that these homes are in as great danger as if they were surrounded by wild beasts.

—Ida B. Wells, “Lynch Law in America”

This is Black life in the wake; this is the flesh, these are the bodies, to which anything and everything can be and is done.

—Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake*

To work with images of atrocity is a fraught project. Sedimented constructs shaped through racist and settler colonial violence continue to define the production and consumption of the visual, as well as memory practice and scopic politics. These retinal sedimentations must be looked at plainly and addressed openly, to name

the ways in which history and identity shape the function of the eye. I turn to the understudied visual archive of German colonialism in southwestern Africa, with an emphasis on colonial photography, with the aim of tying the visibility of colonial violence in German South West Africa to broader studies of colonial photography and images of racial violence, and the ways in which these images circulated as discourse. I am particularly concerned with the location of witnessing, and how things look differently from different positions—what I refer to through the concept of parallax—and the effects of this on visual consumption. Images of violence travel, through a visceral witnessing that can be grotesquely pornographic—in the words of Claudia Rankine, “the dead body as an object that satisfies an illicit desire”—or evidentiary.¹ I use viscosity in this context to think about a methodology of witnessing that attends to embodiment, experience, and feeling. The resignification of images, however didactic and captioned, depends on the eye and the gut of the viewer—the transhistorical viewer is not a passive or innocent witness. This is especially important in the context of the pornotrope tendency of white supremacist culture to fetishize the image, particularly of Black injury and death, and the ability of images of violence to retraumatize survivors.²

I refer to these different functional iterations as the trophy—the pornographic capturing of violence by the perpetrator or titillated bystander—and the appeal—the fervent belief that if only what was happening was made visible, those who saw it would have to make it stop. These two operations oftentimes coexist within the same photograph. Whether the photograph functions as trophy or appeal depends largely on the gaze of both the photographer and the audiences who circulate and view the photograph. For those of us invested in both visual culture and decolonial praxis, these disjunctures of looking, as well as the incommensurability of the gaze from different positions, are frustrating to say the least. Because the photograph is a medium that is easy to reproduce, indeed, meant to be reproduced, the context in which images are viewed may shift quickly. The failure of the *camera as objective witness* has particular implications for the image as a site of ethical demand and the *photograph as evidence* in making human rights claims. The circulation of image as appeal represents a trap of visibility that extends from slave portraits to body cams.³ Visual scholars such as Ariella Azoulay assert that images contain their own injunction, a demand to the viewer for justice, or action.⁴ The concern with this belief is that it assumes or requires a shared positionality between the author and the reading audience. For example, Marianne Hirsch critiques the violence of the Nazi gaze in Holocaust photography, but fails perhaps to consider what other fascists might be looking at in the image, for what purpose.⁵ The location of witnessing—how the identity of a spectator shapes that individual’s consumption of the image—is central to my argument about the possibilities of

looking at images. In other words, the power of evidence, or lack thereof, is often dependent on the idea of a shared site of looking, or lack thereof. The same image may circulate as trophy or appeal, or an image can circulate as both at once depending on who is looking. I conceptualize this phenomenon through the idea of parallax, meaning the difference in the perceived position of an object viewed along different lines of sight, in order to consider what happens when we look at things from different positionalities. The parallaxic gaze is a way to understand the spectator's participation in making meaning in visual texts. Thinking through parallax here requires a careful look at intimacy and ownership in the consumption and production of images, particularly those of physical harm and damage done against Black and brown bodies, and a refusal of the fetishistic spectacle and ownership explicit in the white gaze. To see differently is to imagine differently, with material implications. The excision of anti-Blackness is in many ways a visual project. If the present moment is a continuation of a regime in which Blackness is antithetical to humanness, and the eye is the purveyor of that truth, then we must learn to look differently.

The height of European colonial power coincided with the first photography boom, allowing settlers as amateur photographers to document their lives like never before, with a verisimilitude that seemed to represent an uncorrupted reality. The timing of these developments supported the ascent of anthropological photography as well as what might retrospectively be described as the genre of atrocity photography. Photographs taken as trophies by the colonial photographer are recast as evidence through human rights regimes created after the images, and through present-day postcolonial and antiracist demands. Some are intentionally repurposed by activists, and the trophy is amended as appeal.⁶ The visual archive of German South West Africa is usefully placed in a larger history of photography both as a colonial apparatus and as a technology of picturing the scopic regime of the human as physiognomically European.⁷ While often dismissed because of the relatively short period in which Germany was a colonial power, the horrors it perpetrated in South West Africa occurred in a broad landscape of colonial "extermination," as mass murder and genocidal ideology proliferated not only in German colonies but also in British, Belgian, and Italian colonial projects, and certainly in the United States as a settler colony. Writing from a US context, I consider what is particular to photographs in thinking about processes of racialization in colonial contexts; both the United States and German South West Africa represent sites of settler colonialism invested in relational and circulating ideologies, subjugated Black labor forces, and Indigenous genocide. This is not to dismiss the particularities of each of these sites or to collapse anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racisms in the United States, but to note their resonances and mutual scaffolding. Many of

the histories of German South West Africa fail to contend with anti-Blackness and settler colonial ideologies as part of the bedrock of Western modernity—thus the Herero and Nama genocides are treated as an aberration rather than part and parcel of the project of colonialism. Additionally, the Herero and Nama genocides largely remain ghosts within German memory and scarcely noted in the United States, in contrast with the ubiquitous memorialization of the Holocaust. The photographs that I look at here primarily come from the photographic collections of the Prussian Secret State Archive in Berlin and some secondary sources—especially Wolfram Hartmann’s collection of colonial photography. I also draw from the 1918 Blue Book, a British report on the atrocities of German rule in South West Africa. The Blue Book exists both as a document of German colonial atrocity and as an erasure of British colonial harm. Furthermore, the report was quickly hidden away after the capture of German South West Africa by British South Africa in World War I. It was “destroyed [in 1926] with the aim of achieving reconciliation within the white settler community.”⁸ However, the book was recovered and published in 2003 as *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia—an Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book*.⁹

In 1884 Germany, under the Second Reich, colonized the region that is now Namibia—“an enormous section of Africa stretching from the Orange River, in the south, to the Kunene River in the north.”¹⁰ This area was and is home to many Indigenous peoples, including the Ovambo, Herero, Nama, Kavango, Damara, Lozi, San, and Tswana nations. German South West Africa became Germany’s largest colonial holding in terms of number of settlers by 1903. In the course of this settler colonial project, the German military and colonizers committed what has been described as the first genocide of the twentieth century.¹¹ In 1904 the Herero people rose up against colonial rule and were defeated. In the aftermath, between forty thousand and seventy thousand Herero people were killed or died as a direct result of German genocide—about 80 percent of the Herero population. This was followed by another failed uprising and mass killings of the Nama nation, in which about 50 percent of the population died.¹² At the onset of the genocide in German South West Africa, the German general Lothar von Trotha “declared the Herero inhuman, proclaiming in the 2 August 1904 Berliner Lokalanzeiger that ‘no war may be conducted humanely against nonhumans.’”¹³ In addition to direct killings by both colonial troops and individual settlers, the Herero and Nama were forced into the desert to die by thirst and starvation.¹⁴ Survivors were rounded up and sent to forced labor and concentration camps—Konzentrationslager—such as the Shark Island camp in Lüderitz Bay.¹⁵

Looking at historical images through the lens of visual and critical media studies makes clear the foundational role of the visual in conceptualizing the

human and categorizing who is marked as nonhuman. I do not reproduce any of the images from the archive here, as I recognize the contradiction in my work, in which looking at the photographs reproduces the dynamics I theorize. There is a push and pull that I ultimately discuss here through the language of the trophy and the appeal. Looking can reproduce the harm of nonconsent and retraumatize those who must look. At the same time, images provide powerful evidence useful in the process of reparation. By not showing the images, but nevertheless engaging them, I think through how to represent evidence of violence without reproducing violence, even as I am implicated. Moreover, I write from the complicated positionality of being a white Jewish American descended from Holocaust survivors, who were wealthy, ownership-class Germans before the rupture that the Third Reich represented for assimilated German Jews. I do not know what my grandparents' position was on Second Reich German colonialism, but they undoubtedly benefited from it before being classified themselves as racial inferiors and deported to camps. As a third-generation American, I both carry this familial trauma and benefit from the United States' own brand of white supremacy.

Memory and Genocides

The dominant idea that there is a separation between German colonialism under the Second Reich and the Third Reich is dependent on a view of history as episodic instead of continuous. Against historical forgetting, I develop a visual genealogy of German settler colonialism in South West Africa that recovers the traces not only in the historical archive but in cultural memory, in that figural palimpsest, that “field of . . . documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times.”¹⁶ A visual language of racialized codes links colonial history to later Nazi expansionist and racial policies—including anti-Blackness in eugenicist work and the camp system—that carried from South West Africa to Germany. In South West Germany, this included the presentation of Black Africans as uncivilized, criminal, inhuman—key to this imagination was the frequent imaging of Black people who have had extraordinary violence done to their bodies. These racist visual codes were in conversation with racial science and popular racist imagery that was being produced across the colonial West at this time, especially in the United States in the aftermath of Reconstruction.

In collective popular memory practice and policy alike, the differential treatments of the Herero genocide and the Shoah represent a deep failure to contend with the ongoing effects of the history of German South West Africa in present-day Namibia, Germany, and the Herero and Nama diaspora. The failure to

contend with both anti-Blackness and anti-Indigenous settler colonialism at the core of Nazi ideology both indicates and enables a willful omission of Black people from post-Holocaust memorial or reparation work globally, which rarely includes an engagement with anti-Black racism. Scholars who contend with historical violence and the Holocaust in particular must attend to the ideological travels from the Second to the Third Reich, and the ways in which events in the German colonies shaped German identity in the metropole.¹⁷

Scholars including Jürgen Zimmerer, Benjamin Madley, Sven Lindquist, and Enzo Traverso have tracked the ideological and genealogical routes from the Shark Island camp to the camp at Auschwitz.¹⁸ Work has been done, largely in a European academic context, to connect the nascent ideology and genocidal practices of German South West Africa under the Second Reich to the Nazi ideology and systematic genocide of the Third Reich. However, this work often fails to contend with the thread of anti-Blackness that remains unbroken through both regimes. For example, Madley argues that German South West Africa was the “incubator” for later Nazi ideology and practices, and that the Nazi regime borrowed the language of racist policies around interracial sexual relations from the Second Reich’s anti-Black colonial projects.¹⁹ The Herero genocide was not merely a practice round for the Holocaust. Madley also fails to contend with the specificity of anti-Black racism, the continuing colonization of South West Africa, and the experiences of Black victims and survivors of the Nazi regime.²⁰ The colonization of Africa and German anti-Blackness did not disappear after the Herero genocide. Furthermore, they were not simply replaced by antisemitism and a focus on Slavic land for the project of Lebensraum.

Alexander Weheliye identifies and critiques this common tendency toward elision. For example, he critiques Giorgio Agamben for leveraging the “colonial prehistory of concentration camps” only to argue that the camps’ true telic significance becomes apparent when they are annexed into the legal state of exception during the Third Reich. Nevertheless, the effects of colonial eugenics carried out in South West Africa during Germany’s colonial period were not confined to this locale, but, more crucially, helped establish German bourgeois society during colonialism and after.²¹

The visual culture that came out of the colony and circulated to the metropole was key in cohering the figuration of the German as imperial master, in which national pride is based on conquest and colonial opportunity. Scholars such as Steinmetz and Madley point out that “South West Africa’s first German governor, Heinrich Goering, was the father of the Nazi Reichsmarschall Hermann Goering” and that “the majority of German Namibians were enthusiastic Nazis during the 1930s and 1940s.”²² Yet these claims seem to operate on a conception of

generations as separate iterations rather than constructed demarcations within the overlapping and ceaseless stream of time. Key ideologues of Nazi Germany, most notably the anthropologist Eugen Fischer, did in fact directly develop the racial beliefs they would later circulate within Germany while in the colony. Fischer, who served as chair of the anatomy department at Freiburg University beginning in 1918 and director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics in Berlin from 1927 to 1942, traveled to German South West Africa in 1908 and conducted a study published in 1913 as *Die Rehobother Bastards*. This study described the mixed-race children of Germans and Africans—largely German men and Khoisan, and later Herero, women—as “bastards” and was seminal in the burgeoning field of eugenics not only in Germany but in the United States and Britain.²³ *Die Rehobother Bastards* drew on photography as a method of visual “evidence” of racial degeneration through miscegenation. Many of the photographs were taken by Fischer himself.²⁴ Also in 1913, Fischer suggested that African prisoners sentenced to death be sent to Germany alive, to better preserve the soft parts of the body for scientific study.²⁵

Nazi racial ideology against Jews both played on existing European anti-semitism, built on German anti-Blackness as produced by colonial racial science, and continued via racist propaganda against primarily French troops of African origin during World War I and during the occupation that followed. Anti-Black propaganda proliferated as the Nazis gained power—a propaganda slide from circa 1933 depicts two well-dressed women in makeup with their arms around each other—one is Black, one is white. The text reads: “Das Ergebnis! Der Rassestolz Schwindet” (The result: Racial pride fades).²⁶ In 1928 Fischer began a comprehensive ethnological survey of Germany, toward, he claimed, preserving a distinct German race. As Nazis were building their racial propaganda machine, an ideological and rhetorical line was drawn from the Rehoboth Bastards to the “Rhineland Bastards,” the children of German women and Black African troops stationed in Germany during World War I. In April 1933 “Hermann Göring ordered that the local authorities collect information on their numbers and whereabouts,” and in 1937 “the Nazi regime consulted Eugen Fischer . . . Special Commission No. 3 was formed by the Gestapo,” with Fischer and Wolfgang Abel from the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute on the board. “The commission’s task was to identify and sterilize the Rhineland children . . . by 1937 almost four hundred, all in their teens, had been forcibly sterilized.”²⁷ The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, with Fischer at its helm, was at the center of Nazi racial politics and was directly involved in the Nazi genocide of Jews and Roma-Sinti; Fischer’s images from South West Africa were used in the institute’s propaganda materials. In one educational slide from 1936, a portrait of a Black woman in profile is juxtaposed with an image of a blonde, light-

skinned woman. Both are mixed race—the caption on the slide reads “Baßtard-frauen aus Südwe.rafrika; die eine ähnelt dem europäißen, die andere dem hottentottißen Erßcheinungsbild” (Bastard women from South West Africa; One resembles the European, the other the Hottentot).²⁸

The concealment of and inattention to the archive of Black German and Indigenous Herero and Nama history that I describe is increasingly being countered by Afro-Germans and allies. Namibian historians and institutions collect oral histories that describe the experiences of those directly affected by German colonization.²⁹ In Berlin, this is evidenced by community involvement in Coco Fusco’s performance of material from the Blue Book, protests of Herero skulls at the Charité Museum, the push to change street names celebrating colonization, and an ongoing grassroots “people’s history” movement that gives postcolonial tours of Berlin and of the German History Museum.³⁰ Only as recently as October 2016, the German History Museum ran its first exhibit on the history of German colonialism, titled *German Colonialism: Fragments Past and Present*, which made stark the previous absence of colonial histories while signaling a potential shift in the treatment of German colonialism in the metropole.³¹ However, the visual archive remains thoroughly colonized.

The Colonial Album

In looking at photo albums from German South West Africa, pictures that appear to show no overt violence at all are nevertheless marked by the colony’s genocidal history. In previous studies of German colonialism, images are often presented as illustrations of historical fact rather than texts in their own right. They are presented as obvious or marginal, and they are removed from their original context. The effect is that images appear to be random, or the intent of their juxtaposition is lost; an image of exceptional violence, such as a lynching, may exist in the same album as jovial moments of everyday life, such as coquettish portraits of German soldiers having a naked swim party. Included in the Prussian Secret State Archives in Berlin are what appear to be souvenir albums compiled for sale to the public, and more personal snapshot albums. I consider individual photographs as texts and read the album as an artifact. Colonial albums present an archival challenge: sometimes their provenance is not documented, and it is unclear who assembled them or for what purpose. Photographs in the archive are often preserved in a more haphazard manner than official or formal documents and often have less metadata. Because of the overall lack of information and care given to each photo album, questions arise: Who is its creator? Has it been assembled randomly, or

constructed purposefully as a mode of preservation? In what ways has the album been amended since its original assembling?

It is possible to infer, based on the colonial presence in the late nineteenth and very early twentieth century, that the albums I encountered at the Prussian Secret State Archives belonged to members of the *Schutztruppe*, the volunteer colonial forces. This is made more likely because the albums reside in German archives and contain a proliferation of images of men in uniform. On sight, it is difficult to place the specific dates of many of the images beyond a general range of years, and in some cases, this range is the full span of Germany's brief colonial reign. The colony of German South West Africa, as a site of visual production, only produced colonial images because the photographers were always colonizers: German and later British soldiers, administrators, settlers, missionaries. Joachim Zeller writes, "Questions about African self-representation during the war simply do not arise."³² This is read both as an indictment about the attention of scholars and as a dearth in the archive—cameras were not available to Indigenous Africans, and little work has been done to imagine or analyze the resistant modes of self-representation practiced by Africans in front of the camera. The camera remained in the hands of the colonizer as a weapon of colonization; the German and the African alike were captured only by the settler's gaze.

The colonial albums contain photographs of men and women in German-style clothing who are likely African Christians, Ovambo or San, in addition to numerous snapshots of white German men in and out of uniform. These images are present in the same albums as images of Herero and other groups of Indigenous African people wearing traditional dress or whatever has been afforded to them—sometimes burlap sacks, in the camp system and the servitude that preceded and followed the *Konzentrationslager*. Images of Indigenous Africans are often on the same page or in the same image as hunting trophies. One page of an album features four photographs: a leopard tied by its feet and hanging from a wooden pole carried by two men; a pile of antelope surrounded by German officers; two officers flanking five dead wildebeest strung from a tree; and a photograph of Herero men lined up for the camera.³³ Such juxtapositions liken people to literal trophies or objects of fascination. These images coexist in beautifully bound photo albums. In one gray, cloth-bound, arts and crafts-style album with gold metallic and floral design details from circa 1904–9, photographs include the aforementioned images of naked German officers relaxing, one posing in just his military cap beside a swimming hole.³⁴ These images are not visibly captioned. It is possible that the caption has faded or is written on the back of the photograph, but upon examining them in the archive there is no textual index. The image must speak for itself, or the researcher must infer or invent a narrative.

Photographs of atrocities by German colonial officers or settlers were circulated, like the skins of leopards or horns of antelope, as trophies. These same photographs were later used to disparage Germany's behavior in the colonies. As in the United States, lynching postcards were circulated not only in the colony but in Germany. One postcard depicts German soldiers "packing skulls into crates, for export to university collections and race scientists in Germany."³⁵ A 1907 German war chronicle details, horribly, that "Herero women have removed the flesh [from the skulls of murdered Herero people] with the aid of glass shards."³⁶ This is presented as gendered labor—it reads as perhaps a kind of abject maternal labor, within a racial logic in which the "desire that engenders future" is denied, and reproduction can only ever be that of *things*.³⁷

Perpetrators have long recorded their own violence against dehumanized others, a visual calculus that extends beyond the case of German South West Africa. Lynching photographs from the United States also contend with the transnational logic of Black suffering and death captured and circulated as spectacle. In all cases, the atrocity photograph performs multiple functions; it moves between trophy and appeal, between the economy of perpetrator pleasure and the calculations of humanitarian demand.³⁸ Representation and identification in the space of atrocity photography are complicated by positionality. The Herero saw images of the genocide against them in German homes and British colonial courts—certainly these images have been seen and are used as evidence by Herero making claims in the present moment. For spectators who might also be victims, the image might be a reminder that they are still living, but under threat of death. Indeed, the threat of death or the status of having been always already marked for death is a function of control.³⁹

The 1904–9 album, with its gold metallic details and naked German officers, includes a photograph of an African man with a chain around his neck in front of a whitewashed brick wall. The links of the chain are looped over his arm. While his hands are clasped, they do not appear to be bound, and he holds his hat in his hands. A German officer in uniform stands next to the man. The officer's hands are on his hips, and he looks directly at the camera. The African man, who remains chained, looks at the ground. On the left side of the photograph, a corrugated metal door stands open. A Black child leans slightly against the door, one hand to his chin as if in contemplation, looking at the scene. Compositional details mark these photographs as different from biometric images collected in police albums or the eugenicist portraits of Eugen Fischer. The colonial album is marked by histories of classification but also exceeds them.⁴⁰ The child in the image is identifiable as Bambusen—a position of servitude forced on African male children, enabled by genocide—by his mix of military and nonmilitary dress.⁴¹ Thousands of the

Herero orphans of the gallows and the camps became servants to the murderers of their parents, in an intimate, colonial-patriarchal mode of relating. The Bambusen were frequently photographed sitting at the feet of their German enslavers. They were, through the genocidal destruction of lineage and family ties, bereft of names but for the one they were given by the conqueror, as well as identity or culture beyond the German uniforms they had been dressed up in.⁴² With the expansion of the photographic frame to include other witnesses, like the Bambusen, there is an attention to composition over classification that nevertheless traffics in the aesthetic languages of these classificatory images—the racial lexicon of the scientist enters the lens of the amateur.

Shadows and Traces

In one box of loose photographs at the Prussian Secret State Archives, I find, first, an image of a caged leopard and then an image of a Herero woman.⁴³ Unlike the albums, there is no sense of purposeful juxtaposition, but in both photographs, the leopard and the woman are literally cast in the shadow of a German photographer, identifiable by the outline of his military cap. Sitting in the archive, I read the shadow cast over the subject as the metaphorical, violent settler gaze of the photographer. The proximity of this shadow gaze looming over both the leopard and the woman evokes the approximation of Blackness and animality. In the imaginary of Africa as exotic, he saw the woman and the leopard as the same. The Herero woman in the photograph looks back at the photographer, squinting with sun or feeling. She holds her wrap to her body. Regardless of the real details of her life, in the photograph, she is trapped within the historical narrative of German colonial genocide.⁴⁴ She is subject to the logic of the perpetrator's camera, whether or not she is in imminent danger.

Photographs of Herero and other Indigenous African women are framed through the gaze of colonial desire. This violating gaze can also be read in photographs of Herero male youth, and in the literal ownership of the bodies of Bambusen. In an analysis of photographs taken in the twentieth century by the Malian photographer Seydou Keïta, Teju Cole writes,

The difference between the images taken by colonists or white adventurers and those made for the sitter's personal use is especially striking in photographs of women. In the former, women are being looked at against their will, captive to a controlling gaze. In

the latter, they look at themselves as in a mirror, an activity that always involves seriousness, levity, and an element of wonder.⁴⁵

Many of the images of women in the colonial albums are with German officers. In one, a blonde bearded German man is surrounded by four smiling African women in long skirts, aprons, and head wraps. A small African child, mostly naked, looks up at the man. The German man's hand is in his pocket. The women are close enough to touch him, and their bodies overlap in the image. In another set of two photographs placed side by side in an album—the same album as the hunting photographs—a German man in uniform and an African woman wearing a head wrap and long white dress stand near each other. They look like shy lovers in the empty landscape. They both face the camera and smile, but with a cautious distance between them. Her arms wrap around her own waist, his hands are on his hips. The next photograph is only of the woman; she stands sideways but faces the camera, smiling but with one hand over her mouth, evoking shyness. Two small African girls, also in light-colored dresses and head wraps, play in the dirt behind her.⁴⁶

The relationship between the man and the woman can only be read through the lens of colonial race relations; while consenting miscegenation was disciplined and policed in German South West Africa as well as in Germany, the 1918 Blue Book documents cases of sexual violence against Herero women and reports, “Evidence of violation of women and girls is overwhelming, but so full of filthy and atrocious details as to render publication undesirable.”⁴⁷ Endemic sexual violence is also heavily a part of the Herero oral history and collective memory of the genocide and the broader colonial period.⁴⁸ In one of the few surviving photographs from the Shark Island concentration camp, a man identified as Dr. Gühne is posed, in an echo of the (superficially) more light-hearted album images, in military uniform and at the center of a group of Herero women.⁴⁹ The image echoes other photographs of German men in uniform taken with African women. However, in the Shark Island camp photograph, the women's physical and emotional distress is visually legible; in another from Shark Island, a young girl clutches the remains of a clearly torn-off dress between her legs. In all the images of Herero women with German men, questions of consent and the gaze are at play, but they are particularly exposed in these carceral images. David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen write,

As in all the camps, rape was common on Shark Island, and the sexual exploitation of Herero women was not merely accepted—it was actively celebrated. . . . many pornographic and semi-

pornographic images [were] taken of African women by German soldiers during the war. Some were made into postcards and sent to Germany or otherwise distributed in colony.⁵⁰

Images of sexual violence and coercion circulated as trophies, then were documented in the Blue Book as appeal—now, reading these more and less apparently violent images together, I am struck with the thought that the best we might do is to dispose of these colonizer’s photographs, to not look at these women through the lens of German lust and repugnance for the sexualized and dehumanized black body.⁵¹ It is a perpetration of violence in and of itself, to not be able to look away.

Tina Campt writes of ethnographic photos in a South African archive: “Viewed in their historical and institutional context, they witness a transliteration of beauty into racialized cultural categories.”⁵² The contestations of these transliterations are on display in these images that simultaneously evoke intimacy and violence in the context of anxiety about miscegenation and the impossibility of consent—not only in the concentration camp but in the carceral conditions of forced labor that constituted the colonial farm.⁵³ One photograph, printed in a collection of colonial photography and originally taken between 1909 and 1915, shows a German man and an African woman together on a bed in the troop’s quarters.⁵⁴ He lies flat, she is raised up on an arm, they both look at the camera. The corrugated metal walls around the bed are home to two large illustrations of the faces of white European women, perhaps clipped from an advertisement.⁵⁵ They smile from the walls, the absent presence of white femininity. The juxtaposition of the Black woman on the white German soldier’s bed and the painted white woman on his wall presents multiple contestations around race, gender, and sexuality in this colonial space. There were comparatively few German women in the colony, although some missionaries came with their families, and a campaign was sponsored by the German Colonial Society to transport white German women to South West Africa in response to concerns about miscegenation.⁵⁶ As suggested by the image of the German soldier and the African woman in the white dress, and by photographs like those collected by Wolfram Hartmann in *Hues between Black and White*, transracial romantic intimacy and sexual exchange—via coercion, transaction, or mutual interest—was captured casually in photographs. The images presented by Hartmann show, for example, African women arm in arm with or on the laps of German men, and family portraits of married German men and African women with their children—before or in defiance of the 1905 ban. While it is certainly possible to imagine consensual interracial relationships in the colony, these too had to exist under the threat of German anxiety about these relationships. The majority of the women pictured in the earlier colonial albums are

African—the scarcity of white women in the colony makes the logic of white femininity more jarring in colonial German visual culture.⁵⁷ In a familiar racist trope, one propaganda illustration depicts two Herero men dressed as farmworkers and brandishing a rifle and club, assaulting a German woman who cowers dramatically. She has one hand over her brow and the other raised toward the men in a gesture of pleading and ineffectual self-defense. A shadowy mass of threatening Hereros approach in the distance.⁵⁸ The lack of white women in the colony, much less the lack of violence against white women in the colony, necessitated caricature over photographic documentation. The fictional, savage, and predatory African men are in stark contrast to the often-chained or starving, very human African men in the colonial albums. In contrast to the many images of seemingly complacent African women with German men in colonial albums, many Germans outside the colony believed that Herero women in particular “often mutilated and ‘roasted’ flesh from the corpses of German soldiers.” In one letter to a German-language newspaper, a man named Karl Brehmer wrote, “One will hardly wonder that the soldiers cannot be constrained from killing such bestial creatures.”⁵⁹ As with all racial grammars, German South West Africa’s is rife with contradictions, which all lead to the same place: the white colonizer’s aspiration for ultimate control over the lives and bodies of Indigenous Black people as well as the land.

In the album containing the photos of the woman in the white dress, the second-to-last album I looked at in the State Archives, I also found a photo of a Black man being hanged by white men. The album begins in 1905 and was purchased from Kodak in Berlin.⁶⁰ In the colonial album, the photograph of the lynching party is on the same page and facing photographs of a swimming hole, an African woman and child in traditional dress, cattle, and mining (it looks like the subjects are panning for gold). The presence of this image in the album, among these other photographs, suggests a quotidian aspect to the execution—it is a normal event. This was the first photograph of a hanging that I came across while conducting my own archival research. Even though I was expecting to encounter such images, after hours of flipping through photographs I was unprepared for the affective impact of an imprint of such blatant violence. In attending to the historical context and the possibility of close reading this photograph, I have to contend with the nagging presence of my position as an embodied spectator as well as a researcher. Viscerality, in this context, operates as a methodology of witnessing, experiencing not only the wave of feeling associated with this evidence of colonial and racialized murder but also the relationship between “embodiment and documentation” and the “fleshiness, or experiential dimension, of the text.”⁶¹ I have to contend with the extent to which my body is the site where I have registered these questions, that I am looking at these images again and again, because I

feel something: What is the desire that led to this documentation and preservation in the archive? Is the perpetrator's photograph driven by a perverse or pornographic desire? What shapes my viewing of this image, and through the image as conduit, the interaction between my embodied self and the lively and dead bodies in the photograph? Who am I when I look at this image, and what would it mean to instead look away? Who am I when I can't look at this image, and what does it mean to look anyway?

The original caption, written in white ink, indicates that the scene is of an execution for the murder of farmers (*Strafgericht an einem Farmermörder*).⁶² The use of *Strafgericht*, which translates to "punishment" but is often used to describe criminal courts, suggests legal legitimacy of the killing, in contrast with the unequivocal *mörder*—murder. The gallows, a large, sturdy structure, appear to be a permanent or semipermanent fixture in the landscape. The photograph is taken from some distance away, the desolate and rocky ground rises up in the foreground and the wooden gallows fills the image, although the camera is angled to show two German men observing. One, heavily mustached and wearing a suit, bow tie, and hat, stands with his hands folded behind his back. The other, in a heavy coat and slacks and wearing a cap, holds a mug and appears to be midconversation or laugh. Two more white men in pants and shirtsleeves, one almost entirely obscured behind the construction of the gallows, appear to be moving bricks. A dog saunters through the frame. A German officer in uniform, his tall leather boots reflecting the light, stands below the body of the hanged man. The officer has one hand on the man's feet and the other raised to his torso, as if to steady the dead man's body for the photograph, under direction from the photographer. He does not look at the camera. Instead, his face is turned slightly away, his head inclined toward the hanged man's leg, his cap almost touching the body. I read this figure as concentrating on the task of holding the body still.⁶³ This macabre labor places the German officer in the photograph but not of the photograph; he is both a perpetrator caught in the act by another perpetrator and a prop, so that the body will not blur in the image but will be reproduced faithfully.

When I first encountered this image and in subsequent readings, my eye has always been drawn elsewhere; I have been unable to focus my gaze at the center of the composition, to look closely at the body of the lynched Black man. I have looked at hundreds of atrocity photographs, the horrors accumulate, and in the desire to look away, I risk blurring this man into a universal and universally Black victim, against the individuality and specificity of his life and death. In the desire to look, I risk affirming the white logic of the dead black body as "spectacle for white pornography."⁶⁴ I make myself look: the distance of the photographer and the contrast in the image obscures the victim's features so that his face appears

in silhouette, almost flattened into a paper cutout portrait. He is a young Black man wearing the worn European-style shirt and slacks of a laborer. His hands are tied behind his back and his feet are bare, and possibly bound. He hangs from the gallows by what looks like wire, as opposed to twisted rope. A European transport driver during the Herero genocide in South West Africa testified in the Blue Book that,

the hanging of natives was a common occurrence. . . . No trial or court was necessary. Many were hanged merely on suspicion. . . . The Germans did not worry about rope. They used ordinary fencing wire, and the unfortunate native was hoisted up by the neck and allowed to die of slow strangulation. This was all done in public, and the bodies were always allowed to hang for a day or so as an example to the other natives.⁶⁵

The hanged black body, in public space and circulated in reproduced image, operated as a warning and a conditioning. These actions and the circulation of their images tore apart communities and family structures. Unlike many lynching photographs from the United States, the frenzied or jubilant mob is not so much a feature of execution photographs from South West Africa. Instead, there are often Germans standing in the margins or in rows or groups as an audience. Inasmuch as mass killing operated to subjugate, in addition to decimate, dysgenic populations, the spectacle of the lynching, both in the United States and in South West Africa, was partly for the satisfaction of the perpetrator. Such spectacles were also, and perhaps even more so, meant to “educate” the survivors.

In the 1905 photograph of the hanged man, there is no indication that the image was reproduced, but it was nevertheless public, as photographs taken of lynchings by professional and amateur photographers alike circulated commercially as part of a cottage souvenir industry. These images allowed white Americans and Europeans to participate in an imagined community of racial domination, cohering white identity through the images of violence against the black body. Photography was fundamental to lynching as publicized mass death that was meant to function as a mode of necro and biopolitical control.⁶⁶ I scrutinize the perpetrators in this image, caught in the act.⁶⁷ The eye focuses not on the black body undone but on the white bodies that are implicated.⁶⁸ The photograph resonates visually with a lynching photograph taken in 1935 by white Mississippian O. N. Pruitt. In it, a white man kneels before the bodies of lynching victims Bert Moore and Dooley Morton to hold them steady, his face turned away from the camera and fully obscured by the brim of his hat. The image, originally printed as a postcard,

was reproduced by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in 1965, amended with only the indictment “MISSISSIPPI.”⁶⁹ These two photographs are not from the same place or time but from within the same ideological scaffolding. The perpetrator or bystander is eager to assist the photographer in documenting the act, to hold the victim’s body steady, in these white supremacist memento mori, to make the aftermath and product of racist violence clearly visible to those who would witness it. The brutal, lurid image must be crisp, the man in the photograph is only concerned at the quality of the product—that is, the photograph as weapon of racial discipline—not that he might be implicated. There are no consequences in the present: indeed, the idea that there could be is unknowable, and the future feels assured, and white.

In my initial observations, while visiting the archive, of the 1905 *Strafgericht an einem Farmermörder* photograph, I did not notice two more figures in the image. They appeared at first as more of the barrels and bricks that surround them. I zoom in on a digital scan of the photograph after returning to the United States and notice that two African women sit with their backs to the gallows, facing the wide open expanse of desert and shrub that fades into the sky. They are barely silhouettes, a swatch of light fabric next to dark, an obscured but dark-skinned face, one looking down, the other looking at her companion. Women were subject to particular gendered violences under German colonial occupation; among them, the burden of being surviving witnesses. I return to the devastating 1907 chronicle that describes the incarcerated Herero women removing the flesh from the bones of murdered Herero men, women, and children so that the remains could be sent to researchers and museums in Europe and the United States.⁷⁰ This ghastly labor—the making of humans into specimens, the witnessing of the “educational” murder—given to Herero women is a perversion of the maternal, the destruction of desire, futurity, reproduction in the mode of generations. But these two women turn their backs to the scene. I want to pay attention to these witnesses, those who refuse to look, these survivors who barely appear, who are looking at something else. This is a mode of intentional parallaxical viewing—to pull one’s eye to the nearly imperceptible figures hiding in an image. I end with these two women; having noticed them, my eye is drawn endlessly to them. Against the additional violence of the settler gaze, this is the oppositional mode of self-representation practiced by these women in front of the camera. The perpetrator steadies the victim’s body for scrutiny; the intended subjugated witnesses withhold their look. To read their turned backs as an act of resistance offers us a gift, a methodology through which we might imagine a different visual lexicon and practice of refusal, as part of a crucial antiracist and decolonial struggle.

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Notes

¹ Claudia Rankine, "The Condition of Black Life Is One of Mourning," *New York Times*, June 22, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/magazine/the-condition-of-black-life-is-one-of-mourning.html?_r=0. Zeb Tortorici, in "Visceral Archives of the Body," defines viscerality as the "experience of intense and highly mediated bodily feelings or affective responses that manifest themselves through conflicting corporeal and emotive reactions," following Elizabeth Freeman's "haptic historiography" and Tina Campt's "haptic temporalities." I extend this definition in relationship to Alexander Weheliye's heuristic *habeas viscus*—*viscus* here as the Latin root of viscera, the internal organs, the gut, or, as Weheliye interprets it, the flesh. See Tortorici, "Visceral Archives of the Body: Consuming the Dead, Digesting the Divine," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 20, no. 4 (2014): 407, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2721375> and Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 72, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373582>.

² Hortense Spillers coins the term *pornotroping* to describe the external imposition of meaning on the Black body, particularly the suffering of bodies of Black women for the pleasure of white people. See Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2, <https://doi.org/10.2307/464747> special issue Culture and Counteremory: The "American" Connection (1987): 73. Weheliye, in *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822376491>, focuses on pornotroping as the element of bare life that is literally naked, the deep sexualization that is paired with subjugation.

³ In the documentary *13th*, the activist Cory Greene, speaking about photos of police violence, says, “We don’t need to see pictures to understand what’s going on, it’s really to . . . speak to the majority of masses who have been ignoring this. . . . But I also think there’s trouble of just showing black bodies as dead bodies too” (dir. Ava DuVernay; Kandoo Films, 2016).

⁴ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

⁵ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

⁶ For example, the NAACP used postcard images taken by perpetrators and bystanders of lynching victims in antilynching campaign posters—in one 1935 circular, which features smiling white children among other figures surrounding a murdered Black man identified as Rubin Stacey, the NAACP amends the image with text. They write, “Do not look at the Negro. His earthly problems are ended. Instead, look at the seven WHITE children who gaze at this gruesome spectacle. Is it horror or gloating on the face of the neatly dressed seven-year-old girl on the right?” Accessed online via Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, *Yale University*, <http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3833735>. The text goes on to imagine the psychological impact on the aforementioned white children. It is fairly clear that this campaign was aimed at a white audience.

⁷ *Scopic regime* as a term was introduced by Christian Metz in *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).

⁸ Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia—an Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Boston: Brill, 2003), xiv. This has particular resonances with the exposure of Britain’s own colonial archives and colonial atrocities—though a later example, the court case that revealed evidence of the Mau Mau encampment in Kenya comes to mind. Blue Book refers to the type of report rather than a proper title; therefore I do not italicize it.

⁹ Silvester and Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found*.

¹⁰ Benjamin Madley, “From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South West Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe,” *European History Quarterly* (July 2005): 35(3), 451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265691405054218>

¹¹ This label has been contested partly because of a lack of documentation (particularly in comparison to the massive bureaucratic archive of the Holocaust) and the context of colonial war—some historians argue that genocidal intent must be proved even in the presence of genocidal acts. The label does not contend with

ongoing settler colonial genocides that predate but continued into the early twentieth century.

¹² The Nama, notably, were referred to by colonists as Hottentots—there is a proliferation in eugenicist writing and imagery of particularly salacious and sustained attention to the Hottentot as racial mythology, especially the figure of the Hottentot woman as subject of hypersexualized racial stereotyping. See, e.g., Siobhan Somerville, “Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, no. 2 (1994): 243–66, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smx6p>; Laura Briggs, “The Race of Hysteria: ‘Overcivilization’ and the ‘Savage’ Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century Obstetrics and Gynecology,” *American Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (2000): 246–73, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2000.0013>.

¹³ Madley, “From Africa to Auschwitz,” 442.

¹⁴ A tactic of expulsion and pursuit through hostile environment that predates but evokes the Armenian genocide.

¹⁵ Jeremy Sarkin, *Colonial Genocide and Reparations Claims in the Twenty-First Century: The Socio-Legal Context of Claims under International Law by the Herero against Germany for Genocide in Namibia, 1904–1908* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2009).

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited by D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 76.

¹⁷ I think about ideological and codes as traveling, as following routes—the routes of enslavement, colonization, diaspora. I am beholden in this spatial conceptualization to M. Jacqui Alexander’s methodology of revealing the ideological commerce between seemingly distinct histories—deliberately jumping sites to connect seemingly ruptural events. See Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822386988>. Naomi Klein also offers a useful example of connecting case studies to build a history of the present, not via comparatives or geographic bounds, but through an ideological rubric. Klein writes, “In the attempt to relate the history of the ideological crusade that has culminated in the radical privatization of war and disaster, one problem recurs: the ideology is a shape-shifter, forever changing its name and switching identities” (*Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* [New York: Picador, 2007], 14).

¹⁸ Jürgen Zimmerer, *From Windhoek to Auschwitz: On the Relationship between Colonialism and the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 2018); Madley, “From Africa to

Auschwitz”; Sven Lindquist, *“Exterminate All the Brutes”*: *One Man’s Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness and the Origins of European Genocide*, translated by Joan Tate (New York: The New Press, 1997); Enzo Traverso, *Origins of Nazi Violence*, translated by Janet Lloyd (New York: The New Press, 2003).

¹⁹ “It is not surprising that Nazis deployed vocabulary nearly identical to German South West African Rassenmischung laws and associated Reichstag debates when they criminalized marriage and sexual intercourse between Jews and ‘Aryan’ Germans. Linguistic connections indicate wholesale borrowing” (Madley, “From Africa to Auschwitz,” 439).

²⁰ Scholars who write on Black Germans under the Nazi regime often focus specifically on this period—see, for instance, Tina Campt, *Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.17684>.

²¹ Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 36.

²² George Steinmetz and Julia Hell, “The Visual Archive of Colonialism: Germany and Namibia,” *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (2006): 173. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-18-1-147>

²³ In 1933 the *New York Times* ran an article about Fischer that praises his work as a boon to science and its aid to anthropological research—“Despite its connection with the ‘national resurgence,’ it is a truly scientific study”—while reassuring readers that the Reich was not about racial superiority, only purity. The article mentions Fischer’s research on “crossings between whites and Hottentots in German South West Africa,” which it praises as a classic. The article further positively compares Fischer’s argument about race and national identity “to that advanced in the United States for preserving national parks free from outside plants, for keeping them in their natural state.” This aligned with existing isolationist and eugenicist views in the United States.

²⁴ Reinhart Kössler writes, “The German term of ‘Bastard,’ as its English equivalent, carries a derogatory meaning that is absent from the ethnonym of Baster which is employed by the community themselves” (*Namibia and Germany: Negotiating the Past* [Windhoek: University of Namibia Press, 2015], 276, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh8r4d4>).

²⁵ “Among the German rank were a large number of medical officers who facilitated the shipment of preserved body parts like brains, penises and noses to Germany. By 1906 research on cadavers was endemic. According to German medical statistics a total of 778 autopsies were conducted in the concentration camps” (Casper W. Erichsen, *Modern Genocide: The Definitive Resource and Document Collection*,

edited by Paul R. Bartrop and Steven Leonard Jacobs [Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO], 1058). In a response to a request by the anthropologist Felix von Luschan, a German lieutenant named Zürn wrote, “In the concentration camps taking and preserving the skulls of Ovaherero prisoners of war will be more readily possible than in the country, where there is always a danger of offending the ritual feelings of the natives” (quoted in Reinhart Kössler, “The Saga of the Skulls: Restitution without Recognition,” in *Namibia and Germany: Negotiating the Past* [Windhoek: University of Namibia Press, 2015], 277).

²⁶ USHMM Collections 1996.A.260 Photograph #17608, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

²⁷ David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust: Germany’s Forgotten Genocide and the Colonial Roots of Nazism* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), 307.

²⁸ These images were accessed by the author at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum archives. The juxtaposed images, taken by Fischer, and the caption on the slide express a deep racial anxiety around passing.

²⁹ See, e.g., Uazuvara Ewald Kapombo Katjivena, *Mama Penee: Transcending the Genocide* (Windhoek: The University of Namibia Press, 2020) as well as the oral history project published as Casper W. Erichsen and Larissa Förster, *What the Elders Used to Say: Namibian Perspectives on the Last Decade of German Colonial Rule* (Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy, 2008).

³⁰ Coco Fusco presented a performance at the Sophiensaele Theater in Berlin in March 2017, of testimonial material from the “Words Cannot Be Found” 1918 Blue Book publication *Report On the Natives of South West Africa and Their Treatment by Germany*. Silvester and Gewalt (2003). See also Werner van Bebber, “Where the Streets Have Bad Names,” *Handelsblatt Global*, November 26, 2017, <https://global.handelsblatt.com/politics/where-the-streets-have-bad-names-851040>; Kössler, “Saga of the Skulls”; Campt, *Other Germans*; and Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

³¹ *German Colonialism: Fragments Past and Present*, Contemporary And, 2016, <https://www.contemporaryand.com/exhibition/german-colonialism-fragments-past-and-present/>.

³² Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller, *Genocide in German South-West Africa: The Colonial War (1904–1908) in Namibia and Its Aftermath* (Monmouth, UK: Merlin, 2008), 317.

³³ The proximity of African men and animals, especially dead trophy animals, in these images, is usefully read through the lens of work on Blackness and

animalization, the intersections of critical race theory and animal studies. See Che Gossett, “Blackness, Animality, and the Unsovereign,” Verso Blog, September 8, 2015, <http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2228-che-gossett-blackness-animality-and-the-unsovereign>.

³⁴ My photo documentation of this archive was lost along with my phone in 2015, but from my notes and recollection, there was at least one full page of photographs from this swim party. While there is no explicit evidence of homosexuality in these portraits of homosocial comradery, for general and related reading on colonialism and sexuality, see Robert Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2002, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203930175>); Arthur N. Gilbert, “The ‘Africaine’ Courts-Martial: A Study of Buggery in the Royal Navy,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 1 (1974): 111-22, https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v01n01_09; Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520950405>; and Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203699546>.

³⁵ Steinmetz and Hell, “Visual Archive of Colonialism.”

³⁶ Madley, “From Africa to Auschwitz,” 437.

³⁷ Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 1987.

³⁸ The desire for images to act as evidence of or in the face of atrocity is captured in Georges Didi-Huberman’s *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), as well as Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

³⁹ On the quality of “still living,” see Leigh Raiford, “Photography and the Practices of Critical Black Memory,” *History and Theory* 48, no. 4 (2009): 121, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2009.00522.x>.

⁴⁰ Lorena Rizzo, “Shades of Empire: Police Photography in German South-West Africa,” *Visual Anthropology* 26 (2013): 328, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08949468.2013.804701>. In 1912 the “central government in Windhoek issues a directive” regarding new and specific standards for arrest, which included “fingerprinting . . . and Bertillonage, i.e., a standardized anthropometric description combined with a portrait photograph and a . . . spoken portrait” (336).

⁴¹ In one photograph, from an album circa 1905–07 (IV Nr. 32), eight Germans in military uniform stand, one holding two dogs on a leash. Five Herero youth squat

in front of them, three in military caps. The names of the German men, but not of the boys, are labeled under the image. Steinmetz discusses the “partial similarity” of these children to the German soldiers—a mimetic training in which they were given German names, parts of German uniforms to wear, and were indoctrinated into military sociality while remaining servants to those who killed their families and communities. See George Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 212, DOI: 10.7208/chicago/9780226772448.001.0001.

⁴² Orlando Patterson, in the context of US chattel slavery, describes natal alienation as the “alienation of the slave from all formal, legally enforceable ties of ‘blood’” and from all “‘rights’ or claims of birth” (*Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982], 7, 5).

⁴³ Prussian Secret State Archives, IX. HA Bilder SPAE VII Nr. 2157, Photo 14, Photo 56. Photo #56 captioned “[obscured word] Schönheit D.S.W.A.,” Prussian Secret State Archives, Berlin, 2015.

⁴⁴ In my work on selfies, I attend to the disruption of the perpetrator gaze; in Holocaust photography, this is defined by photographs of Einsatzgruppen firing squads; in one photograph on display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “the barrel of the executioner’s rifle protrudes into the shot . . . the gun and the camera occupy the same space in the landscape. As Hirsch points out in *The Generation of Postmemory*, the spectator unwittingly occupies the ‘Nazi gaze,’ in which ‘the photographer, the perpetrator, and the spectator share the same space of looking at the victim’ and the victims ‘are shot before they are shot’” (JB Brager, “Selfie Control,” *The New Inquiry*, March 17, 2014, <https://thenewinquiry.com/selfie-control/>).

⁴⁵ Teju Cole, *Known and Strange Things* (New York: Random House, 2016), 129.

⁴⁶ From the album GStA PK, IX. HA, SPAE, IV Nr. 41 Deutsch-Südwestafrika, Enthält u.a.: Otawi; Outjo; Tsu-meb-Mine; Rietfontein; Grootfontein; Namutoni; Waterberg, ca. 1904–1909, Prussian Secret State Archives, Berlin, 2015.

⁴⁷ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found*, 121.

⁴⁸ Herbert Jauch, Lucy Edwards, and Braam Cupido, “Inequality in Namibia,” in *Tearing Us Apart: Inequalities in Southern Africa* (Johannesburg: Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, 2011), 185; Donald G. McNeil Jr., “Its Past on Its Sleeve, Tribe Seeks Bonn’s Apology,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/31/world/its-past-on-its-sleeve-tribe-seeks-bonn-s-apology.html>.

⁴⁹ A German lieutenant named Düring brought a roll box camera to Shark Island in 1906 while stationed in South West Africa. Out of the images taken by Düring—the Sam Cohen Library of the Swakopmund Scientific Society in Swakopmund, Namibia holds several albums with photographs by him—“only five of Düring’s photographs of Shark Island are known to have survived” (Olusoga and Erichsen, *Kaiser’s Holocaust*, 212).

⁵⁰ Olusoga and Erichsen, *Kaiser’s Holocaust*, 213.

⁵¹ I use the phrase *black body* here to specifically point to a material dehumanization that denies personhood; the lust and repugnance I describe here is not about Black people, it is about the body made flesh. A number of scholars have written about anti-Black racism and the paradox of white sexual desire, especially Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe.” See also Michele Wallace, “The Imperial Gaze: Venus Hottentot, Human Display, and World’s Fairs,” in *Black Venus 2010: They Called Her “Hottentot”* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 149–54. The story of the Hottentot Venus is an extraordinary illustration of the subject of the black body as source of fascination, spectacle, and illicit desire, as well as disgust in the white gaze.

⁵² Campt, *Listening to Images*, 50.

⁵³ Miscegenation was illegal under a colonial law passed in 1905 in German South West Africa (Deutsch Südwestafrika DSWA), and similar laws were introduced, though not passed until November 26, 1935, within Germany. See Madley, “From Africa to Auschwitz,” 438.

⁵⁴ “A German man and a local woman on his (?) bed in the troops’ quarters. (Basler Africa Bibliographien, Photoarchiv, Album unbekannt, 1909–1915),” published in Wolfram Hartmann, *Hues between Black and White: Historical Photography from Colonial Namibia 1860s to 1915* (Windhoek: Out of Africa Publishers, 2004).

⁵⁵ Although I do not contend with colonial advertising in this project—as David Ciarlo does in *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany*—“Neither the growth of German colonial sciences, such as anthropology, after the 1870s nor the beginning of direct German colonial rule in 1884 had much impact on commercial articulations within the German metropole. The construction of a racial—and ultimately racist—imaginary of colonialism in Germany . . . flowed not from the established ideologies of race science or colonialism but rather from the new connections of commerce” (215). Ciarlo tracks the appearance of the visual markers of minstrelsy, originating in a US context. However, the postcard or advertising trade card as colonial fetish object appears in this project—e.g. the distribution of colonial images from Namibia as commodity items, the pinning of a

German advertisement to the barracks wall in a photograph. See David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjghw4v>).

⁵⁶ The society “allocated money for selected unmarried women’s free ship passage to German South West Africa, where they would work as domestic servants for colonist families until bachelor colonists married them. Women in Germany who were already engaged or married to German colonists were also to receive free passage. . . . By 1907 it had given free passage to 111 unmarried German women.” Yet Lorna Wildenthal quotes the colonialist economist Moritz J. Bonn as saying, “When discussing the high numbers of mixed-descent children born outside marriage, ‘the main cause of bastardization in Africa was not the absence of white women but the presence of black ones’” (Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001], 91, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822380955>).

⁵⁷ For more on the roles of white German women in the colonial context, see Daniel Joseph Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad: Cultural Policies and National Identity in Namibia* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002); See also Hans Grimm’s *Südafrikanische Novellen* and scholarship on his work, including Sara Lennox, “Race, Gender, and Sexuality in German Southwest Africa: Hans Grimm’s Südafrikanische Novellen,” in *Germany’s Colonial Pasts*, edited by Eric Ames, Marcia Klotz, and Lora Wildenthal (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 63–75; Maureen O. Gallagher, “Fragile Whiteness: Women and Girls in German Colonial Fiction, 1900–1913,” *Women in German Yearbook* 32 (2016): 111–37, <https://doi.org/10.5250/womgeryearbook.32.2016.0111>; and Gunther Packendorf, “Of Colonizers and Colonized: Hans Grimm on German South West Africa,” *Social Dynamics* 12, no. 2 (1986): 39–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533958608458405>.

⁵⁸ Zimmerer and Zeller, *Genocide in German South-West Africa*, 186.

⁵⁹ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found*, xxiv.

⁶⁰ Prussian Secret State Archive, GStA PK, IX. HA, SPAE, IV Nr. 36.

⁶¹ Tortorici, “Visceral Archives of the Body,” 408; Amber Musser, *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 23, DOI:10.18574/nyu/9781479891818.003.0001.

⁶² Thank you to Nil Uzun for helping me decipher twentieth-century cursive handwriting.

⁶³ I am reminded of the 1910 lynching photograph taken by Mississippian O. N. Pruitt, in which a white man in a hat kneels before the bodies of two hanged men

to hold them steady, his face turned away from the camera. See Raiford, “Lynching, Visuality, and the Un/Making of Blackness,” 29, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10757163-20-1-22>.

⁶⁴ Rankine, “Condition of Black Life.”

⁶⁵ Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found*, 120.

⁶⁶ Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” translated by Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 1140, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478007227>

⁶⁷ See here the series *Erased Lynchings* by Ken Gonzalez-Day, who presents historical photographs of lynchings that have been manipulated to remove the image of the victim. The photographs, then, are without violence, uncanny particularly because some of them are iconic, as the viewer recognizes the absence and knows that there is meant to be something going on. Significantly, many of these images include white participants and spectators at the lynchings, which are left in the image, and become, with the victim absented, the focal point of the image.

⁶⁸ As a media practice, this archival implication links with calls to focus our contemporary smartphone lenses on police, to document evidence of violence, rather than sharing retraumatizing images of the killings of Black people or capturing images of protestors that might be used as surveilling evidence by the police.

⁶⁹ Berkley Hudson, “O. N. Pruitt’s Possum Town: The ‘Modest Aspiration and Small Renown’ of a Mississippi Photographer, 1915–1960,” in “The Photography Issue,” special issue, *Southern Cultures* 13, no. 2 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1353/scu.2007.0016>: 52–77; Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

⁷⁰ Daniel A. Gross, “The Troubling Origins of the Skeletons in a New York Museum,” *New Yorker*, January 24, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/thetroubling-origins-of-the-skeletons-in-a-new-york-museum>.