

JEREMIAH GARSHA
Cambridge

PICTURING GERMAN COLONIALISM: "SIMPLICISSIMUS" 1904 SPECIAL ISSUE

Three Africans, shirtless and dressed in grass skirts, climb over a pile of stones and descend upon large boulders of gold. Having reached their destination, they say, in German, "We mine for riches of gold again, otherwise the Europeans [will] bring us their culture."¹ That was the caption on the front-page illustration that greeted readers when they picked up the 3 May 1904 copy of "Simplicissimus". The reader quickly saw that the satirical German weekly magazine "Simplicissimus" had in fact devoted an entire fifteen-page issue to one particular theme, European colonialism.² In the sixty-one years the magazine was published, from 1896 until 1967, this was the only issue that fully and explicitly addressed colonialism.³ Why, in May 1904, did the editors of the magazine choose the African imperial project as their central theme? In what ways did the authors and illustrators of this particular issue choose to portray and protest against colonialism and what does this say about the mindset of the German intelligentsia during this moment?

These questions are not easily answered. Certainly it is clear that, as a weekly publication, the magazine reflected the current events that would best resonate with their audience and thus sell more printed copies. Yet, the colonial project had existed long before May 1904 and would continue to dominate global events for decades after. While this forty-first issue was completely dedicated to exploring and protesting colonialism, the very next issue, printed just one week later, returned to "Simplicissimus" usual general mockery of conservative Wilhelmine institutions, particularly the church, the aristocracy, and elected officials.⁴

¹ "Simplicissimus: Online-Edition." KlassikStiftung Weimar, accessed 22 June 2012. [http://www.simplicissimus.info/index.php?id=6&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1\[issueId\]=484&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1\[action\]=showIssuePages&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1\[controller\]=YearRegister&cHash=86595dfd8a3c0f5b1e5324655b7ec93f](http://www.simplicissimus.info/index.php?id=6&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1[issueId]=484&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1[action]=showIssuePages&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1[controller]=YearRegister&cHash=86595dfd8a3c0f5b1e5324655b7ec93f).

² While this was the only special issue dedicated to colonialism, "Simplicissimus" usually ran four to five special issues per year, each one organized around a central theme. What is surprising is that even in the pages of the regular issues, very few essays or illustrations ever addressed colonialism.

³ "Simplicissimus" ran from 1896 to 1944. It was re-released from 1946 to 1950 under the title "Der Simpl" and then again in 1954 until 1967, though by this time it was a remarkably different magazine.

⁴ "Simplicissimus: Online-Edition." KlassikStiftung Weimar, accessed 22 June 2012. [http://www.simplicissimus.info/index.php?id=6&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1\[issueId\]=485&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1\[action\]=showIssuePages&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1\[controller\]=YearRegister&cHash=86595dfd8a3c0f5b1e5324655b7ec93f](http://www.simplicissimus.info/index.php?id=6&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1[issueId]=485&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1[action]=showIssuePages&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pi1[controller]=YearRegister&cHash=86595dfd8a3c0f5b1e5324655b7ec93f).

This article explores the particularity of the “Simplicissimus” 1904 “special issue” by examining three of the illustrations and deconstructing these textual sources against the backdrop of global events. The article begins by setting up the history of the magazine in order to show that “Simplicissimus” represented the attitudes and political mindset of its middle-class authors and audience, who were responding to their lack of political power within the authoritative and militaristic system of government. Next, the article contextualizes the global events surrounding the publication of the forty-first issue, specifically the South African War (1899-1902) and the beginnings of the Imperial German genocide⁵ of the Herero and Nama in South West Africa (1904-1908).⁶ By connecting the “Simplicissimus” colonial issue to the larger historical context, the illustrations are read as texts in order to unpack deeply ingrained signs and discourses.⁷ The three images are united by their depictions of colonial violence as a metaphor for colonial corruption. At their core was a visualization of the brutish European behavior paying out in the periphery, first illustrated by Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* (1899)⁸. Like Conrad, the “Simplicissimus” protest shows that the imperial backlash was not necessarily a call for humanitarianism on the part of colonized people, but rather was centralized around the concept that colonialism was flawed because it turned “good” Europeans into excessive brutes. In this way, the anti-colonial authors themselves were trapped inside of the imperial discourse, and inadvertently supported the very system they attempted to discredit.

In April 1896, Albert Langen, a Munich-born publisher, and Thomas Theodor Heine, a gifted art student from the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, founded “Simplicissimus”, a satiric weekly magazine that was dramatically influenced by

naldb_pil[action]=showIssuePages&tx_lombkswjournaldb_pil[controller]=YearRegister&cHash=8e301f4fd95cf59c37e3a7dad2d260c.

⁵ (Editor’s note) The measures undertaken by the authorities of the German Empire against the Herero and Nama people are termed by the author as genocide in the contemporary understanding of the notion. However, it must be remembered that the term “genocide” was introduced into the science of international law and the science of international relations in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin in his book *Axis in Occupied Europe*, whereas to international law only upon the drawing and adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, i.e. in 1948.

⁶ I use the more recent term “South African War” to refer to what has also been traditionally called “the Boer War.”

⁷ In this regard, my analysis throughout this paper is guided by post-structuralism, where images are deconstructed and unpacked to be read as sources that reveal the author’s conscious and unconscious intentions and world views. “Signs” are defined here as anything that is polysemous. That is to say, a “sign” is anything that has multiple meanings and stands in for something more than itself. A “discourse” is the interpretations of signs, often expressed as a duality between “this and its other.” For an excellent introduction of poststructuralist theory, signs, and discourse, see C. G. Brown’s *Post-modernism for Historians* (Pearson Education Limited, Harlow, England 2005). Readers may also be interested in Roland Barthes’ essay *Rhetoric of the Image*, in: *Image, Music, Text* (Hill and Wang, New York 1994), p. 32-51.

⁸ (Editor’s note) The Polish title of Joseph Conrad’s book is “Jądro ciemności”.

the emerging aesthetic style of the Jugendstil movement, the German version of the French Art Nouveau.⁹ From its inception, "Simplicissimus" was centered in Munich, the epicenter of Germany's modern movements of art and literature during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Langen and Heine named their publication after the protagonist in the 1669 novel *Der abenteuerlich "Simplicissimus" Teutsch* [*The Adventures of German „Simplicissimus"*], by author and satirist Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen. The novel was one of Germany's first and best works to use the "picaresque" style, a satirical type of prose fiction which details the humorous adventures of a witty and socially lower-class hero through the corruptions of society.¹⁰ With its allusion to Grimmelshausen, Langen and Heine's magazine underscore its direct connection to a Germanic legacy of satirical social commentary. In naming the publication after a working-class hero, the title "Simplicissimus" implies, while a product of left-leaning intellectuals, the authors and artists were in favor, theoretically, of the lower-class masses and directly opposed to the traditional oligarchy of right-wing conservatism.

"Simplicissimus" critiques of authoritarian structures in government most often took the form of caricature. In a promotion of the Jugendstil style, the magazine eschewed lengthy text and instead relied on large, often full-page, colorful illustrations. As a literal translation of its name suggests, "Simplicissimus" presented itself in one of the simplest forms of expression, cartoons and political illustrations, and was thus more accessible to all segments of society. The standard format of the magazine featured a provocative cover illustration, followed by numerous smaller cartoon strips or and illustrations, a few poems and short stories, and an assortment of advertisements. The brief poems and stories were penned by young leftist authors, and in the early years of publication these authors helped shape "Simplicissimus" sharp satirical style.¹¹ "Simplicissimus" provocative style and substance often caused controversy, which added to its appeal.

The German government's censorship attempts only dramatically increased "Simplicissimus" readership. In just a four-year period, between 1903 and 1907, the magazine was confiscated twenty-seven times.¹² In its second year of publication, the thirty-first issue of "Simplicissimus" featured a caricature and short poem mocking Kaiser Wilhelm II during his 1889 visit to Palestine. In response, the German police force cracked down on the "Simplicissimus" contributors. In order to

⁹ S. Eskilson, *Graphic Design: A New History*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2007, p. 96.

¹⁰ J. Heckman, *Emblematic Structures in Simplicissimus Teutsch*, "Modern Language Notes" Vol. 84, No. 6, Dec. 1969, p. 889; U. Wicks, *The Nature of Picaresque Narrative: A Modal Approach*, "Publications of the Modern Language Association of America" Vol. 89, No. 2, Mar. 1974, p. 248-249.

¹¹ P. Jelavich, *Art and Mammon in Wilhelmine Germany: The case of Frank Wedekind*, "Central European History" Vol. 12, No. 3, Sept. 1979, p. 222.

¹² A. T. Allen, *Satire and Society in Wilhelmine Germany: Kladderadatsch and Simplicissimus, 1890-1914*, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington 1984, p. 41.

avoid arrest, publisher Albert Langen fled to Switzerland, and for five years edited the magazine in exile. Illustrator Thomas Heine and author Frank Wedekind were arrested and given six-month prison sentences for the crime of *majestäts-beleidigung*, publicly insulting the monarch.¹³ The scandal, dubbed “The ‘Simplicissimus’ Affair,” greatly increased demand for the magazine, and served to popularize the antiestablishment reputation of the artists.

“Simplicissimus” can be credited with launching the careers of Bruno Paul, a famed architect and illustrator, Frank Wedekind, the well-known dramatist, authors Gustav Meyrink, Heinrich and Thomas Mann, and, most famously, authors Hermann Hesse and Rainer Maria Rilke. It also made cover illustrator and co-founder Thomas Heine “the most popular and well-known illustrator in Germany” during the Wilhelmine and Weimar period.¹⁴ The founding members and subsequent contributors of “Simplicissimus” were usually members to the Munich-based Jugendstil art movement. Generally, they were leftist aligned, internationally versed members of the German liberal middle-class, who, like the Social Democrats, lacked political power for much of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Both groups claimed to feel an affinity for the broad working-class.¹⁵ The cartoon format made the magazine quite popular with the masses, allowing the style and medium of the cartoons to convey the artists’ layered meanings and messages.¹⁶ “Simplicissimus” was widely circulated across all segments of German society.¹⁷ It was not the working-class, however, who were the target audience, but rather the emerging German middle-class.

The creation of an urbanized middle-class within Germany was a product of the Second Industrial Revolution (1870-1914). During this period, most of Europe experienced profound social and economic changes. Within Germany, however, the strong ethos of Prussian conservatism and militaristic culture continued to shape the domestic and foreign policy of the ruling elites. In Germany, wrote historian Felix Gilbert, “aristocratic values were not replaced by bourgeois values; instead, the German high bourgeoisie became feudalized.”¹⁸ Unlike other European great powers, Germany industrialized without a bourgeois revolution. The nascent political and economic liberalism was crushed beneath the state-sponsored system

¹³ M. M. Paddock, *Redemption Songs or How Frank Wedekind Set the ‘Simplicissimus’ Affair to a Different Tune*, “German Studies Review” Vol. 28, No. 2, May 2005, p. 247; P. Jelavich, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

¹⁴ T. W. Hiles, *Thomas Theodor Heine: Fin-de-siècle Munich and the Origins of ‘Simplicissimus’*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York 1996, p. 70-71.

¹⁵ D. G. Blackbourn, *Class and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The Center Party and the Social Democrats in Württemberg*, “Central European History” Vol. 9, No. 3, Sept., 1976, p. 225.

¹⁶ R. Zurier, *The Art for the Masses: A Radical Magazine and Its Graphics, 1911-1917*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 1989, p. 139.

¹⁷ F. Gilbert, D. C. Large, *The End of the European Era: 1890 to the Present*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York 2002, p. 79.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

of big industry and banking cartels, and the inherited legacy of Prussian conservatism.¹⁹ Lacking political power, the German middle-class was most receptive to a magazine that made a mockery of the status quo rightwing rule. The popularity of "Simplicissimus" among the liberal middle-class shows that the magazine exemplified their frustrations with the conservative Prussian-based ruling group.

The magazine served as an important form of expression for bourgeoisie protest and progressive dissent. In her comparative work on satire and society during this period, historian Ann Taylor Allen concluded that the popularity of "Simplicissimus" reflects "not only the disenchantment of a considerable segment of the middle-class public with the ruling elite whose prestige had been seriously eroded, but [also] their tentative search for a new political ideology."²⁰ Logically, the favored targets of "Simplicissimus" satire were the aristocracy and political institutions of Berlin – the Kaiser, the clergy, the military, and the industrialists – symbolic representatives of the crushing influence of rigid conservatism and the Prussian tradition of authoritative rule. "Simplicissimus", as a bourgeois product for a largely bourgeois audience, stood in as a manifestation of the middle-class mentality. Its images and writings, therefore, offer a window into how this newly established class viewed both themselves and their society.

In explaining the origins of the 1904 "special issue" of "Simplicissimus", it comes as no surprise that German colonial expansion under the direction of Kaiser Wilhelm II would be an ideal target for satire. German colonialism was a perfect combination of Prussian military tradition, industrialists' capital expansion, and the Kaiser's seemingly corrupted search for monarchal power. What is shocking, however, is that in its sixty-one years of publication, "Simplicissimus" only directly addressed the Kaiser's colonial policies on 3 May 1904. Subsequent issues in the 1930s do take up colonial planning again, but never as an entire special issue, and often in reference to Poland and Eastern Europe, *not* Africa (fig. 1).

The historical context of the 3 May 1904 issue is quite telling. Germany had already become an emerging colonial power in the 1880s. While public opinion had originally persuaded Chancellor Otto von Bismarck to begrudgingly take a few geo-strategic colonies beginning in 1884, by 1904 the colonial project had failed to live up to the Kaiser's promise of giving Germany its "place in the sun." In his essay on German public opinion during this period, noted historian Wolfgang J. Mommsen wrote that the popular enthusiasm toward imperialist overseas expansion waned following "the apparent failure of the colonial policies on which Bismarck had embarked with considerable hesitation."²¹ Furthermore, Mommsen argued

¹⁹ R. Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York 1979, p. 45; B. Moore, Jr., *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, Beacon Press, Boston 1993, p. 485.

²⁰ A. T. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

²¹ W. J. Mommsen, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in Wilhelmian Germany, 1897-1914*, "Central European History" Vol. 24, No. 4, 1991, p. 384. Mommsen uses the term "New Imperialism" to

“New Imperialism” was a failure for Berlin, as “virtually all...imperialist ventures ended in disappointment. They seriously undermined Germany’s international position and no longer paid off in domestic affairs.”²² While imperial expansion benefited the massive German industrial and banking monopolies, it also caused the domination of both the working-class and the small and middle-sized economic enterprises, such as those operated by “Simplicissimus” primary audience. The opportunity to protest the colonial mission crystallized with the conclusion of the South African War in 1902.

FIGURE 1²³

“Simplicissimus” 11 October 1936

Title: “To the German Colonial Congress”

The caption underneath reads: “*Muscles of humans strong through the work, muscles of the nation [strong] by the work for the nation, and such work is the Colonization, and the only limit is the range of the world.*”

Source: <http://www.“Simplicissimus”.info/article/41262>

refer to the rapid and industrialized overseas territorial grab by European powers beginning around the 1884 Berlin Conference and ending following the First World War in 1918.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 390.

²³ Note the contrast in artistic style and the less overt lampooning of this later image when compared to the others discussed in this article.

The "Simplicissimus" colonial issue was released less than a year after the conclusion of the South African War. In many ways, the issue was a reflection of the prevailing middle-class mindset as well as an overall example of German public opinion at this time. While there is a great deal of historiography pertaining to European public opinion surrounding the events of the South African War, the great majority of scholarship focuses on public reaction within Britain. The British media exposed the public to the harsh realities of colonialism, including detailed reports about the concentration camp system used by the British to subdue the civilian South African populations in South Africa. The result was a significant public outcry against the supposed civilizing mission of colonialism. What is often overlooked in the current historiography is the specific German affinity toward the Afrikaners.

Feelings of *Burenbegeisterung* [Boer Enthusiasm] existed within the larger German *Völkisch* movement. Following the massive surge of urbanization in the industrial period, much of the German public experienced widespread feelings of dislocation. As workers abandoned the rural countryside and became industrialized manufacturers, they become inwardly isolated and outwardly alienated. Historian George L. Mosse, the foremost authority on the German *Völkisch* movement, argued that the movement began as a desire for unity, as individuals wanted "to feel like they belong to something greater than oneself."²⁴ German nationalism, itself largely shaped by the *Völkisch* movement, was therefore a response to industrialization and an embracement of the "organic" and "natural" opposing elements of modernity. Romantics praised the notion of the *Volk*, the original people of Germany, with heroic statues, creating a mystical understanding of Germanness.²⁵ If the ethnic Germans were imagined to be the fierce dissentients of Tacitus' barbarian tribes that held off Roman incursion, then *Völkisch* ideology, as historian Tilman Dederling wrote, depicted the Boers to be "Teutonic 'blood-brothers' in the African diaspora, who fought for survival in the wilderness, under constant pressure from 'perfidious Albion' [antiquity England]."²⁶

The Boer struggle against England, was therefore of genuine interest to the German public, beyond the context of geopolitical rivalry, which popularized an Anglophobic public opinion.²⁷ The German public sympathized with the Afrikaners' struggle. They embraced the Afrikaners as "low Germans," and emotionally and vocally supported the Boer Republic cause. Perhaps, the debut of the "Simplicissimus" colonial issue intentionally coincided to address the rising zeal for German colonialism under *Burenbegeisterung*. Certainly, the timing of the 1904

²⁴ G. L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, Grosset and Dunlap, New York 1964, p. 14.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁶ T. Dederling, *The Ferreira Raid of 1906: Boers, Britons and Germans in Southern Africa in the Aftermath of the South African War*, "Journal of Southern African Studies" Vol. 26, No. 1, Mar. 2000, p. 45.

²⁷ W. J. Mommsen, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

colonial issue shows that, similarly to England, within Germany the South African War triggered a profound reaction to the imperial discourse.

The anti-colonial illustrations of the "Simplicissimus" issue stand in as intellectual and liberal dissent to the Pan-German Nationalist movement. Following the South African War, physical German colonialism only increased. In part, this was the result of nationalist circles, which used the outcome of the South African War and the surge of *Burenbegeisterung* to push the government toward a more aggressive colonial policy. They argued that only increased German colonialism would protect the Volk's Boer cousins from British domination. The German imperial discourse went one step further, arguing that the *Verdeutschung* [Germanization] of colonialism would force the Boers to "eventually accept the supremacy of their German siblings and merge with [the] expanding German settler population."²⁸

Within the South West African colony, the Boer immigrants and refugees continued to maintain their own strong cultural independence, despite efforts to turn the Boers into the German *Volk*. Using the South West African school system, colonial agents attempted to force the assimilation of Afrikaner children. One official proclaimed, "[p]ursued with the right means and necessary consideration, it will be a question of only decades to make out of the Boers in German South West Africa true *Deutsch-Afrikaner* [German-Africans]."²⁹ While the Boers could be won over, in the words of another colonial official, "to *Deuschtum* [Germanness] through the *geistigen* [spiritual/intellectual] weapons of German culture," in the minds of the colonial agents and settlers, the indigenous populations of South West Africa represented the greatest threat to colonial stability.³⁰

While the Boers in Southern Africa were marked for assimilation, the indigenous Herero and Nama indigenous groups were to be exterminated. On 14 January 1904, just five months prior to the publication of the "Simplicissimus" colonial issue, the South West colonial government wired Berlin the following message: "All farms in the vicinity of Windhuk (the capital of the South West Colony) plundered by Herero. Whites living on isolated farms murdered. Situation very grave."³¹ The revolt of the Herero population was a direct response to years of settler encroachment. In 1894, the same year the German imperial government took formal control over the settler-colony, the colonial governor Theodor Leutwein, announced that "15 years from now, there will not be much left for the natives," but warned that "if they learn about this now, revolution is inevitable."³² While

²⁸ T. Dederling, *op. cit.*, p. 49-52.

²⁹ Quoted in D. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad: White Education in German South West Africa, 1894-1914*, "German Studies Review" Vol. 24, No. 2, May 2001, p. 328.

³⁰ Quoted *ibid.*

³¹ Quoted in I. V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2005, p. 7.

³² Quoted in B. Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2007, p. 381.

containing only 4,674 colonists, German South West Africa nevertheless comprised the largest overseas population of German settlers.³³ Colonists fenced off the best grazing land, the colonial police routinely brutalized the local population, and coinciding with increased European settlement, the Herero and Nama pastoralists experienced a widespread cattle plague. In short, German rule had dispossessed, impoverished, and subordinated the Herero population. As their power slipped and their living conditions worsened, the Herero and Nama united in rebellion. The uprising was subsequently met with nothing short of genocide.

The swift and immediate response of the German colonial administration, under General Lothar von Trotha, was to "annihilate the rebelling tribes with rivers of blood and rivers of gold."³⁴ Beyond violent armed suppression, the campaign of genocide relied on the tactic of driving the Herero into the eastern Omaheke Desert, while seizing and poisoning waterholes. After pushing the surviving Herero into the colony's dry and arid region to die of dehydration, Trotha issued his infamous "Vernichtungsbefehl" [Extermination Order]. In his 2 October 1904 proclamation, Trotha stated:

"The Herero people must leave this land. If it does not, I will force it do so by using the great gun (artillery). Within the German border every male Herero, armed or unarmed, with or without cattle, will be shot to death. I shall no longer receive women or children, but will drive them back to their people or have them shot at. These are my words to the Herero people."³⁵

The settlers of German South West Africa did not, however, support a campaign of total genocide.

As with most African colonies in the late nineteenth century, German settlement depended on Africans as a force of cheap labor. The editor of the leading German newspaper in South West Africa summarized the prevailing settler view by decrying the genocide on the basis that, "[the] Herero are needed as laborers" and thus should not be destroyed. The editorial did, however, condone the genocide of the Nama, who were "an insignificant tribe."³⁶ Frustrated over Trotha's tactics and unlimited authority, in 1904 colonial governor Leutwein resigned, only to see Trotha appointed governor in his place.

As a general and governor, Trotha frequently corresponded with German newspapers, both in the colony and in Germany. He justified the tactics of annihilation to a Berlin newspaper, stating, "[a]gainst 'Unmenschen' [nonhumans] one cannot conduct war 'humanely.'"³⁷ In a second news article, Trotha wrote, "the

³³ A. Palmer, *Colonial Genocide*, Crawford House Publishing, Adelaide 2000, p. 149.

³⁴ General Lothar von Trotha, quoted in B. 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* Vol. 35, No 3 (2005), p. 430; I. V. Hull, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

³⁵ Quoted in B. Kiernan, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

³⁶ Quoted *ibid.*

³⁷ Quoted in I. V. Hull, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

destruction of all rebellious Native tribes is the aim of our efforts.”³⁸ In a response to settler demands, Trotha set up “prisoner-laborer” camps. The German colonial strategy was to fill labor shortages by creating a slave labor force. The few weakened and emaciated Herero and Nama survivors, however, could not be used for practical labor, and the abysmal living conditions of the prison camps only exacerbated death rates.³⁹ Historian Benjamin Madley has suggested that the genocidal intent “to destroy the Hereros played a part in the German maintenance of such lethal camp conditions.”⁴⁰ Overall, the campaign of genocide decimated the Herero and Nama, reducing the populations by at least fifty percent.⁴¹ The majority were murdered without direct violence, rather they perished in the desert, far outside the colonial and public gaze. Nevertheless, the 1904 Herero and later the Nama uprising and the violent colonial response received a great deal of public attention within the German metropole. It was in this context of publicly reported genocide, just five months in the making and immediately following the conclusion of the South African War, that the artists of “Simplicissimus” questioned the system of colonization.

The 3 May 1904 issue of “Simplicissimus” featured a particularly striking cover image by Bruno Paul (fig. 2). As discussed at the beginning of this article, the image is titled “The End of *Zivilization* [Civilization],” and the caption has three African natives stating that they must mine for gold again, lest the “Europeans bring us their *Kultur* [culture].” The illustration’s text immediately sets up a dichotomy between the signifiers *Zivilisation* and *Kultur*. For Germans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the term *Zivilisation* had very negative connotation. Under *Völkisch* ideology, *Zivilisation* was a corrupting influence of western industrialization, a threat to the idealized, rural *Volk*. *Zivilisation* was a representation of materialism, internationalism, capitalism, and most importantly, urbanization and industrialization. *Kultur*, therefore, represented the opposing aesthetic elements – spirit, community, values, and, of course, a sense of rootedness – to the rural German landscape.⁴² This illustration equates *Kultur* to the “civilization missions” of other European imperial powers. Colonialism is challenged in this image by showing that, under imperialism, the uniquely Germanic notion of *Kultur* has been corrupted and transformed into British and French led *Zivilisation*.

³⁸ Quoted in B. Kiernan, *op. cit.*, p. 385.

³⁹ I. V. Hull, *op. cit.*, p. 74-76.

⁴⁰ B. Madley, *Patterns of Frontier Genocide 1803-1910: The Aboriginal Tasmanians, the Yuki of California, and the Herero of Namibia*, “Journal of Genocide Research” Vol. 6, No. 2, June 2004, p. 188.

⁴¹ The overall death toll remains debated. Drawing off of census data, Isabel Hull puts the Herero death rate much higher, at 66-75 percent. See I. V. Hull, *op. cit.*, p. 88. See also B. Madley, *op. cit.*, p. 431.

⁴² J. Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1986, p. 6,16, 226; E. Demm, *Propaganda and Caricature in the First World War*, “Journal of Contemporary History” Vol. 28, No. 1, Jan. 1993, p. 176; V. Langbehn, *Introduction: Picturing Race*, in: V. M. Langbehn (ed.), *German Colonialism, Visual Culture and Modern Memory*, Routledge, New York 2010, p. 5.

FIGURE 2



"Simplicissimus" 3 May 1904

Cover illustration title: *The End of Civilization [Zivilisation]*

The caption underneath reads:

"We mine for riches of gold again, otherwise the Europeans [will] bring us their culture [Kultur]."

Source: [http://www."Simplicissimus".info/article/5644](http://www.)

In keeping with "Simplicissimus" usual satirical style, the title *The End of Civilization* brings up a post-apocalyptic notion, which is underscored by portraying Africa, not as a lush paradise, but rather a barren and rocky wasteland. Perhaps the small tree and lizard in the foreground are meant to represent Eden and the serpent, now withered and nearly destroyed by colonialism. It is important that the caption has the Africans saying that they must mine for gold *again*. This signifies that the Africans are responding to a second wave of colonialism, perhaps this time led by Germany, rather than their two rival powers, Britain and France. Beyond its literal meaning, the title *The End of Civilization* also suggests that as Germany, the latecomer to colonialism, increased its role as a Great Power, *Kultur* will no longer protect the *Volk* but rather become a stand-in for *Zivilisation*. Under colonialism, the illustration argues, *Kultur* will be corrupted into a weapon of exploitation, used to benefit the German industrial and banking cartels, not the *Volk*.

The cover illustration also reveals the artist's, perhaps unconscious, view of African alterity. Bruno Paul's mental colonialism is filled with early twentieth century racial stereotypes. The Africans exist as pure "others." Hairless and dressed in grass skirts, the natives are drawn to represent primates. The pose of the second native, perched on the rock at the top of the image, is distinctively ape-like, and the added facial hair, absent on the other two natives, only adds to this conception. The image shows Africans as primitive people, wandering through the country in search of survival. There are no cities or even villages in the picture, just fierce but curious tribesmen. Without the caption, the image would appear to show the natives are more concerned with the lizard than with the golden colored rocks. The notion that the gold is waiting for European consumption also alludes to the colonial notion that Africans were not using their land properly. The gold does not have to be mined as it is just lying on the ground, waiting to be picked up. The Europeans exist only as a threat. The picture sells the notion that if Africans want to save themselves from the horrors of the civilizing mission, they had better forage for gold themselves, and hand it over to the Europeans. The artist's purpose was to highlight the true nature of colonialism, using the loaded terms *Zivilisation* and *Kultur*. The image, however, also reveals the dominant paradigms of highly racialized colonial thought.

The next image is the most famous picture from this issue (fig. 3).⁴³ Here the artist, "Simplicissimus" co-founder Thomas Heine, illustrates a comparison of the colonial projects by the four largest European colonizers of Africa. The first panel reveals the typical anti-Prussian militarism of "Simplicissimus". In the German colony, order reigned supreme. All the animals have been lined up and numbered. The giraffes have been taught to goose-step, and the crocodile has been tamed. The small sign in the background indicates that all noises and claws are forbidden. Conspicuously absent from the German panel, but present in all the others, are any images of Africans. Africa, from the German panel's perspective, appears as a zoo. The colony is a laboratory. It is a place where order can be imposed through violence, and where society and animals can be studied. The violent campaign of genocide, occurring as Heine created this image, may very well have shaped this first panel. The presence of the absent Herero and Nama speaks the loudest.

In the British panel, the plaid suit-wearing businessman is forcing his product, in this case a jug of whisky (the label written in English), into the native mouth. Clearly the native represents the colonial market, being force-fed European manufactured goods. The businessman has cooped the soldier into literally pressing every cent out of the native, while the missionary idly proselytizes. This panel underscores the perspective that empire is economically motivated, with the military working for the interests of big business. The presence of the pastor creates a trinity of civilization,

⁴³ For a conflicting interpretation of this image, see N. Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*, Basic Books, New York 2003, p. 294-295. See also S. Conrad, *German Colonialism: A Short History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, p. 2-3.

FIGURE 3



"Simplicissimus" 3 May 1904

Title: "Colonial Powers"

The captions, from top to bottom right, read:

"Colonization by the Germans,

Colonization by the English,

by the French,

and by the Belgians."

Source: [http://www."Simplicissimus".info/article/5644](http://www.)

commerce, and Christianity, all three of which were simultaneously used by the British to justify their colonial expansion.

The final panel shows pure exploitation of Africans via brutal measures. King Leopold II of Belgium is shown devouring the head of a roasted native. As the final image, it conveys the notion that no matter what the other European powers are doing, it is not as bad as what is happening in the Belgian Congo. The use of King Leopold himself underscores that unlike the British, who are using business, the military, and the church in the services of empire, the Belgian Congo is run as

a private colony to benefit only King Leopold. The use of a monarch figure may also be an attempt to reflect back on Kaiser Wilhelm, "Simplicissimus" favorite target. Like most of the "Simplicissimus" images during the Wilhelmine period, the mocking of a monarch underscores the general disenchantment of the middle-class artists with ruling elites. Here we see that each panel, while supposedly a representation of national characters, actually all exist within Germany. For Heine, only German big industry and banking, presented in the British panel, motivated and benefited from colonialism. The Kaiser, often accused as being a puppet to the aristocracy and industrialists, feasted on the spoils of the colonial exploitation gained through violent means.

The penultimate French panel is, however, the most interesting. Unlike the somber faces of the other European caricatures, the French soldiers and the native women are all smiles, frolicking together in the tropical jungle. The racial mixing in the French panel is represented by the small child figure in the foreground. Colored slightly lighter than the rest, the child is a subtle reference to the creation of Afro-Europeans, existing not as whites, but not as Africans. While every other figure in the French colonial panel is embracing a carefree, "free-love" spirit, the child is on the verge of tears. The French are able to ignore the child for the moment, but perhaps Heine is attempting to draw the viewers' attention to a problem in the making. The child will grow up, and existing in the middle ground, it is a threat to the established color line deemed so necessary by colonial officials. In the French panel, the relaxed racial relations, while perhaps meant as a humorous stereotype of Frenchmen, serve as a subtle warning of danger to all the other colonial powers.

In 1905, German South West Africa became the first German colony to formally ban *Rassenmischung* [race mixing]. It is no coincidence that this image was created in the month proceeding the publicized Reichstag debates surrounding the drafting of a similar ban on interracial marriage within Germany. According to Benjamin Madley, it was the press coverage of these debates that allowed terms like "'Rassengefühl' [race feeling], 'Mischlinge' [mixed-race people], 'die Mischlingsfrage' [the mixed-race question]" to enter the general public's lexicon.⁴⁴ Heine's final panel shows that he too has been captured by the imperial discourse. The inherent underlying evil of colonialism, in this illustration, is its corrupting influence, most prevalent in the overt racial mixing occurring the colonies.

The final illustration, penned by Ferdinand Reznicek image takes up racial relations in a much more overt, and gendered fashion (fig. 4). A colonial agent, shown in the first panel, is enjoying an intimate moment with a docile and submissive native woman. Literally colored in deep black, the female character represents Africa. Unlike the French panel in the preceding cartoon, the whip in the hand of the colonial agent shows that this is not consensual relationship, just like the

⁴⁴ B. Madley, *From Africa to Auschwitz...*, p. 439.

FIGURE 4



"Simplicissimus" 3 May 1904
 Title: "Force of Habit"

Note: Cartoon runs top down, from left to right.

Source: [http://www."Simplicissimus".info/article/5644](http://www.)

European relationship to Africa. In the next panel, the agent returns to his home in a generic European metropole and is met enthusiastically by his innocent wife. She embraces him, but he does not embrace her in return. Dressed in an all black coat, the agent wears the skin of Africa, foreshadowing that colonialism, like a sinister stowaway, has been carried back to Europe. In the third panel, domestic life has set in. The colonial agent has lost his wild-west outfit, and sits in a chair bored and drunk, watching his wife perform her domestic duties. If the color black stands in for Africa, painting the stove black shows an incorporation and transference of colonialism into the European home. From there, it spreads. In the next three panels, he paints his wife black, puts his colonial cowboy outfit back on, and gleefully whips her into submission.

A gendered analysis of this illustration says a great deal about relationships between men and women at this time.⁴⁵ We see the male figure as a colonial man-on-the-spot, pushing the empire forward while his wife stays behind. The image maintains that in the colonial setting, there is no place for European women. The female slave, once dominated into submission, fulfills the sexual needs of the European male. Like Heine's illustration on comparative colonial powers, racial mixing has corrupted the colonizer. He returns from his duties abroad, only to find that his experience has placed him outside of society. There is no place for colonial fighters back home. As a retired man, he does not assist his wife in any domestic duties, despite the fact that painting a cast iron stove seems to fall outside of feminine responsibility. He sits around the home, bored and intoxicated. His boredom is broken when his colonial instincts return to him. It is not enough that colonialism has been painted into the home; he must force it into his wife.

The message of the illustration is that colonialism has corrupted German men. They are no longer good husbands, but excessive brutes. The violence in the colonial setting has returned home and threatens to turn good husbands into bad males. The man does not just beat his wife, he whips her with the "chicotte," a hippo hide whip used on the Congolese under Belgium rule. The illustration stresses that the victims of colonialism are the metropole's females. From this perspective, colonialism is not harmful because it is exploiting Africans. The problem with colonialism is that it corrupts paternalism and threatens the mothers of the imperial nations.

Of all three illustration discussed above, it is this third one that most closely echoes Joseph Conrad's message in *Heart of Darkness*. At its core, Conrad's story elucidates the contradictions between "civilized" and "brutish" behavior. He juxtaposes two seemingly opposed versions of colonialism within the opening pages of *Heart of Darkness*. Seated aboard the *Nellie*, a cruising yawl anchored in the Thames, the unnamed narrator first muses about the British colonizing mission: "Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire."⁴⁶ Like a prequel to Reznicek's illustrated panel, the colonial agent set's out into the colonial periphery with seemingly virtuous intentions. Conrad's unnamed narrator sees the British imperial agents acting as a modern day Prometheus, bringing the sacred fires of civilization into the darkness of the world. The protagonist Charlie Marlow, having traveled through the central African "heart of darkness," offers up a much more cynical, and more accurate, viewpoint. Marlow tells his audience, "[the imperial agents] were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force...your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others...It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great

⁴⁵ L. Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945*, Duke University Press, Durham 2001, p. 74-76.

⁴⁶ J. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Random House, New York 1999, p. 5.

scale, and men going at it blind – as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness."⁴⁷ The use of the double narrators at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness* sets up a dialogue between the ideology and idealization of the "civilizing mission" and the stark reality of the colonial corruption in much the same way that Bruno Paul's used the signifiers *Zivilisation* and *Kultur*.

In *Heart of Darkness*, the character of Mr. Kurtz is an embodiment of the infectious violent nature the colonial system fostered in the imperial agents. Reznicek illustration, therefore, can be read as a continuation to *Heart of Darkness*, one when where Kurtz makes it home to his fiancée, bringing the brutish behavior of colonialism back to Europe. While Kurtz can abandon his African fortress decorated by shrunken heads impaled on stakes, he cannot return from his similar abandonment of civilized morals. Kurtz was tasked with creating a pamphlet to guide future colonial agents. Marlow encounters the final words of the report, added as a postscript by Kurtz that reads, "Exterminate all the brutes!"⁴⁸

The postscript underscores Kurtz's abandonment of the civilizing mission pretense. Added to his pamphlet on benevolent theocracy, Kurtz's call for extermination stands in for a metaphor to Conrad's own understanding of European hypocrisy of civilization and exploitation in the colonial setting. The civilizing mission in Kurtz's mind is a corrupted, abandoned notion, destroyed by his years in the colonial setting and his active engagement with his own violent impulses. Earlier in the story, Marlow encounters an old oil painting done by Kurtz a year before he disappeared into the "heart of darkness." The painting is of "a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch."⁴⁹ This is the corrupted version of the unnamed narrator's idealistic vision of colonialism as spreading the promethean spark. Marlow notes, "the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister."⁵⁰ The carrying of the civilizing ember has only corrupted and blinded the torchbearer, twisting the idealistic imperialist into a brutish thug. While colonial agents may venture out of European metropolises under the guise as torchbearers of civilization, Conrad, through Kurtz, shows that how quickly the benevolence of European colonization transforms into brute force. Kurtz's call for genocide, like General Lothar von Trotha's real-life annihilation order, shows that to the "Simplicissimus" authors, the corrupting power of Empire was the greatest threat to Europeans.

The extent as to how much Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* directly influenced the "Simplicissimus" "special issue" remains speculative. The dearth of biographical information on many "Simplicissimus" artists makes it difficult, if not impossible,

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁸ J. Conrad, *op. cit.*, p. 51; This is the infamous line that launched author Sven Lindqvist on an investigation of the European colonial project as an antecedent to many twentieth century genocides. See his very excellent, *'Exterminate All the Brutes': One Man's Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness and the Origins of European Genocide*, New Press, New York 1992.

⁴⁹ J. Conrad, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

to uncover the artists' intellectual influences. Certainly most of the bourgeois German writers and artists at this time would have known about Conrad's groundbreaking work. Originally published in serial form in 1899, by 1902, the text had been bound into book form and was tremendously popular to Anglophone audiences. *Heart of Darkness* was not translated into French and German until 1925 and 1926, respectively, but the parallel messages of Conrad's masterpiece and these illustrations seem to be more than coincidental.⁵¹ While intertextuality is difficult to prove, the concurring message shows that by 1904, the colonial backlash drew off of the same notion – the great horror of colonialism was that it is turning European men into brutes. “The force of habit” that has returned to the colonial agent in Reznicek's illustration of the same name, is “uncontrolled violence of individuals” learned and practiced in the colonial setting.⁵²

The contemporary events of rebellion and genocide in South West Africa, when converged with the outcome of the South African War, explain why the “Simplicissimus” colonial issue appeared in May 1904. The ways in which the artists expressed their criticism of modern imperialism show that, while on the surface each illustration was a rejection of the colonial doctrine, on a deeper level the artists were also captives to colonial thought.

In *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, Bernard Porter argues that most Europeans' were not concerned with events in the world's periphery. He claims that their day to day lives had “little sympathetic contact with the Empire” and in fact “[t]heir lifestyles and alternative discourses alienated them from it.”⁵³ While the production of only one “Simplicissimus” colonial issue seems to substantiate Porter's claim, its very existence shows that his blanket statement is a fallacy. The context above shows that, at least in 1904, colonialism was very much on the mind of certain bourgeois intellectuals, as well as the mass public within Germany. “Simplicissimus”, while a representation of middle-class thought, was also a product for consumption. Langen and Heine's overall goal was to sell magazines, and this was done through satire of political relevant and highly topical subject matter. Their production of a special colonial issue should not be dismissed as a mere anomaly, but rather a reflection and interpretation of 1904 domestic and global events.

While the artists of “Simplicissimus” were liberally aligned leftists, the art they produced was still very much a product of the times. Their questioning of African colonialism had less to do with its affect on Africans than it did on the ways in which

⁵¹ Translation dates found through author's search of WorldCat.

⁵² S. Lindqvist, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁵³ B. Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004, p. 164. While Porter is largely discussing British public opinion, C.M. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner make the same argument of French public indifference. See *Centre and Periphery in the Making of the Second French Colonial Empire, 1815-1920*, A. Porter, R. Holland (eds.), *Theory and Practice in the History of European Expansion Overseas*, Frank Cass and Company, London 1988, p. 9, 28.

colonialism was harming Europeans. Racial depictions of Africans as primitives come through in their art, as do nineteenth century concepts of masculinity and femininity. Nevertheless, in an era of increased colonial pursuits, the 3 May 1904 issue of "Simplicissimus" is one of very few anti-colonial protests in Germany. And yet, a detailed analysis of these three images proves that even the mindset of anti-colonial artists was deeply rooted in the dominant colonial discourse.

Jeremiah Garsha, graduate student at the University of Cambridge, Centre of African Studies. His research focuses on comparative genocide and collisions of European and African history (jgarsha@gmail.com)

Słowa kluczowe: "Simplicissimus", Niemcy kolonialne, Herero, Nama, Afryka Południowo-Wschodnia, wojna burska

Keywords: "Simplicissimus", Imperial German, the Herero and Nama in South West Africa, South African War

ABSTRACT

This article explores the particularity of the "Simplicissimus" 1904 "special issue" by examining three of the illustrations and deconstructing these textual sources against the backdrop of global events. The article begins by setting up the history of the magazine in order to show that "Simplicissimus" represented the attitudes and political mindset of its middle-class authors and audience, who were responding to their lack of political power within the authoritative and militaristic system of government. Next, the article contextualizes the global events surrounding the publication of the forty-first issue, specifically the South African War (1899-1902) and the beginnings of the Imperial German genocide of the Herero and Nama in South West Africa (1904-1908). By connecting the "Simplicissimus" colonial issue to the larger historical context, the illustrations are read as texts in order to unpack deeply ingrained signs and discourses. The three images are united by their depictions of colonial violence as a metaphor for colonial corruption. At their core was a visualization of the brutish European behavior paying out in the periphery, first illustrated by Joseph Conrad in "Heart of Darkness" (1899). Like Conrad, the "Simplicissimus" protest shows that the imperial backlash was not necessarily a call for humanitarianism on the part of colonized people, but rather was centralized around the concept that colonialism was flawed because it turned "good" Europeans into excessive brutes. In this way, the anti-colonial authors themselves were trapped inside of the imperial discourse, and inadvertently supported the very system they attempted to discredit.