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The diamond novels of Luderitz: fact or fiction?

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel ondersoek drie prosawerke wat gedurende die opwindende tydperk van 1908–1914 oor die lewe op die diamantvelde van Suidwes-Afrika, spesifiek in die omgewing van Luderitz, geskryf is. Aangesien die skrywers van hierdie werke kragtige ondersteuners van die Duitse kolonialisme was, wou hulle met hulle literêre werke die kolonisasie van Suidwes-Afrika aanmoedig. Daarom het hulle – soos hierdie artikel aantoon – kwistig historiese gegewens in die fiktiewe tekste geïntegreer om sodoende 'n outentieke agtergrond te skep. Hulle ploeg egter vir die sentimente met die kalwers van die Duitse triviale vervolghere wat destyds reeds in die kolonie beskikbaar was. Hierdie eenaardige kombinasie lei tot negatiewe assosiasies met die destydse kolonie Suidwes-Afrika en ondermyn sodoende die doelwitte van die skrywers.

Waar die skrywers die probleme van die kolonisasie van die inheemse bevolking aanraak of wys op die moeilikhede wat die Duitsers met die aanpassing by die eensame leefwyse in Suidwes-Afrika ondervind, styg hulle bo die vlak van gewone triviale literatuur uit. Ongeag die eksotiese besonderhede, gesien vanuit 'n Europese perspektief, beskryf die tekste 'n onherbergsame landstreek en die helde en heldinne swig òf voor die moeilikhede en versoekings van die lewe in die diamantwêreld, òf hulle keer terug Duitsland toe om daar 'n gelukkiger toekoms tegemoet te gaan.

Perusal of the novels and novellas from the time of German colonial rule in South-West Africa uncovers some curious literary phenomena. These writings, and this is especially true for the so-called diamond novels, can on the one hand be classified as trivial love stories with an exotic background. On the other hand, especially, these stories reveal detailed descriptions of the

country and its people at the time as well as historic events, transgressing the fictional framework.

Therefore, in this discussion these texts will be examined as ‘trivial love stories’ and ‘historic works’ as basis for the ironic theme in this regard, ‘The colonizer as loser’.

The three works depicting the locality of Luderitz and the diamond fields during the German colonial era and which form the basis for my study are: Lene Haase’s novel: *Raggys Fahrt nach Südwest* (Raggy’s Journey to South West) (1910), Clara Brockmann’s novel: *Du heiliges Land* (You Holy Country) (1914), published under the pseudonym Marianne Westerlind, and a novella by Hans Grimm: *Dina* (1913).

I The diamond novels as trivial love stories

In contrast to the majority of the South-West African authors from the colonial period, Clara Brockmann and Hans Grimm seem to be the only authors who had had training and experience in writing prior to the appearance of their novels. Hans Grimm had obtained his detailed knowledge of the diamond fields in 1911/12 as a reporter and then devoted himself to writing after his return to Germany. Clara Brockmann also spent most of her stay in South-West from 1907–1910 as a foreign correspondent. Her artistic talents are evident from her early engagement in acting, music and writing. During her later life she wrote popular fiction on Mozart’s life and on foreign countries (c.f. Thiel, 1981:194–197).

Both these authors were familiar with literary conventions and were able to apply their writing skills in their fictional works. By comparison, Lene Haase’s novel is far weaker in its composition than those of Clara Brockmann and Hans Grimm, and this could possibly be attributed to her lack of training in literary writing as she appears to have had no literary training. Therefore *Raggys Fahrt nach Südwest* will serve as the starting point of this discussion.

Characteristic for Lene Haase’s novel is its description of the country – as such a report on a journey, not exactly a novel. Large parts of the work deal with life on board ships and farms in the hinterland of Luderitz. The various strands of the story are held together only by the heroine Raggy, the daughter of an American mother and a German father, both of whom were deceased. She had been raised in America and did not fit into the German lifestyle of her relatives in Hamburg, who had taken her in as an orphan, and she decided to undertake a journey to South-West Africa to visit friends on a farm. On board the ship she became engaged to a lieutenant of the colonial troops, Hanns von Rehberg.

Her relationship with Hanns von Rehberg was traumatic right from the

beginning. While he commenced his army service she participated in diamond speculations and became entangled in several superficial love affairs. Raggy's forced separation from Rehberg was a welcome solution to the dilemma she had brought upon herself.

Raggy's life now took a different turn under the influence of her cousin Fred Lahusen, whom she had met in Luderitz. He prophesied that she would experience a great and passionate love affair which would, however, end tragically after a short while. Thereafter she would marry a rich and honourable man in a high social position. This did come true and she and Fred lived happily ever after in Germany.

In the light of several characteristics of Lene Haase's novel it can be regarded as a trivial love story (Bayer, 1971:35–47, 68–78; Waldmann, 1973:11–33). The story is superficial, the main characters are all members of high society, and its linguistic form is very simple. There are, however, other characteristics in Lene Haase's novel which distinguish it from the traditional love story. For instance, the character portrayal is so superficial that one can hardly even regard the characters as types; they also do not act on the emotions of the reader.

The plot of the novel is very loosely structured and the story, not aiming at a particular goal, is often submerged in details. It is thus impossible to speak of a closed, overseeable and knowable reality. One cannot say that the villains are punished and the virtuous rewarded, even if in the end the social order is perpetuated when Raggy marries within her own social class and accepts her social responsibilities.

The space in this novel is not defined by fictitious criteria but by historical and geographical boundaries. Therefore one can neither speak of a reduced epic space nor of a timeless epic time. On the contrary, the depiction of the conditions in South-West Africa is exceptionally accurate and the story stays within a historically determinable framework. Town and hotel names are taken over from the region; only when referring to local personalities does Lene Haase use fictitious names. By employing these techniques, Lene Haase gives her novel a high level of authenticity, not found normally in the frameworks of trivial love stories. Even if the reality depicted in the novel is unknown to most of its readers and may therefore seem exotic, the authoress does not allow her readers to become totally absorbed in the novel's atmosphere. She achieves this through the critical distance which Raggy maintains as regards her own person and immediate surroundings. Furthermore, some of the incidents in the novel are depicted with such exaggeration that the reader has to keep a critical distance. Consequently, the heroine cannot be subsumed by the stereotypical characteristics which form part of trivial novels. Raggy does not simply accept her fate but opposes it whenever necessary. Furthermore, Raggy's aggressive nature also does not allow her to flee into an inner asexual love. On the contrary, the relationships Raggy and

many other female characters have with men, who were in the majority in the colony at the time, are very erotic. There are, however, two young married couples with whom Raggy is in contact, and who can be regarded as positive counterfigures. It is true that in the end Raggy accepts her fate, that she renounces her life as a globetrotter in order to marry Fred. Thereby she also accepts her social duties in high society. The acceptance of her fate has, however, little to do with love itself.

Clara Brockmann's novel, *Du heiliges Land* has a much better defined story line and a far more concentrated plot. Six characters dominate the story: Ingeborg Oberländer visits her brother Adolf and his wife Carola in Schalkalwater (i.e. Colmanskop). She finds herself wooed by three men, albeit for different reasons. Firstly, there is the socially-declassed mining field manager, Hans Gothland; secondly the lawyer (Assessor) of the regional administration, Dr. Klinger, and thirdly, the diamond king, Oskar Vollmüller, a social climber, who is later unmasked as a swindler.

Hans Gothland is unhappily in love with Ingeborg Oberländer. Due to his low social position, he sees his chances of marrying Ingeborg waning. This problem undermines his hitherto perfect moral conduct – he becomes a diamond thief and later, believing that he has been deceived by Ingeborg, a murderer, so as to cover up his thefts. He also turns into a drunkard and eventually commits suicide.

Ingeborg, meanwhile, has problems of her own. Her greedy sister-in-law would like to marry her off to a very rich man; namely Oskar Vollmüller, one of the most affluent diamond kings. Ingeborg, who has in the meantime secretly become engaged to Herbert Klinger, is able to refuse Vollmüller's first offer of marriage. But after she has learned of her brother's financial difficulties and especially after overhearing a conversation in which a barmaid claims to have had an affair with Klinger, Ingeborg is willing to accept Vollmüller's offer of marriage. Klinger, however, succeeds in exposing Vollmüller as a swindler before the wedding takes place. He then renews his own secret engagement to Ingeborg. Through circumstances, Ingeborg leaves Luderitz and seeks employment as a lady-in-waiting in Cape Town. Her employer, an elderly English lady, intercepts her letters from Klinger and finally terminates her employment. With her back against the wall, Ingeborg becomes a singer of German folk songs in a cinema. It is there where she unexpectedly meets Klinger again one night. They get married in Cape Town before returning to Germany for good.

In this novel Clara Brockmann managed to combine the stereotyped characters of the trivial love story with representatives of the most prominent social classes of the diamond region: Ingeborg is a beautiful orphan, who, although poor, is well educated. She rides, plays the piano, acts naturally, is simply dressed, innocent, loving, noble minded and duty-conscious. Thereby she corresponds in all respects to the typical heroine of the pulp love stories of

noble ladies. Her adversary is her sister-in-law, née Schramm, who artistically styles her hair, dresses herself with erotic effect, who is inconsiderate, calculating, malicious and violent. Even if her moods are displayed within the South-West African situation, she is nevertheless only a stock character of the trivial love story.

Adolf Oberländer is the deputy of a diamond company, but he is a weak man who blindly succumbs to the wishes of his wife, and, by doing so, lets himself be ruined financially. In order to rescue himself from his financial plight, he accepts his sister's sacrifice of being married to the proletarian diamond king, Vollmüller. In doing so, Oberländer does come across as a rather weak character but not as a one-sided stereotyped figure of the trivial novel.

Herbert Klinger is the deputy district officer in Luderitz and thus one of the senior colonial officials. He is educated, cynical, aloof and a man of the world. This image contrasts sharply with his monosyllabic and unintelligent love-talk with Ingeborg Oberländer which does not improve the lack of depth in his character. Despite skirmishes and erotic advances their relationship remains curiously intangible, possibly because it is not based on any deeper understanding between the two love parties.

Hans Gothland is probably the most complex figure in the novel. His fate, like those of Adolf Oberländer and Oskar Vollmüller, is strongly determined by socio-historical circumstances. In Germany he had failed as a junior barrister, then he had been an officer in reserve and a member of a corps in South-West Africa. He had not succeeded in bridging the gap between being a farm assistant and a farm owner because of the lack of necessary finances. His despair about his low social position as a diamond field manager, which makes a marriage with Ingeborg Oberländer impossible, is the reason for his becoming a diamond thief – despite his principles. His killing of the black worker could be regarded as a cruel prank played on him by fate. When he becomes aware of his deterioration, he throws his riches into the sea and drowns himself.

In attempting to determine the extent to which Clara Brockmann's novel can be classed as a trivial novel, the characters give us the following indication. It is mainly the female characters who conform to stereotypes. All characters are judged from Ingeborg's perspective and all characters receive their due. Although the characters are often inconsistent because of some or other weakness, the moral landscape is nevertheless fixed. Ingeborg accepts her fate by trusting in God and Hans Gothland also bows to the law in the end. All "good" characters stem from the higher social classes; however, the minute they step outside, like Adolf Oberländer does through his marriage to Carola Schramm and Hans Gothland through his financial position, their morals are likewise threatened. Upstarts like Carola Oberländer and Oskar Vollmüller are depicted as being calculating, superficial and domineering.

Clara Brockmann creates a reality through characters which can easily absorb

the reader. Her novel can therefore be defined as trivial. On the other hand, Clara Brockmann's novel is definitely less superficial than Lene Haase's as regards social and human conflicts caused by the curse of the diamonds. The reason for this is the authoress' wider perception and deeper understanding of the problems of the country and the work on the diamond fields. Especially for this reason the novel can be regarded as more than just a trivial love-story.

Clara Brockmann's style of depicting the country is a great deal more fictitious than both those applied by Lene Haase and Hans Grimm. The reader is not overwhelmed by photographic views of the town and its inhabitants, but is introduced to the setting by individual glimpses on the life in the diamond town and its surroundings. These separate pieces form Clara Brockmann's enclosed and fictitious world. Apart from Luderitz, she supplies all places and hotels with imaginary names. However, the reader does find useful clues in her novel which enable him to determine with a fair degree of accuracy the time and place where the action takes place.

As we have seen, Clara Brockmann on the whole incorporates many more individual aspects of the trivial love story in her novel than does Lene Haase. Nevertheless, Clara Brockmann's psychologically and typologically concentrated novel probably portrays deeper insights into the often tragic events of the time.

Hans Grimm's novella *Dina* tells the simple story of a sergeant-major (the Wachtmeister) who arrests two Bushmen and a Hottentot in the desert diamond area. The three indigenous people accompany the sergeant-major to his newly-founded police station in the desert and take over household duties. Especially the woman, Dina, and the old Bushman try to entice him so that he decides to get married to a white woman during his long leave in Germany. Being absorbed by Dina and the Namib, even whilst in Holstein, he only manages to find a wife by accident on his journey back to South-West Africa. Unfortunately his wife does not share his passion for the desert and soon she detects Dina as a dangerous rival. This creates a conflict for the sergeant-major. He tries to distance himself from Dina, who feels offended at his ungrateful treatment. She then turns against the Wachtmeister, also bringing shame to the police station. Finally, the Wachtmeister is wrecked socially as well as physically when he is forced to ride a wild horse possessing demonic qualities. Seeing that the sergeant-major no longer has the physical ability to earn his living in the desert, Dina and her companions abandon him.

Hans Grimm's novella *Dina* approaches South-West Africa from a totally different point of view. There is no trace of love in the true sense, only an erotic undercurrent which emerges occasionally. None of the characters is defined by pre-given character portraits. The Wachtmeister, his wife and Dina are complete products of their environment. Especially the Wachtmeister is determined by the unarticulated paradoxes of life. Therefore reality does not form a consistent whole, despite an authorial and personal narrative perspective, as many questions ultimately remain unanswered.

From a linguistic point of view, the novella is a lot more laconic than the novels of Clara Brockmann and Lene Haase, which extensively exhibit linguistically-trivial characteristics. Consequently, the meaning of the words here is definitely more complex and nuanced than in the other two texts.

In contrast to the novels in question, the novella does not have a happy ending. In fact, similar to Raggy's marriage to Fred, the Wachtmeister is, through the loss of his arm, forcibly reinstated into the European community. This, however, is here even less of a solution to the problem than those in the other two texts under discussion. The exact historical and geographical facts would transform this work into a report, were it not for the "mysterious" conflict within the Wachtmeister which is depicted in a very dramatic manner. This text can therefore in no way be regarded as trivial literature.

II The diamond novels as historic works

The above-mentioned literary plots have been integrated into a specific historic context which provides them with an added dimension. Because of the historic nature of these texts, it is necessary to compare textual events to the historic events during the years 1908–1914, in an attempt to ascertain to what extent the authors tried to reflect authentic historical reality in their works.

The time Lene Haase depicts in her novel is estimated as circa 1908/9. This estimation is based on the following data gathered from the text and, where possible, compared to historical events supplied by reliable sources like the newspaper.

In her novel *Raggys Fahrt nach Südwest*, Lene Haase integrates the beginnings of diamond mining in South-West Africa. On her arrival in South-West Africa Raggy does not only comment on the strange fashions of the South-West African ladies but also on business life, high customs duties, the hotels and bars (eg. Kapps Hotel and the Europäische Hof, where one pays in diamonds), and the other important buildings which dominated the town of Luderitz at the time. The reader also becomes acquainted with the various destinations for excursions. During Raggy's voyage to South-West Africa the "Exima"-expedition is already under discussion. Other entertainment is provided by means of musical evenings in the Europäische Hof, improvised singing of ballads, poker and balls with introductory dramatic performances by the people of Luderitz in Kapps Hotel. Because the local Luderitz newspaper, a valuable source of information, was only established in February 1909, one cannot really ascertain how far these events correspond with the historical reality of the early Luderitz diamond times. As *Raggys Fahrt nach Südwest* is a novel dealing with the early diamond times, the *Schutztruppe* which still played an important part in the social life of the colony at the time also appears in contrast with the later literary works.

The important part which diamonds play in Raggy's life has right from the start been incorporated in the novel. At the beginning of Raggy's stay in Luderitz she goes on an excursion to Colmanskop where, according to the novel, the Colmanskop Gesellschaft is supposed to have had its offices. This appears to be historically incorrect because it was in fact the Lenz-Stauch-Gesellschaft which was located at Colmanskop during the time of Haase's novel. In other places the old diamond mining companies are only referred to by pseudonyms. Seeing that the diamond mining companies are frantically attempting to find new fields without the knowledge of their rivals, one can presume that this must have happened before 22 September 1908. Prior to this date the artificial lowering of share prices and the procuring of mining fields belonging to others (after the burning of their landmarks) were common practice. Bribery and corruption on the diamond fields were thus rife, as the *Deutsch-Südwestafrikanische Zeitung* of 4 November 1908 informs us. The neglect of the mining laws, even in minute detail, led to the immediate forfeiture of the rights to mine and enabled competitors to lay claim to the field in question themselves.

After Raggy's first stay in Luderitz the descriptions of the town and the diamond mining situation are no longer as elaborate. The relatively extensive depiction of the revolt of Abraham Rolf's gang, responsible for the murder of several farmers in the south towards the end of 1908, is another important event enabling us to date the work more accurately. News on the diamond scene, conveyed to Raggy by Dahlmann, indicates the establishment of many new syndicates towards the end of 1908, the conversion of the Colmanskop-gesellschaft into an English company with sterling shares, the establishment of a *Börsenverein* (a private stock-exchange) with official brokers and the anger of the inhabitants of Luderitz directed at Dernburg. The anger of the public at the closing-off of the diamond area, the export duty and the threatening *Regie* found expression in protest meetings.

When Raggy returns to Luderitz at the beginning of 1909 she notices the many new buildings and the larger number of Ovambo workers. The Luderitz community has also become more elegant in dress. Nevertheless, Raggy suffers like Clara Brockmann's Ingeborg Oberländer under the diamond queens of petty bourgeois origin who boast of their new position without being of a befitting educational standard. Before Raggy leaves Luderitz at the end of 1909 she mentions the South African Territories fraud. She blames both Dernburg's special concessions to German big business and the consequent exclusion of private citizens from the diamond business for the slump on the Luderitz stock exchange.

Diamond mining therefore only forms an interesting backdrop for Raggy's adventures. History has in no way been deliberately faked by Lene Haase, but has been integrated with the contents of her story. In other words, through Raggy's adventures the reader experiences the historical turmoils of the life on the South-West African diamond fields.

The historical aspects are rather different in Clara Brockmann's case. She incorporates most of the more prominent incidents of the time in her novel *Du heiliges Land*. But Brockmann's incorporation of history into her novel differs widely from that of Lene Haase. She does not portray history as a sequence of events, which in the end, are of little consequence to the life of the heroine, as does Lene Haase. She tries to demonstrate the true social problems resulting from the diamond finds by making them alive in the fictitious world of the novel. As Brockmann includes events from the end of 1908 (revolt of the Bondelswarts) and 1909 (South African Territories fraud) it can be assumed that Clara Brockmann must already have been in Luderitz before her holiday in Germany around the end of 1909 and the beginning of 1910. Although she does not recount the incidents in chronological order, she nevertheless draws inspiration from many historical incidents.

All the characters used as a point of departure evolve from fact. The authoress has portrayed herself in Ingeborg Oberländer. This is evident from Clara Brockmann's tale about the "Diamantenfieber" (diamond fever) in her book *Briefe eines deutschen Mädchens aus Südwest* (1913:175–182). She rides on horseback, as does Ingeborg Oberländer, on business to a diamond field superintendent who is stationed near the block belonging to the government treasury. Like the heroine of her novel, Clara Brockmann experiences a childlike joy about the diamonds. Ingeborg Oberländer takes part in similar activities to those of the authoress. She, too, visits the tailor in Luderitz and she sings in a cinema, albeit not in Luderitz but in Cape Town (Brockmann, 1912:202). It is self-evident that Ingeborg, like Clara Brockmann, becomes acquainted with the various personages of Luderitz, their local interests and problems, the election of the representatives of Luderitz for the *Landesrat* (local parliament), the various destinations for excursions along the coast and similar details which cannot all be named here. Furthermore, like Clara Brockmann, Ingeborg also travels back to Germany via Cape Town.

Schakalswater, the place of action, is most probably Colmanskop, where Clara Brockmann worked for the Koloniale Bergbaugesellschaft. As far as Adolf Oberländer is concerned, no model has as yet been found. With regard to his wife and the character of Oskar Vollmüller, an announcement in the *Lüderitzbucher Zeitung*, dated 2 April 1910, that is shortly after Clara Brockmann's arrival, supplied interesting information. An engagement between a certain Martha Schramm, whose name the authoress has changed to Carola Schramm, and a certain Oscar Möller, who becomes Oskar Vollmüller in the novel, is announced. Furthermore, Carola Schramm is clothed with the character traits and eyes of an obelisk of a Mrs. Von Löwen who appears as a character in a novel published in instalments in the *Lüderitzbucher Zeitung* at the time, based on the edition of 3 September 1910. And even a minor character like Paul Wiegemann was modelled after a contemporary concert pianist, Walter Wiegemann, as can be seen from the *Lüderitzbucher Zeitung* of 30 April 1910.

The figure of Oskar Vollmüller is linked to several historical events. Evidence can be found in editions of the *Lüderitzbuchter Zeitung* dated 14 August, 25 September, 2 and 9 October 1909 (Levinson, 1983:54). The shares of the South African Territories Concession Company had experienced an unrealistic boom. Right from the start police had not trusted the two prospectors Goslett and Naudé who, as became evident later, had in actual fact planted the stones. Police commander Eschen and district officer Böhmer had suggested a Mr. Brown as a detective for the investigation to the mayor, Emil Kremplin. Brown was employed but soon joined the two prospectors in the Kharas (in the novel: Kanaas) fraud. As soon as this came to light, district officer Böhmer locked up the three criminals before they could undertake a pleasure trip to Cape Town. In reality, district officer Böhmer arrested the criminals, while in the novel it is Dr. Klinger, lawyer of the district office, who personally convicted the prospectors in order to save his former fiancée from getting married to a swindler. Furthermore, Oskar Vollmüller is obviously also one of the diamond kings who belonged to the small traders whom Dernburg had despised so much. He reveals the problem that had existed between the educated classes and the nouveau riches. In the South African Territories fraud a somewhat strange role was played by a certain Mr. Schultius from Mecklenburg, a former have-not who had acquired a manor and wealth in industry. He at first tried to support the rate of exchange of the South African Territories shares by buying them and founding the Kharas Exploration Company. The many parallels with Oskar Vollmüller, the character of the novel, are obvious. He too was a have-not who had, like Schultius, acquired a great fortune. Like Schultius he was probably also deceived by the two prospectors. One was a former detective and tried to maintain the swindle as long as possible, once he had understood his situation. Also, Vollmüller tries, as the prospectors Goslett and Naudé did, to flee to Cape Town in the final instance.

Hans Gothland is also an historically based character. He appears in Clara Brockmann's chapter on "Diamantenfieber" (1912:175–182) which, like the novel, begins with the arrest of a black diamond thief. The author also elaborates on the possible bad effects of diamonds on white sorters who live in straitened financial circumstances. We hear of a man who wanted to flee with uncut diamonds and who embezzled money from black workers on contract from the Cape, even though he had been living among them without suspicion till then.

One of the last editions of the *Lüderitzbuchter Zeitung*, 17 September 1910, published before Clara Brockmann's departure from South West, reports that a prospector, Arthur Beck, was caught unawares below the dunes and drowned. His horse was, however, able to rescue itself. This tragic incident was reflected in Brockmann's novel by the similar death of Hans Gothland.

One last reality of life on the diamond fields depicted by Clara Brockmann is the scene in the novel where the Ovambos receive their pay. It is reasonable

to assume that Clara Brockmann was familiar with the contents of the newspaper articles and based her story on these facts. The *Lüderitzbucht Zeitung* published articles on 16, 30 July and 24 September 1910 dealing specifically with the issues regarding the employment of Ovambo workers. Important issues were their wages, their sensitivity to the sea climate, their duty to their chiefs, to return always after half a year of labour, transport of Ovambos from Ovamboland to Luderitz and back and naturally on diamond thefts committed by Ovambos.

Hans Grimm's novella, *Dina*, is set in the diamond fields discovered south of Luderitz at the mining police-station Dreimasterbucht at the beginning of 1909. The historical background for this is found in Grimm's travel journal: *Hamburg-Deutsch-Südwest-Kapstadt über Madeira und die Kanarien* (1913: 78–105).

This novella also deals with the social problems resulting from the discovery of diamonds. At the very beginning of his novella, Grimm reports on the diamond mining and the occupation of the diamond fields which had to be guarded by the mining police. Grimm covers the area the policemen had to patrol on horseback and mentions every place by its true geographical name.

Furthermore, the Wachtmeister finds water as well as Bushmen, including an old Hottentot who has become like a Bushman at the Buntveldschuh. The two Bushmen maintain that their chief is Prussian Frank, and the Hottentot, who roams about the Namib, says that he too has already worked on the guano islands. Important background to *Dina* is the fact that on the guano islands poor Bushmen did execute unskilled work and Bushman women were concubines of the guano miners. Grimm also describes an East Prussian by the name of Frank who was supposed to have been a foreman on Sinclair Island for 25 years. The Hottentots of Bethanien, who were the rulers of the country, only seldom came to the sea. They did not want any contact with the Bushmen because becoming a Bushman was regarded as a curse among them. Before the diamond mining started, they had only been living at a few water places in the desert, that is, the Buntfeldschuh where deserted homesteads could still be seen. This can be seen from Grimm's novella (Grimm, 1913:105) which in translation reads as follows:

Today the Bushmen have vanished. When after the proclamation of the closure of the diamond area posts of the police troop searched the diamond area they only found a small settlement, a few women and children and an ancient Bastard. They were asked who their chief was and they answered that it must be Prussian Frank on the guano island.

Grimm's excerpts of the life in Luderitz are all realistic, for example, the district officer, who at the time was called Böhmer, and the missionary who during the German occupation, was Emil Laaf. Grimm's short depiction of

the activities on the diamond fields and his portrayal of the diamond thefts also correspond with events of history. The Wachtmeister leaves Luderitz for his vacation in Holstein as it was common for officials to do at the time. On his return trip the much rumoured ship gossip follows and the not so unusual engagement and immediate wedding of the two tall ones in Luderitz, that is the Wachtmeister and the lady he got to know on board ship. The characterization of Luderitz as a construction site and the description of its sandy streets are consonant with Hans Grimm's travel journal. The anchoring places for ships of the Woermann Line in the diamond areas can also be historically verified. Thus the furniture transport to the Dreimasterbucht by ship is an historic possibility. The same is also true of the journey of the Wachtmeister's wife by coach. We therefore see that Grimm, like Lene Haase, depicts many realistic details of the country. This is strange, especially in view of the fact that the real intent of Hans Grimm's *Dina* cannot be historically located. The Wachtmeister is exposed to the Namib and by implication to Dina and the Hottentot because of his duty to guard the diamond finds. In this way, however, the general problems between the colonizer and the colonized, which will be discussed in the last part of this article, are portrayed. Cases like the Wachtmeister's probably did occur in history, but how important this phenomena was remains open to question.

As is evident from the above, all three works have the early days on the diamond fields as a theme, but are nonetheless fictional. The reader is led through the historical events and conflicts in the diamond area by the experiences and thoughts of the heroines and heroes. Even if it is possible for the reader to remain detached from the main characters to a certain degree, he nevertheless has to share with them the experience of their negative fate because a real counterperspective is missing. In Lene Haase's novel the farming couple, Hartwig, is the only one among the many couples depicted which is portrayed positively and as such is not effective enough to counteract the negative impression of life in South-West Africa as conveyed by the heroes. They appear to be more of a positive contrast to the ineffectual German farmers who are hampered by their demanding wives, as well as the farmers of Afrikaner origin who make themselves guilty of mismanagement and immorality.

III The colonizer as the loser

In all three works under discussion it is impossible for the main characters to survive in South-West Africa. This is attributed to two factors: either the characters themselves or the country, or a combination of both.

Although Lene Haase's Raggy must be viewed from a critical perspective, the authoress nevertheless goes to great lengths to portray her as void of all guilt. Raggy is provocative and unfeeling but never dishonourable. Therefore she is regarded as a great lady. Yet Raggy at the end of the novel not only loses her

fiancé because of the South-West African gossip but also her money because of devaluation of her shares. Raggy, therefore, from a personal and financial point of view becomes a victim of the colonizing process. Her private life has been exposed publicly; on a personal level, however, many have to succumb to her.

Ingeborg Oberländer's attempt to survive in South-West Africa is even less successful. At first she is to be married off against her will to a diamond king. Then, when he is exposed as a swindler, she is simply thrown out of her brother's house after his death, also sacrificing her possessions. She leaves South-West Africa to look for work in Cape Town. When Klinger and Ingeborg meet again they decide, as if this went without saying, to spend their married life in Germany. Klinger is happy to shake off the Luderitz dust from his feet (p. 461) and Ingeborg's final decision is that South-West Africa after all has been no holy country, cleansed by the blood of German soldiers. As Klinger states (in translation): "It has been too colourful, too restless, too feverishly turned over by human passions, it could not be sanctified because the diamond sand crackled too harshly under the feet of the people" (p. 461).

South-West Africa seems not to be co-operative as regards the survival of the heroes. Klinger characterizes the land as a "trial" and a "road of thorns", which, although it has strengthened their love for each other, is nevertheless not a country which invites people to stay.

In the world of diamond riches all the main characters (except possibly Klinger), are victims of colonization. Hans Grimm in fact presents this situation more explicitly as the conflict between being a colonizer and a colonized at the same time, which causes the Wachtmeister's personality to split into two. As a policeman of the colonial power, and having his physical strength, he is seen as the colonizer. This can be seen when at the beginning of the novella he not only takes Dina, Isak and the Hottentot as prisoners but also gives the former two of these new names. The Wachtmeister is part of the small German contingent sent out to guard the recently established diamond finds against Bushmen. But the Wachtmeister is the only one who discovers any living person in the "dead land" (p. 8), probably because he had been out there for the greatest length of time and (in translation): "[. . .] perhaps only because the totally inexplicable magic of the dead land already held him prisoner" (p. 8). The Wachtmeister can therefore be seen as already having been colonized by the land itself and its fleeting inhabitants before he is able to colonize it and its inhabitants. These, although not a figment of the Wachtmeister's imagination, seem to be demonic forces rising from the underworld, from the "dead land". There is Dina, portrayed as a witch, because she has (translated) "the devil in her body" (p. 24), Isak whose hunchback likewise implies demonic qualities, and the Hottentot who has been cursed for having become a Bushman with the powers of a magician arriving suddenly during the nights and being inextricably linked to the wild horse which causes the downfall of the Wachtmeister.

Once diamond digging has come into full swing in *Dina* the Germans establish various police stations in the “dead land” and the Wachtmeister becomes a supervisor on a police station. While the German colonial government establishes (translated) “a living net of orderliness” (p. 14) across the “dead land”, the Wachtmeister is accompanied by his demonic crowd to his new station which is incorporated into the deceptive network of orderliness. *Dina*, the most prominent exponent of the “dead land”, is the one who operates most effectively under the disguise of orderliness, and soon the Wachtmeister’s confidence is undermined. It is precisely during the night when the old Hottentot reappears that the Wachtmeister discovers that the sergeant has a sexual relationship with *Dina*. This is a disorder not only in terms of what is permitted by the colonial government but also as regards the personal feelings of the Wachtmeister himself. This can be seen when the Wachtmeister is incapable of exercising his duty as a police officer on the Hottentot because his thoughts are elsewhere, that is on *Dina* and the sergeant.

The Wachtmeister decides to find himself a “proper” white wife when he returns to Holstein on long leave so that this thoughts should not be led astray. But what he does not realize is that by ignoring *Dina*, who approaches him facelessly in the dark, he has not solved his problem. On the contrary, while in Holstein he stares into the (translated) “untamable wasteland of the Namib” (p. 17), and

The Wachtmeister always saw the Buntveldschuh in the distance and a blown over track in the sand and then *Dina*, as she, striding fast, was imprinting her tracks onto the rebellious ground. Always only *Dina*. Is a human track or even more a human being characteristic for the Namib, for the dead land? Oh, certainly not. But it is pleasant to look into the Namib from Holstein, where one does not feel its terror.

(p.18)

Although the narrator disputes it, *Dina* does in fact seem to represent the Namib, the “dead” as well as the “deadly” land. It appears that the terrors the Wachtmeister does not experience in Holstein are actually the lurking dangers *Dina* represents for him.

When the Wachtmeister marries a white woman, he believes himself to be protected from any dangers that the dead land may hold for him. But *Dina* intrudes on his marriage as she becomes the object of jealousy of the Wachtmeister’s wife. In his state of confusion he turns against *Dina* and she starts an open sexual relationship with the Gefreite (lance corporal), just to defy him and to bring shame to his house.

The wild horse with its false eyes, which the Wachtmeister is to tame, finally becomes a test of strength between the colonizer and the colonized. The Wachtmeister has already been socially ruined by *Dina*. He is therefore no

longer morally adequate to conquer and control the powers of the desert. As the lieutenant says aptly (translated), "Well, the Wachtmeister will now probably land himself in a close family relationship with the sand" (p. 31). But the Wachtmeister seems to be aware of the fact that riding that horse will land him in trouble. He also disregards the fact that the ride itself is preceded by the death of a dog from the heat.

There seems to be a close link between the horse and the Hottentot because the horse recognizes the voice and laughter of the Hottentot which accompany the fatal ride. This demonic spectacle is further enhanced by the Hottentot's disappearance and the fact that the dogs do not want to walk along the track of the wild horse.

The triumph of the "dead" country over German dominance is reflected in the old Hottentot carrying the Wachtmeister whose hand has been smashed. This symbolizes the loss of his grip on both Dina and the "dead" country; as a cripple he can no longer rule them. Due to his marriage to Lotte and her longing for Holstein, he will be reincorporated into German society but never again as a colonizer, always as a colonized.

Therefore this novella by Hans Grimm depicts a situation where the white colonizer, especially the Wachtmeister, becomes completely defeated as a colonizer. As in Clara Brockmann's novel, the enslavement or suppression of the white man is viewed as a psychological process which nevertheless has serious social consequences for the major characters affected by it.

Whether one views it from the social, economical, moral or purely physical point of view, the conditions in the colony and especially in the diamond fields are unbearable for Blacks and Whites, especially for the main characters of the works who are not indigenous to the colony. All three works end with the return of the main characters to Germany, a return which brings true happiness at least as far as Ingeborg and to a lesser extent Raggy are concerned. The novels do not provide a solution to the South-West African problems, but only make provision for the escape of the main characters back to Europe. In this respect they contrast sharply with the novels written about the Herero War. There, many soldiers later remained as farmers in South-West Africa and took it upon themselves to maintain German domination over the colony. In my opinion this is a curious situation in view of the fact that all three authors more or less explicitly wanted to further colonial rule. In the case of Lene Haase, her commitment to the German colonies can only be deduced from her biographical details. After she had left South-West Africa for Germany, she was married there to a medical doctor and they emigrated in 1912 to another German colony, the Cameroons. Clara Brockmann, on the other hand, raises her opinion clearly in the foreword of her factual books on South-West Africa (Brockmann, 1910: III-VII, translated):

As I am leaving Europe tomorrow 12/2/1910 for the second time in order to return to my work in the colonial service in Africa, I take leave of all my sisters in Germany and lay the following request close to their heart: All of you help to unite and to make our people determined in their colonial efforts. Support our cultural tasks which have emerged in our new Germany on African soil here at home. I deeply wish that this little book will win new friends for our formerly so heavily tested and now so magnificently blossoming colony.

And:

My concern when writing down these depictions was to provide a more or less complete description of South-West Africa today, a chapter of cultural history, an extract of German life in Africa interwoven with charming characteristics of the country so that everybody who looks for information may find something. It was a rewarding task because there was so much that was new and pleasant to report. There were no longer reports about attacks and blood shed but about blessed peace work, about the settling of German traditions, of glittering diamonds in the desert which suddenly poured out a stream of wealth into our heavily tested country. Trying to avoid all senseless glorification I have written trying to be true, in order to serve the country that I have grown to love [. . .]

In the first place my book is directed at the future colonist and pioneer, the farm assistant, the young farmer and the farmer's bride, that is at all those who personally wish to give the country their full commitment and happiness, but at the same time, at those who have beloved relatives over there whose life and activities they would like to understand and to follow to stay close to them. Finally, it is my wish that these simple writings may serve a didactic function for the public in general and may find a home in the German house, in the German family. It is here that we find the foundation of all love for the Fatherland without which an interest in our overseas possessions is not possible. Here the national thought of love for our colonies is rooted, and here it matures. With the heartfelt wish that this simple book may awaken this love more and further it I put it trustingly into the hands of my readers.

(Brockmann, 1912:VI-VII, translated)

When publishing the novel *Du heiliges Land*, Broschek & Co., again praises Clara Brockmann's important contribution to the cultural history of South West Africa.

Hans Grimm finally has more concrete ideas about the value of South-West Africa for Germany as the following extract from *Die dreizehn Briefe aus Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (1927) shows (Grimm 1971:119, translated):

At present about eleven hundred Germans emigrate to the mandate German South-West – mostly with confused expectations. Does this not reveal the unimportance of South-West Africa for us compared with other figures, compared with the German need for space and life? I shall go even further. I shall maintain that of those eleven hundred people, who are nearly all without money, and of whom almost all belong to a group of troublesome and unruly boys of a new kind, only two hundred stay on their feet in South-West.

But I shall now put another question forward. If a hundred boys fulfil their inner urges at a frontier and can become selfdependent and independent young men instead of being distributed across Germany waiting as rioters and rowdies and always being dissatisfied, and further, if ten boys, who are at a German frontier and far away from the imaginary rather than true inner objects of dispute at home, are made into German leaders by the sun and air and the freedom and action and the unhindered manliness – is that too little? Rather, it seems to me that the German future, if we as a people and a state are to have a future at all, depends on such small numbers. A new opportunity for the small numbers is a priority.

Why then is such a furthering of the German colonial politics carried out through heroes in the novels who themselves cannot survive in South-West Africa? It is true to say that these books inform one in a readable way about the country and its people; even today they are still an interesting depiction of the colonial circumstances of life in the diamond area. As such they contribute to the intellectual colonization of the country. The practical value of colonization as is emphasized by Clara Brockmann and Hans Grimm, however, is undermined by the perspectives of the main characters whose feelings and opinions play the dominant role in the novels. An appreciation of the works which interprets the main characters' defeat in South West Africa as isolated negative examples only is, in my opinion, not promoted by the works themselves, especially as no truly attractive counter-examples are construed. On the contrary, the reader is presented with seemingly unambiguous stark facts. European civilization is praised but it cannot survive under South West African circumstances. The works which were published overseas may therefore have served to line the pocket of their authors but would not have increased the number of emigrants, which always remained negligibly small.

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