SCIENCE FICTION AND COLONIALISM IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

by

ALEXANDER TURNER

(Under the Direction of John Short)

ABSTRACT

Between 1918 and 1933, dozens of German Science Fiction writers in the Weimar Republic envisioned Germany’s return as a colonial power. To date, historians and scholars have viewed Weimar Science Fiction novelists strictly as contributors to a radical nationalist discourse that culminated in the rise of National Socialism, without investigating the connections between the novels and Germany’s colonial past. Through an examination of three Science Fiction novels published between 1919 and 1930, this essay argues that Weimar Science Fiction should be understood as a response to Germany’s loss of status as a colonizing nation and the sanctions of the Treaty of Versailles. Ultimately, reading the novels through the lens of colonialism shows that Weimar Science Fiction, which has often been viewed as simply an overture to the Third Reich, shared as much with Germany’s colonial past as it did with the nation’s future.

INDEX WORDS: Germany, Weimar Republic, Science Fiction, Colonialism, History
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ALEXANDER TURNER
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ALEXANDER TURNER

Major Professor: John Short
Committee: John Morrow
             Jennifer Palmer

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Peter Hartberger, the hero of Rudolf Lämmel’s Science Fiction novel, *Die neue Kolonie* (1924), possesses a mysterious power – he can sense the presence of gold.

Peter’s sensitivity to gold leads him to the discovery of the sunken Island of Atlantis, a site of fantastic golden treasures left behind by an ancient civilization. A brilliant engineer, Peter hatches a plan to raise the sunken island from the floor of the Atlantic Ocean using futuristic technology and claim it as a new colony for Germany. As he and his colleagues explore Atlantis in their newly-invented ship, which is capable of both flight and undersea exploration, Peter contemplates the effect the colony will have on his countrymen:

The path over which they slowly flew gleamed with the soft glow of 200,000 neon candles. An eternal calm pervaded the landscape and its essence filled the souls of the sensitive friends. Peter thought – now we are flying over the ground of the new German colony! How many will one day fly and travel this way after us? How much fortune will this colony bring to the Germans? Will this colony become the beginning of a new blessed epoch for the German people?¹

Peter’s anxieties subside quickly after when he and his crew discover massive temples made of gold, pyramids full of treasure, and a mysterious golden tower on the sunken island. By establishing Atlantis as a new German colony and unearthing an immense array of riches hidden on the sunken island results, Peter marks a reversal in fortune for the German people, who have recently lost their overseas colonies in the aftermath of the First World War.

¹ Rudolf Lämmel, *Die neue Kolonie* (Jena: Granula-Verlag, 1924), 240. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
Although the previous scene, in which Peter Hartberger anxiously ponders the potential of the new colony, might easily be disregarded as mere fantasy, Peter’s discovery typifies attitudes toward colonialism of German Science Fiction writers in the era of the Weimar Republic. In their fantastic stories of the near future, which they called Zukunftsromane (“future-novels”), Weimar Science Fiction writers such as Rudolf Lämmel fantasized that Germany would return as a colonial power – a position it had lost with the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. Through his vision of a new colony that would bring Germany immense wealth and initiate a “blessed epoch,” Rudolf Lämmel expressed a longing for the nation’s return as a colonial power that pervaded Weimar conversations about colonialism. Lämmel was, of course, not alone in his colonial fantasy. Between 1918 and 1933, dozens of popular novelists published fantasies in which the Germans acquire new colonies and overthrow the Treaty of Versailles.²

Most often, historians and literary scholars have viewed Science Fiction as a predominantly Anglo-American genre that emerged in the nineteenth century and reached mainstream success by the late 1930s in the pulp magazines of the American publisher Hugo Gernsback.³ However, as Peter Fischer has shown, Germans also participated in the early development of Science Fiction through tales of marvelous technology, Martian invasions of Earth, and other tropes that helped shape the genre. In his study, Fischer

² Examples include Otto Autenrieth’s Bismarck II (1921), Hans Dominik’s Die Macht der Drei (1922) and Atlantis (1925), Otfrid von Hanstein’s Elektropolis (1928), Thea von Harbou’s Frau im Mond (1928). After a brief decline in the production of “future novels” in the mid-1920s, the novels surged in popularity after the economic downturn of 1929 and even surpassed the number produced immediately after the First World War. According to Brandt, the number of Zukunftsromane published in 1922 was twenty-six. In 1931, twenty-eight were published. Dina Brandt, Der deutsche Zukunftsroman, 1918-1945: Gattungstypologie und sozialgeschichtliche Verortung (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2007), 60.

³ It is important to note that recent studies of Western Science Fiction have linked the birth of the genre to European colonialism. For example, John Rieder has argued that colonialism was crucial to the development of British and American Science Fiction. Rieder has taken a particularly strong interest in the works of H.G. Wells, H. Rider Haggard, Jack London, and Edgar Rice Burroughs, among others, but his study does not include an analysis of German Science Fiction. See John Rieder, Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008).
focuses solely on the works of Kurt Lasswitz (1848-1910), a scientist and philosopher who published several influential novels in the late nineteenth century, and Hans Dominik (1872-1945), an engineer and popular novelist of the Weimar Republic. As Fischer’s work has demonstrated, Science Fiction was a steadily growing, although relatively new, genre of popular literature in Germany by the early 1920s. Though often disparate in the ways they imagined Germany’s future, Science Fiction authors of the interwar period nonetheless shared a desire for the return of Germany as a colonial power.

While Germany was only a colonial power for thirty-five years (1884-1919) – a much shorter duration than other European nations – colonialism had lasting effects on German politics and culture. Even after the Allies confiscated Germany’s overseas colonies, along with several territories in Europe, Germans continued to perceive themselves and others in strict colonial terms and yearned for the nation’s return to expansion overseas and on the European continent. For example, between 1919 and 1933, politicians, intellectuals, and lobbyists repeatedly demanded the return of former German colonies overseas. Colonial societies of the period even endeavored to preserve the memory of the nation’s colonial past through the public veneration of its colonial heroes as well as the erection of monuments to the nation’s overseas expansion. Novelists, artists, and photographers also began to explore the nation’s colonial past and

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reimagine culture and society in postcolonial Germany. Colonial discourse in the Weimar Republic was not limited to overseas expansion, though; cartographers, novelists, and film makers after 1919 also engaged in the creation of Poland and the “East” as a colonial space on the European continent. Included in Weimar colonial discourse were Science Fiction authors who imagined future worlds in which Germany acquired new colonies by inventing fantastic technology.

To date, historians and literary scholars have interpreted Weimar Science Fiction writers and their works primarily as contributors to the völkisch movement, radical nationalist rhetoric, and have positioned them within the history of National Socialism. Peter S. Fisher conducted perhaps the most thorough reading of the novels in *Fantasy and Politics: Visions of the Future in the Weimar Republic* (1991). Fisher’s study positions the novels among the dozens of utopian works of the Weimar era. In sum, he argues, “Weimar’s visionary literature reveals a whole complex of feelings – anxieties and fears, as well as unbroken desires and ambitions – that form the substratum of Weimar politics.” In his analysis of the novels, Fisher identifies strong nationalist themes and revanchist desires, and he points to the role of technology and violence as means of fulfilling German utopian fantasies. However, though his reading of the novels has contributed significantly to the historical understanding of right-wing nationalist attitudes after 1918, Fisher only briefly mentions the significance of colonialism in the

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texts. Jost Hermand has also positioned the novels within a larger study of the origins of National Socialism. He views *Bismarck II* and similar right-wing fantasies from the 1920s as part of a long tradition of völkisch literature that originated in the sixteenth century. Like Fisher, Hermand briefly notes that Science Fiction writers desired Germany’s resurrection as a World Power, but does not include a detailed analysis of the connection between their works and the Weimar colonial imagination. Additionally, Robert Gerwarth has also situated only one of the novels, Otto Autenrieth’s *Bismarck II* (1921) within a study of the “Bismarck Myth,” in which he argues that the figure of Otto von Bismarck became a symbol of anti-democratic ideology in the early twentieth century. However, his description of the novel is brief and does not explore its colonial themes at all. To that end, this essay aims to build on previous readings of the texts by expanding the historical lens through which the novels have been viewed and analyzing their significant contributions to the colonial discourse of the Weimar Republic.

Considering that the authors of these Science Fiction novels devoted much effort to fantasies in which Germany acquires new colonies, it is puzzling that historians such as Fisher and Hermand have interpreted these works simply as a prelude to the Third Reich, rather than exploring the connections between Science Fiction and the ongoing conversations about colonialism during the Weimar era. In lieu of their oversight, this essay will thus investigate the reasons why German Science Fiction authors of the Weimar Republic fantasized about Germany’s return as a colonizing nation and will evaluate the contributions of Science Fiction to colonial discourse in Germany during the

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postwar years. This essay aims to depart from reading the texts merely as part of a nationalist discourse that culminated in the rise of National Socialism; rather, this essay will contend that the fantasies of Weimar Science Fiction writers originated from a deeply held desire to return to Germany’s colonial past. The essay will ultimately argue that Science Fiction authors were inheritors of a colonial tradition that formed the foundation of the Western understanding of the world for centuries prior to the publication of these fantasies. This colonial understanding of the world, combined with Germany’s material circumstances after the Treaty of Versailles, comprise the driving forces behind the fantasies of Weimar Science Fiction authors. Ultimately, reading the novels through the lens of colonialism shows that Weimar Science Fiction, which has often been viewed as simply an overture to the Third Reich, shared as much with Germany’s colonial past as it did with the nation’s future.

To be certain, though, scholars in the decades immediately after the Second World War often overlooked the significance of colonialism in the history of the Weimar Republic. Recent studies have demonstrated, however, that colonial discourse suffused German culture in the years after the nation was forced to relinquish its colonies. Particularly important to this essay are the works of historians who have analyzed colonial discourse in literature, political pamphlets, and art in postcolonial Germany. Jared Poley’s study of the *Rheinische Volkspflege*, a government-sponsored group that observed and published literature on race relations in the occupied Rhineland, has shown that Germans viewed the French occupation of the Rhineland as an attempt to transform the region into a French colony. In numerous pamphlets and essays, the members of the *Rheinische Volkspflege* argued that the French aimed to colonize and exploit the
resources of the Rhineland using African soldiers. The men and women who advanced such arguments were paranoid that the French occupation of the Rhineland had inverted the racial hierarchy established in European overseas colonies and cast Germans as colonial subjects of the French Empire. The publications of the Rheinische Volkspflege thus undoubtedly contributed to Weimar discourse on colonialism by spreading fear that the former colonizers had become the colonized.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to Poley, Susann Lewerenz and Elaine Martin have also examined depictions of Africans in Weimar colonial discourse. According to Lewerenz and Martin, two contradictory images of Africans emerged in colonial discourse of the early 1920s. During the infamous “Black Shame” campaign, German novelists and pamphleteers cultivated a myth that African soldiers in the Rhineland were wild beasts who raped Germany women. At the same time, Germans protested the “colonial guilt lie,” which alleged that the German Empire had engaged in violent oppression of colonial subjects in Africa before WWI and was, therefore, a colonial failure. The source of such lies, they argued, were the French and British, who wished to smear Germany’s reputation as an act of revenge for the First World War. In an effort to revise the nation’s colonial history, novelists and propagandists portrayed African subjects as loyal defenders of the German colonies. They looked to the Askari soldiers of German East Africa, who assisted Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck in the war against the Allied Powers, as evidence of the success of the German civilizing mission and colonial project. In this way, the two contradictory depictions of colonial Others served as a critique of French colonial

practices and sought to revise German colonial history by erasing its alleged colonial guilt.\(^\text{13}\)

In *Germany’s Wild East* (2012), Kristin Kopp has also demonstrated that the colonial imagination was not limited to overseas colonies. Instead, she argues, Germans before and after the First World War imagined Poland and the territories of the East as a colonial space on the European continent. The discursive colonization of Poland, she claims, originated in the eighteenth century, expanded during under Bismarck in the nineteenth century, and reached its peak in the culture of Weimar Germany. Employing a Eurocentric understanding of the world that was typical of the period, cartographers, novelists, and visual artists claimed that Polish people lacked culture, were uncivilized, and non-European. In a fashion similar to the European colonists who justified expansion in North American and Africa with the notion of the “civilizing mission,” Germans of the Weimar Republic claimed that their duty was to bring civilization to the Polish “Wild East.” In the end, they aimed to reassert nation’s status as a colonial power.\(^\text{14}\) Of course, German representations of Polish people and territory as colonial subjects and space were not a new or unprecedented component of Weimar colonial discourse. As Kopp has shown, the discursive colonization of Poland originated at least as far back as the Polish Partitions of 1772-95. In the late nineteenth century, Otto von Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf* (“culture struggle”) policies furthered the German *Drang nach Osten* (“drive toward the


In 1885, Bismarck expelled thousands of ethnic Poles into Austria and Russia and turned over the land to German farmers and settlers. The material colonization of the East was accompanied and shaped by an extensive body of literature in which Germans of all disciplines argued that the Polish were uncivilized, savage, and non-European.\(^{15}\)

For the purposes of this essay, I will also utilize the theories of Kristin Kopp to provide a conceptual framework through which to analyze Weimar Science Fiction. In her work, Kopp has distinguished between material and discursive colonialism. Material colonialism, she argues, refers to the material practices of colonization, including, among other things, territorial expansion, subjugation of indigenous populations, and the actions of colonial administrators and bureaucrats. On the other hand, discursive colonialism is comprised of three elements: the establishment of a subjectivity of the colonizer-self, the construction of the colonial “Other,” and the relationship between the self and Other in colonial terms. Moreover, discursive colonialism, she writes, “is a process able to reinvent its object in colonial terms and to harness this reinvented history to serve the rhetorical needs of the present.”\(^{16}\) In using Kopp’s theory as its conceptual framework, the essay will investigate how Germans perceived themselves as colonizers, constructed the identities of Others, and mediated the relationship between the two within the traditional paradigm of colonizer and colonial subject.\(^{17}\)

\(^{15}\) Kopp cites Gustav Freytag’s *Soll und Haben* (1855) as the prime example of nineteenth-century representations of Polish people. Freytag wrote in his novel, “There is no race more lacking in that which it takes to better themselves and less able to use their capital to improve their state of humanity and Bildung than the Slavs…It is remarkable how unable they are to generate that class which produces civilization and progress, and which can lift up a bunch of scattered farmers into a state.” Quoted in Kristin Kopp, *Germany’s Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 42.

\(^{16}\) Kopp, *Germany’s Wild East*, 6-8.

\(^{17}\) Kopp’s theories, of course, owe much to the work of Edward Said. In his seminal work, *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said argued that Western academics in the age of imperialism engaged in a discursive formation of the “Orient,” and its counterpart, the “Occident.” In their representations of the Orient and its
This essay will investigate colonialism in Weimar Science Fiction through an examination of three novels – Otto Autenrieth’s *Bismarck II* (1921), Rudolf Lämmel’s *Die neue Kolonie* (1924), and Otfrid von Hanstein’s *Elektropolis* (1928). Like many of his contemporaries, Otto Autenrieth served in the Reichswehr during the First World War as an infantry sergeant on the Western Front. After the war, he worked as a stenographer and wrote political pamphlets in which he espoused his right-wing views. Though not a Science Fiction novel in the strictest sense, Autenrieth’s *Bismarck II* contains strong Science Fiction elements, particularly the author’s vision of futuristic technology. In his work, Autenrieth imagined a future world in which Germany would return as a colonial power on the European continent. The hero of the novel, Otto von Fels, rises to the top of German politics after a series of hardships leaves him destitute in the wake of the Treaty of Versailles. A brilliant politician and military strategist, Otto unites the fractured German population through a series of deftly-maneuvered international conflicts, which culminates in the colonization of Poland. Meanwhile, the Germans invent futuristic machines that provide endless energy and weapons of unprecedented power to overturn the oppressive sanctions of the Versailles peace agreement and ensure the success of their inhabitants, Westerners constructed systems of knowledge and power, as well as racial and cultural identities, by drawing fundamental distinctions between Europeans and non-Europeans. The distinction between, colonizer and colonized, Self and Other, served as the underlying principle of Western knowledge of the Orient, and justified domination of the East by Western nations. Though Said focused primarily on British and French representations of the Middle East and Asia, his work has had an enormous influence on studies of Weimar colonialism, especially those that examine discursive representations of German colonizers, non-Europeans, and other Westerners. Edward Said, introduction to *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

18 Autenrieth’s early pamphlets reveal a disgust with the political climate of post-War Germany. In *Die Drei Kommende Kriege* (*The Three Coming Wars* 1919), for example, Autenrieth imagined a future war between the leading World Powers. His most successful work, the pamphlet reached 230,000 copies in the first two years of publication. In another pamphlet, *Heraus aus dem Sumpfe der Revolution!* (*Out of the Quagmire of Revolution* 1919), Autenrieth called for political unity in the chaos of the immediate post-War years and urged the German people to remain steadfast in their hatred of the French. For more information on the connections between these works and radical politics see Peter S. Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics: Visions of the Future in the Weimar Republic* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 38.
colonial project in the East. The novel ends with a technology-fueled, apocalyptic war from which the Germans emerge as the world’s strongest colonial empire, while the French, British, and Americans are left in ruins.

Rudolf Lämmel (1879-1962) also expressed a desire for the return of Germany as a colonial power in his Science Fiction novel, *Die neue Kolonie* (1924), written under the pseudonym Heinrich Inführ. A Swiss physicist best known for his writings on the theory of German dance, Lämmel was also infuriated by the stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles and yearned for a return of German colonial rule.\(^1\) His novel, published early in career as a writer, tells the story of Peter Hartberger, a German engineer who discovers the sunken island of Atlantis and claims it a new colony for Germany. With the help of American engineers and financiers, Peter invents futuristic machines that allow for the colonization of the underwater island. The French, enraged that the Germans might resume their place among the colonial powers, attempt to thwart Peter at every turn. However, the clever German and his colleagues defeat their French adversaries using fantastic weapons, including energy cannons and ray guns.

Finally, in his novel *Elektropolis* (1928), Otfrid von Hanstein (1869-1959) imagined the return of Germany as a colonial power through the colonization of the Australian desert.\(^2\) The novel centers around Fritz Schmidt, a young engineer who struggles to find employment in the harsh economic downturn of the postwar years. One day, Fritz receives a mysterious letter in which an unknown benefactor offers him a job

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\(^1\) Lämmel was the father of Vera Skoronel, a well-known dancer in the Weimar Republic, and served on a state bureau that assessed dance schools for accreditation. For more on his theories of dance see Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

\(^2\) For the purposes of this essay, I have used an English version of Hanstein’s novel translated by Francis Currier and published in the Summer 1930 issue of *Wonder Stories Quarterly*, an American Science Fiction magazine. All quotes from Hanstein’s novel in this essay are from Currier’s translation unless otherwise noted.
as an engineer in the remote regions of Australia. In desperate need of work, Fritz travels to Australia and learns that his uncle, Heinrich Schmidt, has purchased a large area of the desert and aims to convert it into a new German colony. Fritz’s role in the colonial project will be to aid in the design of futuristic machines that will transform the region into a paradise of automated agriculture. Together, Fritz and his uncle construct Elektropolis, a technological metropolis in the heart of the desert. However, the Australian government attempts to halt the Germans when they learn of the immense riches in the new colony. In Hanstein’s fantasy, the German colonists repel an invasion by the Australian army with fantastic defensive weapons.

To begin, the first section of the essay will explore the “colonizer-as-colonized” theme present in the novels and will argue that the revanchist sentiments in the works stemmed from the notion that Germans had been transformed into colonial subjects as a result of the French occupation of the Rhineland. The fear that the colonizer-colonized binary was permeable motivated the depictions of the French and other Allied nations as ruthless colonizers rather than temporary occupiers. The authors furthered the notion that the French aimed to colonize Germany by integrating the rhetoric of the “Black Shame” campaign into their fantasies. In response to the fear that the occupation had transformed Germans into colonial subjects, the authors looked to technology to maintain the colonizer-colonized binary. They reasserted that Germans belonged to the category of “colonizer” through visions of technology-fueled wars in which the German colonists defeat the Allies and the construction of the German engineer as the hero of the colonial project. In this way, they created a new German colonial identity that served as a counterpart to the French invaders and African soldiers.
The second section of this essay will examine the authors’ representations of colonial “Others” and the elements of colonial revisionism in their novels. This section will argue that Lämmel and Hannstein’s depictions of non-Europeans were created in response to the Allied claim that Germany had failed as a colonial power due to the atrocities committed against the Herrero and Nama people of German South West Africa in the early twentieth century. By utilizing favorable depictions of relationships between Germans and non-Europeans, exemplified by the figure of the “loyal Askari” in their works, the authors aimed to counter the notion that Germany had failed as a colonial power. The second section will also argue that technology was essential to the revisionist attempt to counter the notion of “colonial guilt.” Through advanced technology, the novelists argued, German colonists tamed savage landscapes and the people who inhabited them, which portrayed the Germans in a positive light. Finally, the section will also examine the depiction of “Others” in the novel of Autenrieth, who rejected the revisionist approach and instead looked to Poland as a site of a future German colony and portrayed Polish people as colonial “Others” in Europe.
CHAPTER 2


An important component of colonial discourse in the Science Fiction novels of the Weimar Republic was the fear that Germany was under threat of colonization by the Allied nations in the aftermath of the First World War. Following the armistice of 11 November 1918 that ended fighting on the Western Front, the Allied Powers occupied Germany’s western regions and divided them into four zones. The largest and most significant of the occupation zones belonged to the French, who took control of Mainz and Düsseldorf in addition to a sizeable amount of territory along the left bank of the Rhine River, stretching from Koblenz to Strasbourg. In what would become a crucial moment in the German colonial discourse of the Weimar era, the French government dispatched between thirty and forty thousand African soldiers to the Rhineland. In addition to the presence of French forces in the Rhineland, Belgian troops entered the smaller regions of Eupen and Malmedy, while British and American soldiers moved into regions surrounding Bonn and Koblenz. In occupying Germany’s western regions, the Allies, particularly the French and Belgians, hoped to pacify German unrest and establish a demilitarized buffer zone in the event of a future conflict.

Many Germans feared in the immediate postwar years that the temporary occupation of the Rhineland would become a permanent reality. Such fears intensified

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22 Poley, *Decolonization in Germany*, 152.
with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which confiscated from Germany its overseas colonies and established a legal basis for the occupation of the Rhineland, as well as reparations payments and expropriation of German resources. Moreover, the peace agreement returned to the French the regions of Alsace and Lorraine, which Germany had taken during the Franco-Prussian War in the previous century. The fate of the Saarland was to be decided by plebiscite, but would remain under French control until the date of the vote in 1935. In 1920, a vote held in Euepen and Malmedy determined that the regions would remain under Belgian control; in 1925, the Belgians completed the formal annexation of both areas. With the signing of the peace agreement, the allies guaranteed that Germany would keep up with the reparations payments levied against them through an extended occupation of up to fifteen years. Therefore, the fears of the Germans in the early postwar years were confirmed to a certain degree: not only had the Treaty of Versailles resulted in the loss of German colonies, but the French and their allies now occupied German lands in Europe for the foreseeable future.\footnote{Ibid.}

The situation worsened for Germany in late 1922 when the Allied Reparations Committee declared Germany to be in default on its reparations payments. In January of the following year, French and Belgian troops entered the Ruhr, an industrial region rich in coal. Convinced the Germans were attempting to circumvent the sanctions of the peace agreement by purposefully delaying shipments of coal, the French occupied cities throughout in the Ruhr in attempt to force the Germans into compliance. Failure to comply with the French occupation authorities often resulted in the expulsion of German regional officials. For example, in the Pfalz region of the Rhineland, French authorities

\footnote{Ibid.}
dismissed the local council and seized control of the railroads. The German public met the prospect of an extended French occupation with outrage. Despite the German government’s official policy of passive resistance, violent outbursts occurred throughout Germany in 1923, including attempted revolutions by the Communists and National Socialists. By the end of that tumultuous year, which included the infamous inflation crisis, the government ultimately abandoned passive resistance in favor of renewed negotiations with the Allies. In August 1924, the German government, with the assistance of American banker Charles G. Dawes, then approved the Dawes Plan, an agreement that restructured the schedule of German reparations payments and negotiated the withdrawal of French and Belgian troops from the Ruhr by the end of 1925.

It was within the historical context of the Allied occupation of the Rhineland that Otto Autenrieth and Rudolf Lämmel published their colonial fantasies. Autenrieth and Lämmel, as well as a number of Germans during the early 1920s, perceived French control over the Rhineland as form of subjugation akin to the treatment of non-Europeans abroad. Prior to the occupation of the Rhineland, Germans had understood the colonizer-colonized relationship as a subjugation of non-Europeans by Western Europeans. From the time the Germans acquired overseas colonies in the late nineteenth century, they viewed themselves as colonizers with equal status as other European colonizers. For example, Kaiser Wilhelm II’s famous “A Place in the Sun” speech of 1901, in which he borrowed heavily from a speech made by the statesman Bernhard von Bülow in the previous century, confirmed that Germany had entered the pantheon of European colonial

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powers. Yet, the French seizure of German territories, the demand for reparations payments, and the appropriation of raw materials, led many Germans to see their western neighbors as more than temporary occupiers. The realization that the boundary between colonizer and colonized had become permeable – that even a former colonial power could become colonized – frightened and angered the authors.

Additionally, the deployment of African soldiers in the occupation of the Rhineland heightened the fear that the French were attempting to convert the Germans into colonial subjects. Rudolf Lämmel took an especially strong position against the use of African soldiers in Die neue Kolonie. To begin with, he argued, the use of African soldiers in the occupation of the Rhineland meant that non-whites were subjugating Europeans, which overturned racial hierarchies established in the colonies and resulted in a great humiliation for the German people. Non-whites in positions of authority over Germans represented a perversion of the traditional colonial paradigm, which enabled Europeans to stand at the top of the racial hierarchy. Lämmel and his contemporaries saw the use of African soldiers as an attempt by the French to convert the Germans into colonial subjects through miscegenation. By unleashing the allegedly savage African soldiers on innocent German women, Lämmel argued, the French aimed to convert the Germans into non-Europeans. In this way, the use of African soldiers in the occupation further violated the traditional colonial binaries of Self-Other and colonizer-colonized, due in large part to Germans understanding themselves as somehow removed from the category of colonizer and suddenly being re-labeled colonized. This section will thus examine the discursive strategies of the “colonizer-as-colonized” theme that the authors

employed in their works. It will focus primarily on the authors’ representations of the French, who they believed were attempting to seize German space and convert the Germans into colonial subjects.

Essential to the “colonizer-as-colonized” discourse was the portrayal of the French as ruthless colonizers instead of temporary occupiers. Much like the actual events of the immediate postwar years, the French occupy the Rhineland in Autenrieth and Lämmel’s novels. In Bismarck II, published three years before the occupation of the Ruhr, the French invade Western Germany after the Germans fail to meet the reparations obligations outlined of the Treaty of Versailles. During the invasion, French soldiers seize factories, force German citizens to provide French regiments with weapons and supplies, and drive people from their homes. The assault unleashes a civil war in Germany that divides the nation between the Communist forces in the North and the Nationalists in the South. Otto, who has recently risen to the head of the government through the Communist Party, leads the Communist forces against the French invaders and Nationalists. The French appeal to the British for assistance in the war against Germany, but the British decline as they no longer view Germany as a threat to their colonial empire. The conflict enters a stalemate as the French consolidate their power in the Rhineland.27

Through this fictional invasion, Autenrieth implied that the French were determined to conquer German territory and exploit its people and resources. The author furthered this notion in the hero’s career as a writer of nationalist songs. After Otto finds himself destitute in the aftermath of the First World War, he aims to make a living and

27 Otto Autenrieth, Bismarck II: Der Roman der deutschen Zukunft (Munich: “Heimatland” Verlag, 1921), 112-120.
enlighten the masses by writing nationalist *Trutzlieder*, or “songs of defiance.” In the second stanza of his song, “German Is What We Want to Be!” Otto expressed his outrage at the territorial sanctions of the Versailles Treaty: “Though the French command with hate / And steal our German lands / If they tear apart our tribal brotherhood / Our loyalty welds us together.” The “stolen German lands” to which Otto refers are the territories in Europe – including Alsace-Lorraine, Upper Silesia, West Prussia, and Posen – that belonged to the Germany until 1919. In his “song of defiance,” Otto describes the French as thieves who are bent on the destruction of the German people. According to Otto, the French had seized German space that did not rightfully belong to them through the territorial sanctions of the peace agreement. The hero, however, remains resolute in the face of perceived oppression. For Autenrieth, blood ties and loyalty to the nation would unite the Germans against the ruthless French invaders.

Not only had the French wrongfully seized German space, Autenrieth argued, but they also aimed to exploit the wealth and resources of their newly-acquired territories at the expense of the German people. Consequently, one of the author’s primary concerns was the effect of the occupation on the German economy. In the novel, the German government issues bonds to foreign investors to keep up with reparations payments, which results in a massive influx of financiers from Allied countries, who profit immensely from the desperate economic situation. “With a little capital, which would have been modest in their home countries,” Autenrieth wrote, “the foreign bond holders were exempt from every type of taxes and duties and could live like kings in Germany.”

To make matter worse, the fictional foreign investors import cheap laborers from their

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28 Ibid., 94.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 104.
home countries, which increases German unemployment and leads to a housing shortage. The situation meant that “an enormous economic catastrophe stood at the door, which must inevitably result in a revolt of the masses.” Autenrieth feared that, like overseas colonies, Germany had become a destination for foreign investors to make enormous profits at the expense of the local population. By likening the foreign investors to kings, the author implied that, like their colonial predecessors – men such as Cecil Rhoades, Napoleon, and Leopold II – the French occupiers and their allies would rule Germany as tyrants. The economic exploitation of Germany would ultimately lead to an uprising against the foreign occupiers and capitalists, which had happened all too often in European colonies across the globe. In addition to the seizure of German space, the economic repercussions of the occupation threatened to reduce the Germans to the status of colonial subjects.

Lämmel also contributed to the notion that Germany was under threat of colonization by the Allied nations through his portrayal of the French as thieves and exploiters of the German people. In his work, French troops invade the right bank of the Rhine following the discovery of the sunken island of Atlantis. Through an American agent, Erich Blossom, the French government learns of Peter’s plans to colonize Atlantis and attempt to thwart his operations at every step. Finally, when Peter and his colleagues reach the location of the sunken island, the French fleet attempts to halt the group’s progress. With the intervention of the United States navy, the French are repelled, but not defeated. The French government, in search of retribution for the embarrassment they suffer in the Atlantis incident, orders its soldiers to occupy cities on the right bank of the

\[31\text{Ibid.}\]
Rhine River, including Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Karlsruhe. However, in Lämmel’s work, the French harbor greater territorial ambitions than simply the temporary occupation of Western Germany. In a scene following the invasion of the right bank of the Rhine River, Phillipe Dauerine, the Prime Minister of France, holds a cabinet meeting in which he outlines his plan to conquer Germany. Within a fortnight of the invasion of the Rhineland, Dauerine schemes, the French Army will move into German territories East of the Rhine, including Hesse, Thuringia, and Saxony. Dauerine orders that the army silence any resistance it will encounter, though the French will not issue a formal declaration of war in order to avoid the involvement of the other world powers. The Prime Minister’s plan would extend the French occupation zone from the Western border of Germany to Poland and Czechoslovakia. Through the fictional French plot to conquer Central Germany, Lämmel suggested that the actual goals of the French far exceeded the occupation of the Rhineland. In the author’s mind, the French government was determined to reduce Germany to a vassal state through a surreptitious, carefully manipulated conquest. In the conclusion of Dauerine’s speech, Lämmel furthered the notion that the French were conniving enemies who aimed to subjugate the German people:

Germany, said Dauerine, will declare that it will never yield. And it may also be that the officials execute a kind of passive resistance. But after a few weeks everything will again be all right. Then we will conclude a treaty which will make it easier for us to exploit the occupied territories, and will make the Germans believe they have indeed made a treaty based on equality.

Lämmel’s use of the phrase “exploit the occupied territories” in the fictional Prime Minister’s speech echoes the language Autenrieth used in Otto’s nationalist songs and

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32 Lämmel, Die neue Kolonie, 175.
33 Ibid., 215.
34 Ibid.
speeches. The references Dauerine makes to actual events suggests that the turmoil of 1923 had a tremendous influence on Lämmel’s novel. The German tactic of peaceful resistance to which the fictional Prime Minister refers mirrors the historical context within which Lämmel published his work. However, Dauerine’s plot to deceive the Germans into an agreement that would favor the French ultimately proved fictional. Instead, the Reichstag’s acceptance of the Dawes Plan, which stabilized the German economy and negotiated for the withdrawal of the French from the Ruhr, proved beneficial for Germany.\(^{35}\)

Overall, Lämmel’s insistence that the French were trying to trick the Germans into signing an unfavorable agreement proved false. Nevertheless, the author’s fictional account of the occupation crisis reveals that Germans during the early 1920s were anxious that the French aimed to seize German space and exploit the people to whom it rightfully belonged. In his fictional recreation of the occupation of the Rhineland, Lämmel depicted the French as spiteful, envious people whose colonial ambitions led to the subjugation of the German people. Like Autenrieth, he furthered the notion that the French occupation threatened to transform the Germans from colonizers into colonial subjects. Throughout their novels, Lämmel and Autenrieth argued that the French sought territorial expansion within Germany through the Treaty of Versailles. Once they had acquired German space, the French aimed to extract wealth and resources from the German people through ruthless exploitation. Neither depicted the occupation of the Rhineland as an impermanent condition of a just and equitable peace agreement. Instead, the authors used language one might use to describe to a ruthless colonizer in their discourse on the French occupation. The anti-French invective present in the novels

\(^{35}\) Weiz, *Weimar Germany*, 104.
stemmed from the authors’ fear that the established colonial binary of colonizer-
colonized had become permeable in the aftermath of the First World War. To their
dismay, the Germans had ended up on the wrong side of the binary.

Another significant aspect of the “colonizer-as-colonized” discourse in the novels
was the authors’ use of the rhetoric of the “Black Shame” campaign of the early 1920s. In
Die neue Kolonie, Lämmel argued that the French were carrying out a nefarious plot to
transform the Germans into colonial subjects by stationing African soldiers in the
Rhineland. In a passage following the French deployment of African troops into several
German cities, Lämmel expressed a strong disdain for the acceptance of colonial subjects
in French society and their role in the occupation. In the immediate postwar years, he
wrote, “the first half-breeds came into public life in France. The army began to fill itself
with half-black soldiers.”

According to Lämmel, the French tolerated sexual relations
between Europeans and colonial subjects in an attempt to recover from the enormous
human cost of the First World War. Moreover, Lämmel argued, the Treaty of Versailles
left Germany in a weak position in the face of an overwhelming French military force.
The peace agreement had forced Germany to reduce the size of its military and cease
production of armaments; thus, the French quelled any hope of German resistance. For
Lämmel, Germany’s inability to prevent the occupation was a source of great
humiliation.

In addition to their integration in the French Army, Lämmel claimed, the “half-
breeds” (Mischlinge) acquired positions in the academic professions and were intelligent
to some extent, despite the fact that their “grandfathers had still been eating the people of

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36 Lämmel, Die neue Kolonie, 213.
Here, Lämmel utilized language frequently employed in descriptions of non-Europeans in postcolonial Germany. Though the multiracial citizens of France were educated and held respectable positions, they remained uncivilized in the minds of many Germans of the Weimar Republic. Lämmel assumed that multiracial French people descended from cannibals in the French African colonies and were therefore unable to actually become European, despite their best attempts to mimic European culture. Moreover, it was the ability of the multiracial French people to skillfully imitate European culture that the author found especially threatening. In speech and dress, they looked like most other Europeans, which made them difficult to detect. Often, he argued, the only way to identify the origins of French soldiers and civilians of African descent was by their “frizzy hair and bulging lips.”

Lämmel’s association of specific physical characteristics of multiracial French people with savagery and danger reveals a deep racial prejudice against non-Europeans. For Lämmel, the assimilation of non-white and multiracial people into French public life and the difficulty in identifying them among the thousands of foreign soldiers in Germany constituted one of the gravest threats of the postwar occupation of the Rhineland.

Using the familiar language of the “Black Shame” (Schwarze Schmach) literature of the early 1920s, Lämmel argued in his novel that non-white and multiracial occupiers of the Rhineland “lacked any inner moral stability and spiritual calm.” In contrast to the virtuous, rational, and even-tempered German – embodied in the hero of the novel – the non-white or multiracial French soldier was morally corrupt and prone to erratic behavior. Unlike Germans and other Europeans, Lämmel implied, Africans and their

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37 Ibid., 213.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
descendants were primitive, brutish, and more animal than human. For Lämmel, the physical characteristics of the multiracial French soldiers, particularly their hair and lips, betrayed their inner savagery. In his depiction of African soldiers in the Rhineland, Lämmel utilized typical language of the “Black Shame” literature of the early Weimar Republic, in which propagandists often portrayed Africans as apes and beastly creatures. One of the greatest dangers of the French presence in the Germany, he argued, was the unpredictability of the non-white occupiers.

For Lämmel, the threat of sexual relations between German women and African or multiracial soldiers proved even more frightening than the deceptiveness and instability of non-white occupiers. In the conclusion of his condemnation of French racial inclusiveness, Lämmel argued that African and multiracial soldiers, even more than white soldiers, “were determined to go further than the Rhine in the gallicization of Germany.” The fact that non-white soldiers had moved into cities on the right bank of the Rhine proved that they were willing, in a literal sense, to go “further than the Rhine.” However, Lämmel’s use of multi-layered language in the phrase served as a subtle but urgent warning against sexual relationships between German women and non-white French soldiers. In their readiness to go “further than the Rhine,” the author implied, African and multiracial men were willing to use other methods, including rape, as a means of extending French control throughout Germany. Because he believed that non-

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40 For example, the popular German magazine, *Simplicissimus*, published such an image in 1920. Printed in color ink, the image depicts an African soldier as a monstrous ape; in his arm is a helpless white woman who tries to escape his grasp. The caption read: “The Black Occupation. A disgrace for the White race— but it’s happening in Germany.” Reprinted in Elaine Martin “‘Die Bestien im Lande’ Converging Discourses in the ‘Black Shame’ Campaign” in *Weimar Colonialism: Discourses and Legacies of Post-Imperialism in Germany after 1918*, eds. Florian Krobb and Elaine Martin (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2014), 73. Caption translation by Elaine Martin.

41 Lämmel, *Die neue Kolonie*, 213.
white soldiers were inherently savage, and unable to control their primal behaviors, miscegenation through rape appeared a realistic outcome of the occupation.\textsuperscript{42}

Like Lämmel, Autenrieth also issued a warning against the presence of African soldiers in the Rhineland. In his novel, after the outbreak of civil war following the invasion, the French High Command orders that the army fortify its positions. French soldiers round up German men and force them into concentration camps, where they are terribly mistreated. Meanwhile, the author wrote, German “women and children suffered the most terrible things under the black troops.”\textsuperscript{43} Like Lämmel, Autenrieth employed subtle, ambiguous language in his description of the non-European occupiers. However, given the prevailing attitudes among Germans in the immediate postwar years regarding the treatment of women by African soldiers, one can infer that that by “most terrible things,” Autenrieth meant sexual abuse, or violence. The fact that the French High Command left the surveillance of women and children to African soldiers in the novel is also significant because it suggests that Autenrieth believed that the French had purposefully unleashed beastly African men on vulnerable German women.

Thus, for Autenrieth and Lämmel, the use of non-white soldiers in the occupation of the Rhineland represented a multifaceted threat. On one hand, non-white soldiers were loyal collaborators in the plot to extend French hegemony throughout Germany and Central Europe. African and multiracial troops, like the white soldiers in the French

\textsuperscript{42} Rudolf Mavege equated the alleged savagery of African to their inability to control their sexual impulses in his novel \textit{Die Schwarze Schande} (1921). In one passage, an African soldier makes sexual advances toward a German woman; when she refuses his advances, the man “gnashed his teeth and cast his piercing eyes over the room…His eyes blazed and his fingers buckled as if he were mentally digging his fingers into her white flesh. The black hand was gripped tightly around her waist and he moved his face towards hers. “If you scream, you witch, I will gag you. You will let me have my way with you.” Reprinted in Elaine Martin “‘Die Bestien im Lande’ Converging Discourses in the ‘Black Shame’ Campaign” in \textit{Weimar Colonialism: Discourses and Legacies of Post-Imperialism in Germany after 1918}, eds. Florian Krobb and Elaine Martin (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2014), 80. Translation by Elaine Martin.

\textsuperscript{43} Autenrieth, \textit{Bismarck II}, 117-118.
Army, were instrumental in the occupation and exploitation of Germany. The presence of these African soldiers in the Rhineland ultimately placed non-whites in positions of power over German citizens, an inversion of the traditional colonizer-colonized relationship. At the same time, the alleged desire of non-white soldiers to sexually abuse vulnerable German women threatened to reduce the Germans to a people of savagery; like the multiracial citizens of France, the future generation of multiracial German children would be cursed with the inherent barbarism of their African ancestors. Miscegenation, Lämmel believed, would revert Germany to the racial status of a colonial “Other.” In Lämmel’s mind, the inversion of the racial hierarchy in the traditional colonial paradigm was an essential strategy in the French plot to colonize Germany. Overall, the language of the “Black Shame” campaign fit seamlessly with the “colonizer-as-colonized” myth because both presented the French as colonizers and spread fear that Germans had become colonized.

Though Hanstein did not depict France as Germany’s primary enemy in his novel, he nonetheless depicted the Allies as thieves of German territory and wealth. In his work, Heinrich Schmidt, a German engineer and uncle of the novel’s protagonist, discovers valuable radium deposits in the mountains of the Australian desert. He purchases a large area in the desert from the Australian government and covertly sells the radium on the international market, which provides the funds for the establishment of a new German colony in the region. The Australians, who are unaware of the region’s hidden wealth, believe Schmidt to be a fool for having purchased a seemingly worthless, barren wasteland.44 However, when the colony begins to flourish, the Australians realize that the

Germans have uncovered radium in the desert. Immediately the Australian Parliament demands the termination of the agreement and the deportation of the German colonists. Lord Albernoon, the Australian president, travels to Elektropolis and orders Schmidt to surrender the colony and its resources. When Schmidt refuses, Albernoon dispatches the Australian army to take the German colony by force. Fortunately for the Germans, Schmidt and his team of engineers have constructed a technological defense system that produces an invisible forcefield around the colony, which renders Australian aircraft and artillery ineffective.\footnote{Ibid., 514-523.}

The lack of anti-French sentiment in Hanstein’s novel can perhaps be explained by the fact that tensions between Germany and France had eased by the time Hanstein published his novel in 1928. Under the stewardship of Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann, the Weimar government approved a series of treaties in the mid-1920s that brought a relative calm to the uproar surrounding the French occupation. In 1924, the Reichstag ratified the Dawes Plan, which restructured Germany’s reparations payments and negotiated a removal of French troops from the Rhineland by the following year.\footnote{Weiz, \textit{Weimar Germany}, 101-104.} With the signing of the Locarno Treaties in 1925, Germany normalized relations with its Western neighbors, recognized its Western borders, and promised not to use force to settle territorial disputes. In return, the French promised to evacuate the region surrounding Cologne and officially abandoned their annexationist ambitions in the Rhineland, though they retained control over Alsace-Lorraine. By 1928, Germany’s
economic and territorial crises had calmed the country had enjoyed a period of relative stability.47

However, the notion that Western Powers aimed to seize German space and wealth nonetheless persisted in Hanstein’s novel, despite the easing of tensions between Germany and the Western Allies. Like Phillipe Dauerine and the French occupiers in the novels of Lämmel and Autenrieth, Lord Albernoon and the Australian Parliament lay claim to territories and resources that rightfully belong to the Germans. The Australians’ willingness to use force to acquire German lands further betrays their ruthless, vindictive nature. While Hanstein did not characterize the Australian invasion as a form of colonization, his depiction of Western Powers gives insight into changes in colonial discourse in the later years of the Weimar Republic. At a time when Germany’s economic and political circumstances had improved, the fear that the Germans might become colonial subjects was not as significant in conversations about colonialism among authors of Science Fiction. Nevertheless, Hanstein contributed to the notion that the Allies were determined to appropriate German space and wealth, which shows that the German antagonism toward the Western Allies persisted during Weimar’s brief period of stability.

It was during the massive social upheaval following the first World War that Science Fiction novelists looked to technology as a means of maintaining Germany’s position as colonizer in the traditional colonial binary. One way the authors sought to preserve the nation’s previous status within the colonizer-colonized binary was through visions of future wars in which the Germans would overpower the Allies with advanced technology. For example, in Autenrieth’s Bismarck II, German engineers develop

technology of unprecedented power which essentially renders existing military weapons useless. Their astonishing inventions include engines that produce their own energy by converting coal to gas, which the Germans use in powerful new weapons such as giant cannons, aircraft that could destroy entire cities, and gases that could destroy all life on earth. During the apocalyptic world war between the Triple Entente and the United States which Autenrieth describes in his novel, German technology leads to unparalleled devastation after Otto turns over the blueprints to the powerful new weapons to his enemies. Otto, now the dictator of Germany, takes advantage of the vulnerability of his enemies and sends his troops into each nation; the Germans then successfully convince the local populations to revolt against their leaders, which, of course, ends in the Allies’ defeat. With the Allies overpowered, the Germans abolish the Treaty of Versailles, complete the colonization of Poland, and ultimately establish world peace.

Similarly, Lämmel’s novel also features a host of futuristic inventions, including flying submarines, diving suits that can sustain the immense water pressure of the ocean floor, ray guns that immobilize their targets, and giant energy cannons that penetrate any kind of metal. The hero of the novel, Peter, and his colleagues successfully colonize the sunken island of Atlantis through their scientific prowess and advanced machines. Outraged by the colonization of Atlantis, the French surround the Atlantis group’s flagship, the Sternenblitz, at the Italian port Savona. Aboard the Sternenblitz, Peter and his colleague, Martin Wimpffen, decide to use their newly-invented energy cannon against the French fleet. The rays from energy cannon penetrate the hulls of the ships and neutralize their engines, which renders the French fleet ineffective. Of course, the

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49 Ibid., 177-189.
superior strength of the fantastic German technology confuses and frightens the French: “No one could comprehend what kind of secret power resided in the *Sternenblitz*, what kind of mysterious weapons were used.”\(^{50}\) The colonists once more use the nuclear canon when the French learn of the location of Atlantis and dispatch their remaining ships to seize the sunken island from the Germans. In the final battle, Peter and his colleagues disable the entire French fleet with the cannon. Haunted by the defeats at Savona and Atlantis, France withdraws its troops from the Rhineland and recognizes that the island of Atlantis belongs to Germany.\(^{51}\)

Similar events also occur in Hanstein’s novel when the Australian government orders an invasion of the German colony in the heart of the continent’s vast desert. Like the colonists in the other novels, Fritz and his uncle invent fantastic machines, including self-guiding plows that can till and fertilize the soil, and gigantic electrical towers that generate artificial rain used to bring life to the barren desert. In addition to automated agricultural machines, the colonists also design a defense system that uses mysterious “Rindell-Matthews” rays to construct an invisible barrier around the colony.\(^{52}\) The invisible barrier, which repels Australian aircraft and artillery, proves vital to the defense of the German colony. As the Australians bombard the barrier, Fritz gazes in awe at the power of the German machines: “Now I felt like a soldier of the middle ages whom the devil has made proof against his enemy. The rain of shots seemed to die away close before us on the invisible wall. They did not rebound but instead changed into a lively pyrotechnic display.”\(^{53}\) Here, the colonists’ superior technology transforms the new

\(^{50}\) Lämmel, *Die neue Kolonie*, 158-162.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 216-222.

\(^{52}\) Hanstein, “Electropolis,” 517.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 521.
settlement into an impregnable stronghold and reduces the enemy bombardment to mere fireworks. In the end, the Australians finally retreat after they realize they are unable to penetrate the advanced defense system; Lord Albernoon resigns in disgrace and the World Powers recognize the colony of New Germany in Australia.\(^{54}\)

In each of these Science Fiction novels, the authors’ visions of futuristic technology and apocalyptic wars reinforced the notion that Germany was a colonizing nation superior to the Allies in technological strength. In their novels especially, Autenrieth’s and Lämmel’s imaginary wars ultimately responded to the fear that the Allied occupation of the Rhineland had made permeable the colonizer-colonized binary. Moreover, in their works, it is only Germany’s technological might which allows for the abolition of the Treaty of Versailles and a withdrawal of the French from the Rhineland. Thus, for these Science Fiction novelists, technological superiority provided reassurance that Germany was not a nation that could be colonized. Technology would instead protect the nation from foreign invaders and give the German people power over those who attempted to subjugate them. In this way, the authors sought in their works to return Germany, which they feared had slipped in the aftermath of the First World War, to its position as colonizer.

Additionally, Science Fiction authors of the Weimar Republic also aimed to maintain Germany’s previous status within the colonial binary through their elevation of the German engineer as the hero of the colonial project. Peter Fisher has noted in his study of the works that the figure of the engineer-hero was a common trope in Science Fiction novels and short stories of the Weimar era. Perhaps the most significant of these many novelists were Hans Dominik and Thea von Harbou, the wife of the noteworthy

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 520-522, 534-535.
filmmaker – Fritz Lang. An electrical engineer turned Science Fiction writer, Dominik utilized the figure of the engineer-hero in a series of novels published after the First World War. In his most famous work, *Die Macht der Drei* (*The Power of the Three*, 1922), a German engineer invents a powerful ray gun which he uses to restore Germany as a world power. Dominik’s immensely popular novel, which he called a *technischer Zukunftsroman* (“technological future-novel”), sold over one hundred thousand copies in the first twelve years of its publication.\(^{55}\) In a later novel, *Atlantis* (1925), Dominik also imagined the colonization of Atlantis by German engineers. In his work, a female engineer, Christie Harlessen, raises the sunken island to the surface of the ocean and claims it as a new colony for Germany.\(^{56}\) In addition to Dominik’s works, Thea von Harbou’s popular novels also feature heroic engineers. In *Frau im Mond* (*Woman in the Moon*, 1928), which Lang adapted to film in 1929, two engineers, Wolf Helius and Hans Windegger, launch a rocket to the moon in search of gold.\(^{57}\)

In his study, Fisher has argued that the heroic engineers of Weimar Science Fiction novels functioned as symbols of German nationalism and a longing for the country’s renewal. The protagonists of the novels, he wrote, were “constructs of an imagination hopefully awaiting salvation in the form of an engineer-messiah.”\(^{58}\) However, through the heroes of the novels, especially the protagonists of Lämmel and Hanstein’s works, the authors engaged in the creation of what Kopp has referred to as the

\(^{55}\) Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics*, 104-106.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., 109. Other Science Fiction writers of the era, including Reinhold Eichacker, Egon Falkenhayn, and Paul Thieme also fostered the image of the engineer as a Germanic hero who restores the nation’s status as a world power. For a more detailed look at these novelists and their works, see Peter S. Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics: Visions of the Future in the Weimar Republic* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 104-156. For a survey of Hans Dominik’s fiction, see William B. Fischer *The Empire Strikes Out: Kurd Lasswitz, Hans Dominik, and the Development of German Science Fiction* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1984).
\(^{57}\) Ibid., 127, 137-140.
\(^{58}\) Ibid., 115.
“colonial subjectivity of the (would-be) colonizer-self.”  

Not only are Peter Hartberger and Fritz Schmidt national heroes, they are also colonizers. These engineer-colonizers’ amazing technological inventions ultimately allow for the acquisition of new territories and sources of wealth for Germany, in addition to the removal of the oppressive Allied nations; thus, for Science Fiction writers of the Weimar era, scientific discoveries and new technologies were manifestations of specific German qualities – progress, power, and the means to civilization.

The hero in Lämmel’s work, Peter Hartberger, represents perhaps the greatest combination of “Germanness,” technology, and colonialism. Lammel reinforced these connections in a passage during which Peter sends a vitriolic message to the French after the occupation of the Rhineland:

Peter Hartberger is a man of technology and freedom. He wants to restore his fatherland. Peter Hartberger wants to give his fatherland a new colony, which belongs to no other Power, and therefore takes nothing away from anyone else. France! Allow Germany to take its colony peacefully, do not claim what does not belong to you! Further: leave the Rhineland! The German people have worn your chains for long enough. The world is disgusted with you. Go willingly out of the occupied German territories…Leave the Rhineland!

Peter’s warning to the French serves an example of the marriage of technology and a uniquely German colonial identity, as well as the notion that Germany was not a country that could be colonized. Here, Lämmel suggested that “technology” and “freedom” were inherently German qualities, and that such attributes entitled his protagonist to the right to the position as colonizer. In Lämmel’s view, the German engineer-colonist was imbued with the capacity for rationality, scientific aptitude, and a respect for other human beings.

59 Kristin Kopp, *Germany’s Wild East*, 6, 161-162. In her study of the discursive colonization of Poland in the Weimar era, Kopp has noted that the creation of the colonial subjectivity regarding Poland often involved the portrayal of Germans as mighty Teutons who conquered the savage Slavic people of the East. For example, see her reading of Karl Hampe’s medieval fantasy, *Der Zug nach dem Osten* (1921).

60 Lämmel, *Die neue Kolonie*, 264-265.
These unique characteristics, which only the German engineer-colonists of Lammel’s work possess, legitimize Peter’s claim to the island of Atlantis and his demand that the French retreat from the Rhineland.

Moreover, the scientific and technological prowess of German engineers furthered the notion that the Germans were a “civilized” people, unlike the Allied invaders and non-Europeans who had occupied the Rhineland in the postwar years. Whereas the Allies invaders – embodied in the characters of Phillipe Dauerine and Lord Albernoon – are motivated by vindictiveness and the desire to exploit others, the German engineer-colonists strive to improve the welfare of humankind through their technological colonies. The German engineer-colonists of Lämmel’s work did not claim territories or resources that rightfully belonged to another nation, which distinguished them from other European colonists. The civilized engineer-colonizer also contrasted with the figure of the non-European soldier whose inherent savagery threatened to reduce the Germans to servitude. Through the cultivation of a unique colonial identity in the figure of the engineer-colonizer, the authors reaffirmed that the Germans belonged to the category of “colonizer.”

Historians such as Peter Fisher have interpreted the fictional conflicts and heroic figures of Weimar Science Fiction as expressions of German nationalism and revanchist sentiments. In his analysis of the apocalyptic war in Autenrieth’s novel, for example, Fisher wrote, “The war that turns Germany’s enemies into wastelands is history’s (or God’s) retribution for their sinful mistreatment of the fatherland.”61 For Fisher, anger and frustration over the Allied treatment of Germany after the First World War inspired feelings of hatred and desires for revenge among Weimar Science Fiction writers. In his

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61 Fisher, Fantasy and Politics, 45.
view, the authors projected these feelings into revanchist fantasies that anticipated Adolf Hitler’s later dreams of German supremacy and domination.\textsuperscript{62}

While Fisher is correct in his statement that anger and frustration regarding the Treaty of Versailles inspired Science Fiction writers of the 1920s, he has overlooked the importance of colonial themes in the novels. The fear that the temporary occupation of the Rhineland might result in the permanent subjugation of the German people motivated the fantasies of Weimar Science Fiction writers. Thus, they depicted of the Allies as exploiters of German wealth and conquerors of German space in their works. Additionally, the authors perceived the presence of African soldiers in the Rhineland as an attempt by the French to reduce the Germans to colonial “Others” through miscegenation. Ultimately, the traditional logic of colonialism – the division of the world into the categories of colonizers and colonized – was the driving force behind their colonial fantasies. In the end, Autenrieth, Lämmel, and Hanstein sought to reclaim Germany’s position within the traditional colonial through visions of technological wars and the creation of a German colonial subjectivity in the figure of the engineer-colonizer. The belief that science and technology would rectify the humiliating circumstances under which Germany lost its colonies constituted the greatest contribution of Science Fiction writers to the colonial discourse of the Weimar Republic.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 20.
CHAPTER 3

COLONIAL GUILT: REVISIONISM AND REPRESENTATIONS OF “OTHERS” IN WEIMAR SCIENCE FICTION

The representation of the colonial “Others” was also a significant element of colonial discourse in the works of Science Fiction writers of the Weimar Republic. As in the case of “colonizer-as-colonized” myth, the Treaty of Versailles had a tremendous impact on colonial discourse that took place in the years after the First World War. Another important factor that shaped German depictions of colonial “Others” in the Weimar era was the British government’s publication of the *Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and their Treatment by Germany* in August 1918. Prepared by the British colonial government in South Africa during the First World War, the report detailed the German treatment of the indigenous people of German South-West Africa. Through a gruesome account of the atrocities committed by the Germans during the war with the Herrero and Nama peoples in 1904-1907, the document aimed to uncover the “deplorable plight the natives fell under [and] the brutalities and robberies to which they were systematically subjected.”63 During the Paris negotiations in 1919, the report became the centerpiece of the Allied argument that the Germany could never be trusted again as a colonial power because of their violent oppression of colonial subjects. Due to the maltreatment of

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colonial subjects in South-West Africa and Cameroon, the Allies alleged, the Germans had failed as colonizers.64

Known among postwar Germans as the “colonial guilt lie” (koloniale Schuldlüge), the Allied claim that German colonialism had proved a failure provoked a visceral response in the Weimar Republic. Heinrich Schnee, the last governor of German East Africa and outspoken colonial revisionist, argued in his work German Colonization Past and Future (1926) that “the fiction of Germany’s colonial incapacity was concocted, developed and spread abroad merely as a convenient means of effecting certain definite political ends which had been decided upon in secret long before.”65 For Schnee and other colonial revisionists, the Allies had purposely created the lie of colonial guilt as a justification for the removal of German colonies. Other colonial revisionists aimed to refute the “colonial guilt lie” by creating counter narratives of the nation’s history as a colonial power. In literature, film, and the building of monuments to figures of the colonial past, Germans portrayed their colonial predecessors as benevolent and civilizing people toward their colonial subjects.66 Authors of the Afrikabücher (Africa-books) of the 1920s continued the revisionist trend in their stories of life in the German colonies. Through a combination of first-hand experience and collective memory, writers such as Hans Grimm and Hans Anton Aschenborn challenged the notion that Germans had failed

66 Through the public veneration of Peters and other colonial figures, colonial societies encouraged the remembrance of the achievements of the German Empire and a collective forgetting of its past transgressions. For example, in June 1931, the German Colonial Society and the Pan-German League erected a statue to Carl Peters at Heligoland. Constant Kpao Sarè, “The Character of Carl Peters as a Weapon for völkisch and National Socialist Discourses: Anglophobia, Anti-Semitism, Aryanism,” in German Colonialism and National Identity, eds Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer (New York: Routledge, 2011), 160-162.
as colonizers by depicting relationships between German colonists and Africans in a positive light.⁶⁷

From the growing revisionist literature of the postwar years emerged the figure of the “loyal Askari” as a counter to the Allies’ claim that Germans had mistreated African subjects. Novelists and pamphleteers of the Weimar era looked to the Askari soldiers of German East Africa, who fought in Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck’s Schutztruppen during World War I, as evidence of the success of the German “civilizing mission” and colonial project. In an article published in the early 1930s, Erich Duems claimed that African soldiers under German command had agreed to fight due to the “high esteem” with which they regarded their colonial subjugators. The alleged loyalty of the Askari soldier proved that the Germans were neither brutal oppressors, nor colonial failures.⁶⁸

Overall, the “colonial guilt lie” shaped the representation of “Others” in Weimar colonial discourse by provoking the Germans to reimagine the colonial past and the relationships between German colonists and non-Europeans.

Despite the benevolent images conjured by the revisionists in their representation of non-Europeans, the underlying logic of their reimagining of German colonialism operated under the assumption that Europeans and non-Europeans were fundamentally different. They believed Europe was the heart of civilization, progress, and modernity, while the non-European world was uncivilized, static, and primitive. Any advancements

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⁶⁸ Duems argued that African soldiers were loyal to the Germans not only because they were not mistreated, but also because they respected the racial superiority of the white colonists, unlike the soldiers of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais, who violated racial boundaries. Erich Duems, “Rassenreinheit oder Rassenmischung? Frankreichs Kolonialarmee und unsere Schutztruppe,” *DKZ*, 12.45 (1933), 242-244. Quoted in Susann Lewerenz, “‘Loyal Askari’ and ‘Black Rapist’ Two Images in the German Discourse on National Identity and Their Impact on the Lives of Black People in Germany, 1918-1945,” in *German Colonialism and National Identity*, eds Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer (New York: Routledge, 2011), 174.
made in the uncivilized world originated in Europe and moved outward through contact between Europeans and non-Europeans. According to J.M. Blaut, the division of the world into a European “Inside” and a non-European “Outside,” which he has termed the “colonizer’s model of the world,” originated in the earliest centuries of European colonialism and served as the foundation of the Western understanding of the world into the twentieth century.\(^{69}\) Thus, even in the seemingly benign depictions of the “loyal Askari,” for example, colonial revisionists still understood Africans as distinct and uncivilized before their contact with Europeans. The desire of revisionists to absolve colonial guilt did not erase the underlying logic of colonialism. Moreover, the same logic allowed them to depict only German colonial subjects in a positive light. In the case of the Black Shame campaign, African soldiers in the French Army were portrayed as wild beasts and rapists, which stemmed from the traditional view of non-Europeans. The tension between the two representation of colonial subjects reveals the malleability of colonial logic and its effects on the understanding of “Others” in Weimar colonial discourse.

However, there were also Germans of the Weimar era who were less interested in the revision of colonial history in their representations of “Others.” Instead, they looked to Eastern Europe as the colonial space for a future German Empire and viewed the Slavic people who lived there, especially the Polish, as colonial “Others.” During this time, cartographers of the Weimar Republic were crucial to the representation of Polish space and the Polish people as “Others.” For example, in 1925, Albrecht Penck and A Hillen Ziegfield published maps and essays in which they represented Polish space as

historically belonging to the German Volk. The Polish people, they argued, had not contributed to the productive cultivation of the land due to their inherent primitive and uncivilized nature. Indeed, perhaps the most vocal proponents of the colonization of Eastern Europe were the National Socialists, who argued that Germany required space in the East as Lebensraum (living space) for the expansion and sustenance of the Volk. In his infamous work, Mein Kampf (1925), Adolf Hitler argued that Germany should no longer look overseas for the acquisition of new colonies, but instead to the vast territories between Berlin and Moscow.

The section will examine the representations of colonial “Others” in the Science Fiction novels of Rudolf Lämmel, Otfrid von Hanstein, and Otto Autenrieth. In their works, Lämmel and Hanstein engaged in colonial revisionism through visions of Germany’s return as a benevolent colonial power. In their fantasies, the authors portrayed the relationships between German colonists and non-European in amicable terms – the Germans treat non-Europeans with respect and generosity and the “Others” reciprocate with loyalty and support. However, instead of creating revisionist accounts through reenactments of prewar memories, Science Fiction writers of the Weimar Republic created counter-narratives through their visions of future colonial relationships in which Germans treated non-Europeans with kindness. By renegotiating relationships between colonists and “Others,” they further refuted the notion that Germany had been a colonial failure due to its brutal oppression of non-Europeans. Despite their attempts to establish a counter narrative, the authors understood Europeans and non-Europeans as fundamentally different and interpreted the relationship between them in colonial terms.

70 Kopp, Germany’s Wild East, 144-154.
Unlike Lämmel and Hanstein, Autenrieth did not produce a revisionist account in his colonial fantasy. Rather, he contributed to the discursive colonization of Poland as a site for a future German Empire in Europe. In Bismarck II, the Germans remove the Polish people from their land and dispatch German settlers to occupy the East, which restores economic stability and social harmony in the wake of the catastrophic sanctions of the Treaty of Versailles. Yet, very much like his contemporaries, Autenrieth did describe Polish people as uncivilized and thus relegated them to the category of colonial “Other.”

Lämmel and Hanstein contributed to Weimar colonial revisionism through their depictions of non-Europeans as loyal subjects rather than victims of brutality. In Die neue Kolonie, Lämmel utilized the “loyal Askari” theme through his character Washington Watt, an African American man who works as a servant for Peter and his expeditionary crew. Born in the American South to a wealthy family, Watt studied chemistry in his early years, but could only find employment as a cook in the household of Martin Wimpffen, the father of Ria Wimpffen and financier of Peter’s Atlantis expedition. When Peter arrives in the United States with Ria and begins preparations for the colonization of Atlantis, he employs Watt as a member of his team. Watt’s primary duties include manual labor and domestic work. On the Atlantis group’s ship, he cooks and serves Peter and his colleagues. When the group moves its operations from New York to the mountains of the American Southeast, Watt recruits African American workers to build laboratories for the aspiring colonists. In addition to manual labor and domestic work, Watt and other African Americans also defend the group from the French, who aim

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72 Lammel, Die neue Kolonie, 55.
73 Ibid., 80.
to infiltrate and thwart the expedition. As the launch of the voyage approaches, the
Atlantis group moves its operations to Savannah, Georgia to gain access to the Atlantic Ocean. Again, Watt and the African Americans provide the labor needed for the building of sheds that will contain the group’s diving equipment. Most important, they guard the equipment from the Blue Masks, a racist group (modeled on the Ku Klux Klan) hired by the French halt Peter’s preparations. One night, the Blue Masks, led by a thuggish Romanian named Gorganul, storm the compound in Georgia and a battle ensues between the African American guards and the burglars. During the skirmish, Watt uses a ray gun invented by one of Peter’s scientists to pacify the burglars and kill Gorganul. Later, when the expedition finally is underway, Watt saves Peter’s life when a French double agent attempts to kill Peter by cutting off the oxygen supply to his diver’s suit. As Peter gasps for air on the ocean floor, Watt fires his ray gun at the French spy which immobilizes him and allows Watt to rescue Peter.

Throughout the novel, Peter and his colleagues treat Watt and other non-Europeans with respect and admiration. In return, the African American laborers show loyalty and dedication to the German colonists. By depicting relationships between Germans and non-European laborers as a friendly and mutually beneficial, Lämmel aimed to show that German colonists were neither abusive nor exploitative. In this way, Lämmel contributed to the revisionist idea that Germany was not a colonial failure and could be trusted as colonial power. Like the African soldiers who fought alongside Lettow-Vorbeck during the First World War, Watt and his fellow African Americans defend the German colonists from other Europeans who are determined that Germany

74 Ibid., 98.
75 Ibid., 128.
should never again possess colonies. Watt’s willingness to risk his life for the European colonists demonstrates his loyalty to the Germans and his dedication to the colonial project.

Here, Lämmel endeavored to present the German colonists of his novel as benevolent colonizers, yet he never abandoned the traditional colonial paradigm. Because Atlantis is an underwater island, and obviously lacks human inhabitants, colonization can occur without the destruction of indigenous people, which seems to absolve Germany of its colonial guilt. However, Peter and his colleagues still require the labor of non-Europeans in the early stages of the colonial project. In a passage following the establishment of the Atlantis colony, Lämmel stated explicitly that the fictional German colonists were not tainted by racial prejudice in the selection of the colony’s governing administration, of which Washington Watt was a member. “The friends let neither color nor race choose the members of the government,” he wrote. “Only the value of an individual’s personality was permitted to be taken into consideration.”

The inclusion of an African American in the fictional colonial government appears racially progressive and seems to counter the notion that Germans treated non-Europeans with brutality.

Nonetheless, Watt’s role merely as a servant or protector reveals Lämmel’s Eurocentric understanding of the world. Though Watt is a member of Atlantis group, he never participates in the actual governing of the colony and only exerts authority over other non-Europeans. Like the “loyal Askari,” Watt is a devoted servant, and is not the victim of abuses, but he never achieves genuine equality among his European counterparts. Instead, the fundamental distinction between the Germans and non-Europeans in the novel remains intact; Watt and his fellow African Americans never

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76 Ibid., 234.
escape the category of “Other.” The fact that Watt remains in the category of “Otherness,” in conjunction with the author’s earlier representations of Africans in his warnings against the “Black Shame,” indicates that Lämmel operated under the assumption that a fundamental distinction existed between Europeans and non-Europeans. So, though he tried to distance himself and his countrymen from the horrors of Germany’s colonial past, he nonetheless thought within the colonizer’s mindset.

Hanstein also reimagined relationships between German colonists and non-Europeans in his novel. The idea that technology would render colonial subjects obsolete was crucial to his revisionist depiction of German colonialism. After Fritz arrives in the Australia to assist in the colonization of the continent’s enormous wastelands, his uncle, Herr Schmidt, informs him that he aims to convert the barren landscape into a productive utopia through automated agriculture. Schmidt’s futuristic, mechanized agricultural system will allow for the cultivation of the Australian badlands. Due to the intense tropical heat, and the backbreaking nature of agricultural labor, humans would not be able to accomplish such a monumental task. Once the machines that will power the colony are built, Schmidt explains, the Germans will no longer have a need for human workers.77 By eliminating the need for human laborers in his fantasy, Hanstein aimed to circumvent the notion that Germans were ruthless colonizers; if there were no colonial subjects, German colonizers could not be accused of mistreating anyone. At the same time, Germans could retain their positions as colonizers because they would be masters of the machines.

However, Schmidt tells Fritz, the new German colony will temporarily require the labor of non-Europeans in its earliest stages. To find workers, Fritz and Schmidt travel

deep into the wastes where they meet Mormora, the leader of a nomadic tribe of indigenous people and a friend of Herr Schmidt. Mormora agrees to aid the colonists in the building of their facilities and travels with the Germans to burgeoning city of Elektropolis. Like the non-Europeans in Lämmel’s novel, the indigenous people of Australia provide the labor needed for the early stages of the colonial project. In addition to their role as laborers, Mormora and his people also act as healers. When Schmidt fractures his skull in an accident in the wilderness, indigenous doctors, to whom the author refers to as conjurors, attend to his wounds with mysterious tribal medicine. To the amazement of Fritz and the colonists, Schmidt fully recovers.78

Like Lämmel, Hanstein reimagined the relationships between German colonists and non-Europeans by depicting interactions between them as friendly and mutually beneficial. Mormora and his people are loyal servants who perform the labor necessary for the colonial project. They also protect the German colonists from danger and provide aid when the German colonists are in dire need. In this way, non-Europeans in Hanstein’s novel also function similarly to the “loyal Askari” figure Lämmel utilized in his work.

Despite his benign representation of non-Europeans, Hanstein ultimately viewed the relationships between Germans and non-Europeans in colonial terms. The traditional Eurocentric worldview that laid the foundation of prewar colonial discourse, in which Europeans saw themselves positions of power over non-Europeans, also served as the underlying logic of representations of non-Europeans in the novels. In his work, Hanstein referred to the indigenous people of Australia as having the mental capacity of children, a view that was common in the nineteenth-century understanding of non-Europeans.79 For

78 Ibid., 528-529.
79 Blaut, Colonizer’s Model of the World, 95-98.
example, when Fritz and Schmidt approach Mormora’s camp in the Australian wasteland, Fritz asks his uncle why he has not recruited the indigenous people as permanent laborers in the colony. Schmidt explains that the indigenous people have the mentality of children, which prevents them from remaining too long in one place or committing to long-term periods work. However, their inability to adopt Western work habits did not mean the indigenous people were useless. Instead, Schimdt claims, “These savages are like children. They will work, but only like a child at play. They must have the feeling that at any moment they can throw away the toy and pick up another one. Compulsion makes them unhappy.”

Through Schmidt’s observations on the indigenous people of Australia, Hanstein argued that a fundamental distinction in intellectual capabilities existed between Germans and non-Europeans. While the colonists in his novel are inherently rational, evidenced by the fact that they possess advanced technology, indigenous people remain savages due to their underdeveloped minds. Hanstein’s belief that indigenous people were mentally deficient prevented him from seeing them as equals to the German colonists. Moreover, the alleged superiority of Fritz and Herr Schmidt naturally placed them in positions of authority over non-European “Others.” In a later conversation with Fritz, Herr Schmidt remarks:

It is necessary that the white man, who has not room enough in his native land, should spread out, but I am sorry for the natives. The Indians of North America are as good as dead. Those in South America will die out. The former proud inhabitants of the Moluccas have been rooted out by the Dutch. Likewise the Bushmen of Australia will die out – just like the beasts of the primeval forest. It is sad, it must be!  

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80 Hanstein, “Electropolis,” 504.  
81 Ibid., 505.
Schmidt’s second remark shows that the author viewed the colonial paradigm as a product of natural law. For Hanstein, Europeans were destined to seize the land and resources of non-Europeans because of an immutable fact of nature. Non-Europeans were wild animals destined to extinction because of inevitable European expansion. Nevertheless, Hanstein expressed remorse over the maltreatment of the indigenous people in European colonies around the world. Crucially, his criticism aimed at the abuses of non-Europeans omitted any mention of the Herero and Nama people of South West Africa. He condemned Europeans who had abused colonial subjects, but believed that the disappearance of non-Europeans was unavoidable. Schmidt’s words reveal that Hanstein, despite his wish to portray German colonists and non-Europeans in benevolent terms, still viewed the world in colonial terms.

In addition to favorable depictions of relationships between Germans and non-Europeans, technology was also crucial to the revisionist attempt to counter the notion of “colonial guilt.” For Lämmel and Hanstein, the fact that German technology brought civilization to primitive or underdeveloped regions was evidence that the nation was not a colonial failure. Rather, the role of technology in facilitation the civilizing mission – the idea that it was the duty of Europeans to “to revive ‘decadent’ civilizations in Asia and uplift the ‘savage’ peoples of Africa” – proved to Science Fiction authors that Germany was a successful colonizing nation.82 In both novels, German colonists tame savage landscapes and the people who inhabit them by employing advanced technology. For

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82 Michael Adas has demonstrated in his study of technology and colonialism that the marriage of machines and the civilizing mission predates Science Fiction novels of the 1920s. Adas has argued that Europeans as early as the eighteenth century understood technology as a manifestation of Western material superiority. By the nineteenth century, colonial administrators and missionaries viewed Western machines, particularly railroads and steamships, essential to the civilizing mission. Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 4-16, 200-204, 221-224.
example, the engineer-colonists of Lämmel’s fantasy “civilize” non-Europeans by educating them the sciences and training them to operate the complex machines. African Americans in the novel not only serve as laborers, but also as assistants in the scientific experiments of the engineers: “The Negros had full participation in the development of the investigations. They were fully inducted by Watt and Albany. Betrayal was not to be feared.”

The colonists trust African Americans not to betray the secrets of German technology because science has taught them to abandon their inherent savagery and work in the name of human progress.

As such, Washington Watt, the most prominent non-European character in Lämmel’s novel, represents the ideal product of the civilizing mission through technology. Throughout the work, Watt operates various machines created by the engineer-colonists, including a futuristic bathyscaphe, ray guns, and the Spektroskop, a device that can detect the presence of gold. Lämmel suggested here that under the tutelage of German engineers, even non-Europeans could gain access to scientific understanding and modern machines. Crucially, however, none of the amazing inventions in Lämmel’s work originate in the minds of African Americans; rather, non-Europeans can only be taught to understand the importance of technological modernity. In the author’s view, only Europeans were capable of creative, scientific discovery.

As with the “uplifting” of African-American characters, the transformation of the savage wasteland into a colonial paradise through futuristic technology also functioned as a tool in the hands of colonial revisionists. By the portraying German engineers as

83 Lämmel, Die neue Kolonie, 80.
84 Ibid., 128, 171-172.
85 Kristin Kopp has also noted the significance of the colonial trope of “making barren land fertile” in representations of Poland in German literature of the 1920s. For example, in their popular novels about
saviors of static, unproductive terrains, Science Fiction writers depicted Germany as a successful colonizing nation. In each novel, German engineers develop astonishing machines that convert previously uninhabitable terrain into productive colonial landscapes. For example, in *Die neue Kolonie*, the once uninhabitable island of Atlantis becomes a productive, technocratic utopia dedicated to “technical-humanitarian undertakings.”

Under the leadership of Peter Hartberger, the island’s “technical dictator,” German engineers build an underwater compound in which they extract the wealth of the sunken island. For Lämmel, the ability of the engineers to make productive use of the dormant island demonstrated that Germans were effective colonizers.

The revival of a savage terrain is a theme foregrounded perhaps most ardently in Hanstein’s novel. Here, German engineer-colonists convert the barren Australian desert into a luscious tropical paradise. The massive undertaking is the brainchild of the protagonist’s uncle, Heinrich Schmidt, a German engineer who develops automated agricultural machines that produce crops from previously infertile soil. When Fritz expresses skepticism that the project is feasible, Schmidt assures him that technology will unlock the region’s hidden wealth: “Do you know the names of my servants? The first is called technology, the second electricity, and the third is radium. With these three, plus the power of such a sun as stands in these heavens and the riches concealed in this decayed and dried up desert soil, you will see what wonders we shall accomplish.”

In medieval Teutonic conquests of the East, Curt Kühn and Wilhelm Kotzde’s imagined that Germans brought “civilization” to the primitive terrain through the “clearing of previously uncultivated land, the relanscaping and rationalization of crop fields, and the introduction of the iron plow, all developments that were depicted increasing the productivity of the land.” Kristin Kopp, *Germany’s Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 162.

Lämmel, *Die neue Kolonie*, 141-142, 292.

Hanstein, “Electropolis,” 490.
his musings on the transformation of the wasteland, Schmidt rhapsodizes further about the creative forces unleashed by technological advancement:

Bring water into the desert, traverse it with canals: the earth becomes fruitful. Release the precious chemicals here in the decomposed rock, which has been lying fallow for tens of thousands of years: they will become precious loam. Use the fruitfulness of the tropical sun – and here, where there is nothing but a barren waste, blooming gardens and fields will arise.  

Schmidt indeed realizes his vision through the invention of automated plows that till the soil in clockwork arrangement. The fertilization of the soil hinges on the production of artificial rain, which German engineers generate through the evaporation of water housed at the tops of massive towers built in the desert. Electrical current and the heat of the sun combine to evaporate the water and produce life-bringing rain clouds. Schmidt’s brilliant machines quickly transform the desert into a luscious tropical paradise that produces an abundance of fruits and vegetables within a few weeks of the project’s completion. In their visions technological renewal, Lämmel demonstrated that Germans could make productive use of static, unproductive space. The depiction of German engineer-colonists as bringers of civilization to savage terrains contributed to a counter-narrative to the “colonial guilt lie.”

However, while the novelists were optimistic that technology could restore Germany as a colonial power and erase the nation’s “colonial guilt,” a tension between the creative and destructive potentials of future technology pervades the novels. The authors clearly realized that Germany could achieve amazing things through technological innovation – the role of technology in the acquisition of new colonies and transformation of barren wastelands into fertile ground demonstrates their optimistic

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88 Ibid., 493.
89 Ibid., 512-514.
views of technology. The generation of Science Fiction novelists after the First World War were acutely aware that scientific progress had accelerated in the early twentieth century. The expanded role of technology in everyday life – electricity, radios, movie theatres, automobiles, and airplanes – was evidence of the transformative power of scientific progress and technology. The emerging field of nuclear physics, and the prospect of nuclear energy, promised an era of expanded machine power that would leave behind the age of iron and steam.  

Certainly, the rapid pace of technological advancement inspired the colonial imagination as the seemingly impossible appeared feasible.

Indeed, the enormous power of Western machines enchanted many Germans in the years after the First World War. In his memoir, *In Stahlgewittern (Storm of Steel)*, published only a year before *Bismarck II*, Ernst Jünger married “Germanic” virtues – masculine heroism, sudden danger, unwavering will, and the power of nature – with technological warfare. Jünger’s experiences on the Western Front during the First World War heavily influenced his view of technology. He saw in war the explosive energy of the German Volk and the dynamism of nature. In his descriptions of the battlefields of Western Europe, he combined images of nature and mechanized weaponry. For example, in his study of Jünger’s writings, Jeffrey Herf notes several excellent examples of Jünger’s use of nature imagery: “An artillery barrage was a ‘storm of iron,’” an exploding shell a ‘hurricane of fire.’ An airplane dropping bombs was like a ‘vulture’ circling over

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enemy troops who were, in turn, a ‘swarm of bees.’” For Jünger, the *Fronterlebnis* (front experience) not only offered the perfect marriage the German Spirit and technology, but also liberation from the boredom bourgeois life. Jünger’s highly romanticized account of technological warfare echoes the sentiments of many Science Fiction authors of the post-war years, who also recognized and took delight in the tremendous transformative power of machines.

In addition to Jünger, Science Fiction authors of the 1920s also shared an admiration of technology with an array of artists and intellectuals of the Weimar Republic. While Science Fiction novelists focused on technology as a means to secure new German colonies, others, such as the architect Walter Gropius, incorporated technological advancements into a machine aesthetic that was a hallmark of Weimar culture. For example, artists of the New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) and Berlin Dada movement of the early 1920s frequently incorporated machine imagery into artworks that explored with cautionary exuberance the influence of technology on modern life, especially within the context of the modern metropolis. Carl Grossberg’s sober, rational paintings of industrial machines and cityscapes, as well as Raoul Hausmann’s more experimental, futuristic depictions of cyborgs and other human-machines, showcase the mixture of admiration and unease that characterized Weimar attitudes toward technology.

Perhaps the best examples of Weimar Germany’s machine aesthetic were than the designs of the architect Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus school, which Gropius founded

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92 For a closer look at Hausmann’s works, see Matthew Biro, *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 105-151.
in Weimar in 1919. For Gropius, the future of architecture depended on marriage of the artist and craftsmen, as well as the architect’s ability to harness the dynamic forces of technology. In his work, The New Architecture and the Bauhaus, Gropius proclaimed that the Bauhaus aimed to “avert mankind’s enslavement by the machine by giving its products a content of reality and significance, and so saving the home from mechanistic anarchy.” Gropius shared with Science Fiction authors the belief that Germans could accomplish the extraordinary with a philosophy that utilized machines for the advancement of humankind, rather than its destruction. Like Science Fiction authors, Gropius and the Bauhaus designers sought, in the words of Peter Gay, “to satisfy their needs not through escape from but mastery of the world, not through denunciation but employment of the machine.” Therefore, the productions of the Bauhaus – its buildings, lamps, rugs, and furniture designs – emphasized the importance of materials used in construction, such as light steel and glass, and the technological advancements that made possible the utilization of such materials. Gropius’s Bauhaus Building (1925), an astounding achievement of modern architecture that housed his famous school of design, embodies his principles and stands as perhaps his greatest accomplishment. The connection between Gropius’s philosophy design and the technological optimism of writers such as Lämmel, Hanstein, and Autenrieth suggests that Science Fiction contributed to a larger discourse on technological modernity that permeated Weimar culture and constitutes a significant piece the Republic’s lasting influence.

95 Weitz, 198.
Yet, the awareness that technology could lead to unprecedented levels of destruction generated a sense of anxiety that haunts their fantasies. The anxieties of Science Fiction writers concerning technology undoubtedly stemmed from the devastation of the First World War, which as Michael Adas has argued, led many Europeans to challenge the notion that technology represented the greatest achievement of the “civilized” West. Though he did not serve in the First World War, Hanstein expressed anxiety over the destructive capabilities of technology in a scene of Die neue Kolonie in which German engineers test the defensive weapons they have built to protect their colony in Australia. As Fritz and a crowd of engineers observe from a distance, Morawetz, the man in charge of weapons development, conducts a demonstration of the machines that produce immensely powerful “Rindell-Matthews” rays, which will form the invisible barrier around the colony. As the test begins, the machines emit an unnerving humming noise that frightens Fritz and the other onlookers. However, aside from the strange noise, Fritz finds the test largely underwhelming until a terrible accident occurs when Morawetz’s dog runs to the mine in search of his master and is incinerated by the “Rindell-Matthews” rays. “All at once,” Hanstein wrote, “the dog seemed entirely surrounded by a confusion of tiny little flashes of lightning, then he was wrapped in flames, and in a few second was consumed.” Fritz experiences a mixture of horror and excitement as he witnesses the accident; the dog’s ghastly demise disturbs him, but he remains enthusiastic that the amazing power of Morawetz’s machines will successfully defend the colony. During the war with the Australians, Fritz confesses his anxieties

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96 Adas, 365-401. Adas points to a variety of literature, art, and other writings in which Europeans after the First World War argued that the devastation of technological warfare represented the West’s abandonment of reason. This realization, he argued, undermined the long-held assumption that advanced technology made Europeans superior to other people.

about technology to his uncle: “But our own machines! We are like would-be magicians, working with weapons we hardly know, and it is possible that we shall ourselves be destroyed by them.”

Fritz’s fear that the machines might bring devastation to the German colony reflects Hanstein’s inner conflict between technology as a creative and destructive force. Like many Germans and other Europeans after the First World War, he feared that Westerners might have unleashed forces over which they were not in control. Despite his apprehensions, Hanstein was convinced that Germans could avoid another terrible war if they used technology for creative purposes, rather than for the annihilation of their enemies. To make this idea clear, Hanstein repeatedly claimed that future German technology would not be put in the service of aggression or revenge against the Allies. For example, on his deathbed, Heinrich Schmidt informs Fritz: “My work belongs to Germany. Only Germans are to enjoy its fruits. But only men who wish welfare and peace, for these treasures are not to be used for the purposes of war, and its machines are never to become machines of war.” Schmidt’s dying words ultimately reveals Hanstein’s optimistic view of technology; if Germany could use its technological achievements for peaceful purposes, then the nation could both ensure the success of the colonial project and avoid another catastrophic war.

Yet nowhere does the tension between technology as both a creative and destructive force feature more prominently than in Autenrieth’s work. The only one of the three novelists who experienced combat in the First World War, Autenrieth described

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98 Ibid., 520.
99 Ibid., 532.
in vivid detail the destructive capabilities of technological warfare during the apocalyptic war in his novel:

It was soon obvious that this war was a hundred times worse than the last, which had knocked Germany down from the mighty heights. When the cities and villages collapsed like cards under the massive bombardment of artillery and power, when bodies were mowed down like thin, dry stalks, when thousands were burned or asphyxiated by the new gases, a powerful, terrible voice bellowed a question out into the heavens: “Why must this happen?”…if they had been able to understand the thundering voice that spoke out of the terrifying explosions, they would have gotten the answer to their question: “I want to avenge a thousand times what you did to Germany.”

Autenrieth’s account of the fictional war points to his fear that new machines would undoubtedly cause levels of devastation greater than the horrors of the First World War. Like Hanstein, he realized that the same machines which would reinstate Germany as a colonial power may also cause an enormous loss of life. He believed, however, that the devastation of technological warfare was the crucible of Germany’s return as a colonial power, which differentiates his view of technology from those of Lämmel and Hanstein. In his fantasy, Germany emerges from the wasteland as the most powerful colonial power in the world, which makes the destructive potential of technology a necessary evil for the nation’s renewal. Like Jünger, Autenrieth reveled in the dynamism of machines and the combination of creative and destructive forces technological warfare unleashed, which undoubtedly stemmed from his combat experience during the First World War.

Though Autenrieth shared a sense of the destructive potentials of technology, he did not use technology for revisionist purposes. Unlike Lämmel and Hanstein, who sought to dispel Germany’s “colonial guilt lie” in overseas territories, Autenrieth envisioned the rebirth of German colonialism on the European continent. Autenrieth first advocated for the colonization of Eastern Europe in Die Drei Kommenden Kriege (The

100 Autenrieth, 180. Here, I have used Fisher’s translation, Fantasy and Politics, 45-46.
Three Coming Wars, 1919), a pamphlet published two years before Bismarck II. In his earlier work, Autenrieth predicted a series of world wars between the major powers of Western Europe, the Soviet Union, and Japan, whom he saw as a new threat to European hegemony in the period after the First World War. His primary goal in the pamphlet was to outline a vision of Germany foreign politics that would allow the nation to return to its place among the World Powers and abolish the oppressive Treaty of Versailles. Crucial to his vision was the conclusion that Germany must forge an alliance with the Soviet Union against the British and French to prevent another two-front war. He believed such an alliance could come to fruition through the conquest and division of the newly-created state of Poland between the Germany and the Soviet Union. He argued that the Germans should wait to invade Poland until the other World Powers were distracted by conflicts with each other. With the British and French unwilling to assist their Polish allies, the Germans could easily defeat the Poles.

However, Autenrieth’s vision for the conquest of the East was not limited to a simple military excursion. In the closing lines of his section on Poland, Autenrieth wrote, “Out of the new German worker-colonies will arise settlements which will decisively influence the domestic politics of the new Russia and therefore determine its foreign policy, especially its attitude toward Germany.”101 Though the passage is primarily concerned with the future relationship between Germany and Russia, Autenrieth’s words reveal that he envisioned Poland as a space for German settler colonialism. His reference to “worker-colonies” indicates that he viewed the colonization of the East as an opportunity for the economic renewal of Germany, who had suffered immensely in the aftermath of the First World War. Polish lands would provide space for the expansion of

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the German people, who would move into the occupied territories and establish settlements. The acquisition of a colony in Eastern Europe would enhance Germany’s geopolitical status and improve its economy.

In *Bismarck II*, Autenrieth dramatized his vision of the colonization of Poland. German expansion into Poland occurs in two phases in the novel. The first phase involves the invasion and recapture of territories ceded to Poland after the First World War. After the French occupy the Rhineland and a catastrophic civil war unleashes in Germany between the Communists and Nationalists. As the civil war rages, Otto, the leader of the Communists, uncovers a Franco-Polish plot to invade and destroy his army. Through adept political maneuvering, Otto uses the plot to unite the Communists and Nationalists into a coalition government and convinces them that Germany must preemptively invade Poland. Through a fast, aggressive assault, the Germans easily defeat the Polish and occupy several Eastern territories lost after the First World War. In the aftermath of the war with Poland, Otto negotiates a new peace treaty that removes the French from the Rhineland and forces the Polish to surrender Upper Silesia to Germany.102 With the Franco-Polish threat nullified, peace is temporarily restored in Europe and the first phase is complete.

The second phase of the colonization of Poland occurs during the novel’s final apocalyptic war between the major World Powers. Though the European nations temporarily restore order on the Continent, the rise of the United States and Japan as imperial powers threatens global peace. Soon, war breaks out between the US and the Triple Entente, which includes Britain, France, and Japan. As the warring nations destroy each other, Germany remains neutral until Otto uncovers another Franco-Polish plot to

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invade and seize Germany’s industrial regions. With the help of the Russians, the Germans invade and finally destroy Poland. Otto then decides to eliminate Polish people altogether by removing them from their homeland. The Germans round up all Polish men and transport them by railroad to concentration camps in Siberia. Polish women are then scattered in countries across Europe to prevent them from reproducing. Here, the ethnic cleansing of Poland allows the Germans to complete the task of the colonizing the East.

Ultimately, the seizure of Polish space and the elimination of the local population was central to Autenrieth’s the creation of the Polish people as “Others” on the European continent. For example, in his description of the German invasion of the East, Autenrieth claimed that the Polish people were inherently backward and uncivilized. “The territory [Poland], from a geographical point of view,” he wrote, “was divided between Russia and Germany and in a very short time raised to a higher economic and cultural standing.” Autenrieth’s notion that the German colonization would bring economic and cultural progress to the East ultimately indicates that the region as static and uncivilized. In his view, the undeveloped state of the Polish space was evidence that the people of the East were incapable of initiating progress or accepting Western modernity. For Autenrieth, the root of the problem was the alleged backwardness of the Polish culture, which had prevented the rise of “civilization” in the East. Polish people, like the indigenous Australians of Hanstein’s novel, inherently lacked the means to become a civilized, modern nation. In this way, Autenrieth viewed Polish people in the same way that Hanstein viewed indigenous Australians – uncivilized, non-European, and ultimately as

103 Ibid., 180-184.
104 Ibid., 184.
“Others.” However, unlike Lämmel and Hanstein, Autenrieth was uninterested in renegotiating the relationship between Germans and colonial “Others.” Instead, he believed that the savageness of the East gave Germany the right to colonization. With the movement of Germans into colonial settlements in Polish space, the region’s resources would be put to good use and cultural “progress” would be brought to the East.

Not only did Autenrieth relegate Polish people to the category of “Others,” but he also viewed them as an imminent threat to German civilization. Because the Polish were a savage, uncivilized people, their presence in Europe, and the fact that the Treaty of Versailles had granted them territories previously held by the Germans, meant they were a threat to German progress. In a passage following the ethnic cleansing of Poland, he wrote: “The Polish people vanished from the earth; one of the most dangerous threats to European freedom was forever quieted.”105 If the Polish were increasingly given control of German lands and the encroachment upon the West by the East not prevented, European civilization would cease to exist; the binaries of colonial logic would collapse and the Germans would revert to savagery. Moreover, he argued, the Polish purposely aimed to destroy Germany through the seizure of German space and cooperation with Germany’s enemies. The intense hatred Polish people harbored for Germans motivated all decisions made by the Polish state. Instead of looking out for the wellbeing of their own people, he argued, the Polish aimed to do whatever harmed the Germans.106 The inherent “Otherness” of Polish people and the threat they posed to Germany, Autenrieth reasoned, justified the destruction of the Polish population. Not only did his fantasy allow

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106 Autenrieth, *Die drei kommenden Kriege*, 57.
for the German colonization of the East, his vision of the ethnic cleansing of Poland removed an imminent peril to Germany and the whole of Western Europe.

Considered together, the three novels illustrate two divergent views on the relationships between Germans and non-Europeans in Weimar colonial discourse. Lämmel and Hanstein contributed to revisionist discourse that aimed to refute the notion that Germans were ruthless colonizers who were unfit to possess colonies. Through their representations of harmonious, mutually beneficial relationships between Germans and non-Europeans, they reimagined colonial relationships and created counter-narratives that served as a rhetorical strategy against the “colonial guilt lie.” For Lämmel and Hanstein, technology was essential to the revisionist attempt to counter the notion of “colonial guilt.” Through advanced technology, the novelists argued, German colonists tamed savage landscapes and the people who inhabited them, which portrayed Germans as benevolent colonizers. Nevertheless, their representations of non-Europeans rested on the traditional Eurocentric worldview – J.M. Blaut’s “colonizer’s model” – that divided the world into colonial binaries and placed Europeans in positions of power over non-European subjects.

Most notably, though, Autenrieth contributed to another significant strand of Weimar colonial discourse in his creation of Polish people as colonial “Others” in Europe and the ethnic cleansing of the East. Instead of focusing on colonial revisionism, Autenrieth openly embraced the notion that Germans were a colonizing people and that Poland should be the future site of a German colony. The similarities between Autenreith’s novel, Nationalist Socialist ideology, and the events of the Second World War have led historians such as Peter Fisher to see the work primarily within the history
of the Third Reich. Moreover, the author’s strong reaction to the Treaty of Versailles has led Fisher and others to see the novel as primarily a work of radical nationalism. However, if the novel is considered within the history of Weimar colonial discourse, it becomes apparent that traditional colonial logic – the view of the world within the binaries of colonizer and colonized, civilized and uncivilized, Self and Other – motivated Autenrieth’s vision of the conquest of Poland. It is the underlying logic of colonialism, which had shaped the European worldview for centuries prior to Weimar era, that binds Autenrieth’s novel, as well as the works of Lämmel and Hanstein, to Germany’s colonial past, rather than simply its future.
CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION

Science Fiction writers of the Weimar Republic expressed a deep desire for the return of Germany as a colonizing nation through visions of Germany’s future. A reading of the works of Otto Autenrieth, Rudolf Lämmel, and Otfrid von Hanstein through the lens of colonialism has shown that German Science Fiction writers of the 1920s understood the world in colonial terms; they divided the world into binary categories of colonizer and colonized, Self and Other, and drew fundamental distinctions between Europeans and non-Europeans. Germany’s material circumstances after the First World War – the loss of its colonies, the French Occupation of the Rhineland, and the Allied claim of German “colonial guilt” – destabilized the authors’ traditional colonial understanding of the world. Their depictions of the French as ruthless colonizers and African troops as violent savages grew out of the fear that Germany had been reduced to the category of “colonized” after the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. In addition, the “colonial guilt lie” motivated Science Fiction writers to create counter narrative that depicted Germany as a successful colonizing nation, rather than as a brutal oppressor of non-Europeans. Nevertheless, behind their seemingly benevolent representations of non-Europeans lingered the traditional logics of colonialism, which led the authors to see non-Europeans as fundamentally distinct, uncivilized, and ultimately as “Others.”

Above all, Science Fiction authors viewed technology as a means of solving Germany’s postwar dilemma. By envisioning fantastic wars in which Germany
overpowers its enemies with advanced machines and creating the engineer as the hero of the colonial project, they sought to reinstate Germany’s previous position within the colonial binary. In addition, Lämmel and Hanstein used technology as a tool of colonial revisionism by portraying German engineer-colonists as “civilizers” of savage wastelands and non-Europeans. Other writers, such as Autenrieth, rejected the revisionist approach and engaged in the creation of Polish people as “Others” on the European continent. Like Lämmel and Hanstein, however, Autenrieth also regarded technology as the path to Germany’s renewal and was very much aware of the devastation of technological warfare. Of course, Science Fiction authors were aware of the potentially devastating outcomes of technological advancement; nonetheless, they remained optimistic that technology would guarantee Germany’s return as a colonial power.

In his study of the novels, Peter Fisher has argued that by envisioning Germany’s resurrection through the power of nationalist heroes, the authors of Weimar fantasies were the “vanguard of an even more catastrophic future.”107 Fisher has viewed the revanchist and nationalist sentiments of the novels as a prefiguring of the Adolf Hitler’s rise to power and the descent of Germany into the chaos of the Second World War. Likewise, Jost Herman has characterized the works as “national utopias,” in which a new Führer rescues Germany from the humiliation of the Versailles peace agreement.108 Though their studies have gone far in connecting Science Fiction novels to radical politics, Fisher and Herman have read the novels backwards – that is, they have seen them as contributors to a discourse that concluded with the rise of National Socialism. However, a reading the works of Autenrieth, Lämmel, and Hanstein through the lens of

107 Fisher, 226.
colonialism reveals a whole new variety of complexities, motivations, and assumptions that were otherwise lacking in the historical understanding of Weimar Science Fiction.

Moreover, the projection of colonial longings into the fantastic realm of Science Fiction suggests that a natural affinity exists between Science Fiction and colonialism. As Susan Zantrop has shown in her study of German popular literature (Trivialliteratur) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the realm of fantasy – of wish-fulfillment and unconscious desires for colonial dominance – was essential to German colonial discourse at a time when Germany did not possess colonies. In fact, as Patricia Kerlslake has shown in her study of Science Fiction and imperialism, the link between Science Fiction and colonialism was also strong when Germany was a colonial power. For example, in his work, Auf Zwei Planeten (Two Planets, 1897), Kurd Laßwitz, one of the most prominent German Science Fiction writers of the nineteenth century, critiqued the practices of colonialism by envisioning a future Martian invasion. However, in the Weimar era, when Germany again held no colonies, Science Fiction offered Germans a realm in which they could indulge their deepest colonial longings filtered through the context of a rational, scientific world. Scientific progress and advanced technology – hallmarks of Science Fiction literature – appeared to many Science Fiction writers the most likely path to Germany’s return as a colonial power and the abolition of the Versailles peace agreement; it was this emphasis on science and technology that

110 In Lasswitz’s novel, the Nume, an advanced species from Mars, attempt to “civilize” Earth by teaching humans the benefits of peace and advanced technology. However, the Nume’s “civilizing mission” ultimately fails when conflict erupts between the Martians and inhabitants of Earth. For a more detailed look at Lasswitz’s novel, see Patricia Kerlslake, Science Fiction and Empire (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 83-104 and William B. Fischer, The Empire Strikes Out: Kurd Lasswitz, Hans Dominik, and the Development of German Science Fiction (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press, 1984), 125-176.
constituted Science Fiction’s greatest contribution to colonial discourse in the Weimar Republic.
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