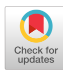

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INTRODUCTION

Violence and intimacy in colonial and postcolonial Africa

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In 1907, German settler Carl Schlettwein published a guidebook for future farmers in German South West Africa (GSWA). He advised his readers on how to build a close yet strongly hierarchical relationship with African farm servants. To reach 'a good understanding' with workers, Schlettwein emphasized that white masters needed to put themselves 'into a position' involving 'fear but at the same time respect and trust' through the 'right amount' of violence (Schlettwein 1907: 178). The idea was to strike a balance between treating Africans too mildly and too cruelly.

Whereas settlers like Schlettwein conceived of violence as a means to produce a form of paternalistic closeness, for many Africans, intimate relations – with lovers, family relations or members of the wider household – were a means to cope with, or protect themselves from, colonial violence. In 1902, Susanna Matroos, a Bondelswarts woman in the south of the German settler colony, tended to her husband's wounds after he had been flogged by his employers Jan and Hendrik Coetzee, for whom he worked as a shepherd. Matroos washed her husband's swollen, sore body with cold water and lubricated his wounds with grease.[1] Moreover, she reached out to a Boer woman for some turpentine, a popular antiseptic for open wounds (Early 2004: 170–1). Eventually, she helped her husband escape from his employers' farm by carrying him to another settlement with the help of his sister.[2]

These examples reflect the ambiguous interplay between violence and intimacy, which was an instrument of colonial oppression but could also offer refuge and/or expose the fragility of colonial hierarchies. We argue that, despite the omnipresence of large-scale, state-sanctioned violence in colonial situations, it is important for scholars to address the sites and practices of intimacy – whether farmers'

[1] Affidavit by S. Matroos, police station, Dawignab, 20 December 1902, GKE 267, D5.03, National Archives of Namibia; affidavit by G. Lopmann, police station, Dawignab, 28 March 1903, GKE 267, D5.03, National Archives of Namibia.

[2] Affidavits by S. Matroos, police station, Dawignab, 20 December 1902, GKE 267, D5.03, National Archives of Namibia; imperial district court, Keetmanshoop, 11 April 1903, GKE 267, D5.03, National Archives of Namibia. Tragically, Matroos's husband died shortly after their arrival, despite the care she devoted to him.

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paternalistic relations to their workers, love and care among spouses, or other quotidian forms of wanted and unwanted forms of proximity. We cannot understand colonial and postcolonial experiences of violence without considering the realm of the intimate.

This special issue explores the complex interplay between violence, conflict and intimacy in colonial and postcolonial Africa. As the contributions demonstrate, Africans' relationships with one another, as well as with those who ruled over them, entailed various forms and degrees of emotional closeness, sometimes shared and sometimes enforced. Intimate relations had the potential to challenge colonial asymmetries or subvert racial hierarchies. Violence was central in shaping forms of distance and closeness, whether through direct interpersonal physical force or through the threat of force, sometimes lurking in the background as armed conflict or surfacing as painful memories. Violence could be a means to an end, deployed to prevent potentially subversive forms of intimacy or impose unwanted emotional or physical closeness. Intimate relationships also provided respite from various forms of suffering.

In the colonial and postcolonial periods, violent (trans)formations of the intimate played out in small spaces, such as workplaces, convict stations, police quarters and people's homes. The articles assembled here advance our understanding of colonial and postcolonial violence by reading it from the perspectives of the intimate, shifting the focus away from political and large-scale conflict, as has been privileged in the existing historiography. Second, we advance recent Africanist and imperial historical scholarship with its nuanced understandings of intimacy in a (post)colonial context. The contributions to this special issue show how colonial asymmetries of gender and race often had an impact on intimate relations through violence or show how the intimate could challenge asymmetries or offer refuge from conflict. Together, the articles contribute fresh insights to a growing body of work on the private lives of men and women under colonial rule and since independence.

Scholarly questions

Over the past few decades, the scholarship on intimacy has grown substantially across a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology and history. An extensive body of work has addressed the intimate as a site of European colonialism and imperialism, analysing the micro-workings of colonial rule (McClintock 1995; Stoler 2002). Intimate matters – childcare, marriage or sexual relations – were key arenas of imperial governance, in which the boundaries of race and gender were being created and upheld. Whereas pioneering studies initially focused on sexual relations and the domestic sphere, more recent work has examined intimacy at the level of mobility, colonial labour relations and global entanglements (Burton 1999; Ballantyne and Burton 2009; Lindner and Lerp 2018). This volume also builds on recent innovative work on the history of emotions in colonial and postcolonial Africa. Although the study of affections, particularly love, has long been neglected in Africanist scholarship, there is a growing body of literature exploring how emotions have been embedded in cultural practices and have shaped particular historical contexts. This scholarship has traced the changing understandings and embodiments of love and intimacy, as well as the rise of global ideals of marriage and romantic relationships (Smith 2006; Cole and Thomas 2009; Hunter 2010; Vongsathorn 2022).

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Many scholars of intimacy have acknowledged violence but they have rarely made it a prominent concern in their analysis. In fact, studies on the private realms of empire, on affective relationships and on shared experiences have attracted criticism for neglecting 'the brute realities of violence'. According to Rachel Standfield, 'coercion and violence, rather than affection, were central in shaping cross-cultural relationships' (2009: 31–2). In particular, Ann Laura Stoler has been criticized for rendering violence and domination 'opaque' (Gutiérrez 2001: 869).[3] Similarly, Florence Bernault and Jan-Georg Deutsch have criticized 'the sanitizing paradigm of the "colonial encounters"', finding that scholars have shifted attention away from colonialism's violent and destructive dynamics (2015: 390).

At the same time, there is a strong body of scholarship on violence in colonial and postcolonial settings that has under-represented the personal, small-scale, emotional and quotidian. As Bernault and Deutsch noted, it is still rather uncommon for historical research on violence in Africa to venture into intimate realms because most of it has prioritized war and political conflict over interpersonal violence (2015: 385, 390). Our special issue contributes to an emerging body of work on violence in intimate settings, including (sexualized) violence in domestic service and households (Badassy 2005; Dooling 2009; Burrill *et al.* 2010; Ally 2015). Although such research extensively touches on violence in realms central to the intimate, intimacy is rarely taken seriously as an analytical category.

Thus, instead of pitting the one against the other, this special issue highlights the need to combine the study of 'soft' intimacy with the hard facts of colonial violence. Heike Schmidt formulated the concept of 'colonial intimacy' to emphasize the proximity between colonizers and the colonized, here resulting from their shared spaces, knowledge and experiences without 'denying or belittling the unequal power differential and the omnipresent colonial violence' (Schmidt 2008: 29; see also Jackson 2018). Penelope Edmonds and Amanda Nettelbeck have recently broken new ground by explicitly setting their analytical focus on 'the nexus between violence and intimacy' and the formation of settler-colonial societies (Edmonds and Nettelbeck 2018: 1). They argue that settler economies heavily depended on indigenous labour and that intimacies arising from proximities between indigenous people and settlers were 'intrinsically connected' to forms of colonial violence: cultural repression, labour coercion and sexual exploitation (*ibid.*: 1–2, 6).

Whereas Edmonds and Nettelbeck concentrate on the relations between the colonized and colonizers in the Pacific Rim, the contributions to this special issue engage with similar questions for contexts in Africa. They also foreground relationships among colonized groups because such aspects have been missing in studies of intimacy under imperialism. Our volume builds on recent Africanist work on connections between intimacy and violence, including Peter Geschiere's groundbreaking analysis of 'occult aggression' and kinship (Geschiere 2013: xvii). This special issue aims to bring these different scholarly strands together into a fruitful dialogue. To do so, we explore three core questions: how did violence (re)shape the intimate? How did intimacy influence the ways in which violence was used, perceived, legitimized, represented, regulated or condemned? Finally, how have violence and

[3] Gutiérrez (2001: 869) criticizes that, in Stoler's 2001 essay 'Tense and tender ties', violence and domination appeared 'naturalized, tenderized' and were 'made palatable and opaque'.

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intimacy positioned individuals within contexts of (post)colonial rule and capitalism, law and governance, as well as in relation to domesticity and medical practices?

Conceptualizing intimacy and violence

The contributions here build on our focused definition of violence. We conceptualize this as any forceful act that violates the bodily and/or psychological integrity of human beings, often with fatal consequences.[4] Violence is a concrete set of *practices* that are physical but also symbolic, discursive or epistemic.[5] Second, building on the theoretical literature and our empirical findings, the articles refer to intimacy as a degree of closeness between people. Intimacy is often an effect of physical proximity, but it goes further than that. These articles build on the assumption that those who are intimate are familiar with one another, know each other well, care for each other, are emotionally attached to one another, long for each other and/or share a sense of belonging. At the same time, emotional closeness can be one-sided, forced or a source of distress for those subjected to unwanted attention. Intimacy is produced and shaped by positive and negative affects,[6] such as trust, affection, sexual desire and a sense of kinship, but also by fear, anger, shame or revulsion.[7]

Interpreting intimacy in a positive light, it can or could serve as a bastion against colonial or postcolonial violence. Nancy Rose Hunt's and David Zeitlyn's contributions discuss the ways in which relations motivated by love, kindness or pity constituted a way to deal with a violent postcolonial milieu or ongoing war. At the same time, Peter Geschiere has argued against the 'tenacious anthropological vision of the inner circle of home and family as a haven of reciprocity' and has pointed to intimacy as 'a lethal source of threat and betrayal' (Geschiere 2013: xvii, 23). As the articles here demonstrate, these lethal dimensions went with colonial rule, partly because power was so unevenly distributed, to the glaring disadvantage of Africans; relations of dependence restrained their agency; and enforced proximity often went against their choosing. In convict stations in the Cape Colony (Chris Holdridge), police compounds in GSWA (Marie Muschalek) or towns in the copper-mining district of Namaqualand (Kai F. Herzog), many men and women closely interacted with others to whom they did not feel close – like an estranged partner, a fugitive acquaintance or an overseer. Emotional attachment, sexual desire and trust were not always reciprocated. Men – and especially women – frequently suffered from unwanted and enforced intimacy in colonial situations.[8]

[4] Hence, our conceptualization largely follows that of Klaas van Walraven and Jon Abbink (2003: 17).

[5] For an overview of the myriad forms and concepts of violence, see Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004: 1–31).

[6] Both empirical research and theoretical literature on intimacy often draw on work on the history of emotions, as Thrift (2004) and Jackson (2018) exemplify. William Reddy's *The Navigation of Feeling* (2001) is among the publications most commonly used by scholars of intimacy.

[7] Thus, we approach the notion of 'nearness' according to Heidegger – that is, 'not something that can be measured by physical distance so much as the degree of involvement, engagement, concern, and attention one gives it', as Stoler has summarized (2006: 15).

[8] Stoler reminds us that '[c]olonial intimacies engender "precarious affections": awkward familiarities, unsolicited attentions, uninvited caresses, probings that cannot be refused' (2006: 15). In this regard, Stoler builds on Svetlana Boym's reflections on what she calls diasporic intimacy (see Boym 1998: 499–500).

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Several contributions discuss violence and intimate relations as gendered practices, analysing aggression by men as a means to reinforce or restore patriarchal domination. Muschalek shows how German colonial policemen sexually exploited African women, obscuring uncomfortable truths about their cruelties together with colonial officials to protect masculine honour, comradeship and state authority. In the examples discussed by Herzog, colonial capitalism and colonial legal systems opened up new opportunities for women, triggering male violence.

In colonial and postcolonial Africa, intimate relations were not only an arena in which violence played out; they were also targets of violent interventions from the outside. Brenda K. Kombo explores how modern notions of domesticity came to be enforced on Cameroonian households during French colonial rule. At the same time, colonial authorities were often indifferent to human suffering, at least as far as Africans were concerned, thus reinforcing intimate abuse. As Herzog highlights, the callous disregard of the Cape colonial judiciary and general public towards sexual exploitation in Namaqualand's mining district prompted men to violently abuse women, prolonging their agony and pain.

Although we consider intimacy as being an affective relationship rather than merely a physical condition, spatiality plays a crucial role. For emotional closeness to arise, spatial closeness must already be present. People need to see, feel and experience each other's presence to develop a sense of familiarity – of knowing each other, either for good or bad. Still, intimacy could be upheld despite separation and distance, as Holdridge's micro-spatial analysis of a mobile imperial subject, the convict Michael O'Brien, shows. Intimacy could even be mediated at a distance, as seen in Kombo's contribution on marriage legislation passed by Cameroon's French mandate administration. This special issue speaks to Will Glovinsky's notion of 'distant intimacy' – that is, the fact that emotional closeness is not only (re)configured on site but also from afar.[9] Thus, the authors here conceptualize intimacy as emotional closeness and as a scale of investigation; they look at fraught interactions across a range of small colonial and postcolonial spaces in which emotional closeness took shape and was also reconfigured.

Methodological approaches

This special issue assembles contributions from history, (social) anthropology and legal studies. Although all of our contributors approach intimacy and violence historically, they do so from the vantage point of different disciplines. All struggle with exploring forms of closeness that were felt more than verbalized or otherwise expressed. What people think and how they feel about each other is often kept private and hidden from any outside view. Nigel Thrift returns to the sociology of Jack Katz by emphasizing that 'emotions are largely nonrepresentational: they are "formal evidence of what, in one's relations with others, speech cannot conceal"' (Thrift 2004: 60). With regard to nineteenth- and twentieth-century Africa, it is particularly difficult to find evidence on people's perceptions of intimate relations, not least due to the impact and legacies of

[9] Glovinsky makes this clear regarding mid-nineteenth-century Victorian Britain. Introducing his concept of 'distant intimacy', he points to the struggles of mostly middle-class families to maintain affective bonds with relatives who emigrated to the colonies (Glovinsky 2020: 91–2, 94).

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colonialism and the silencing of African voices in its wake. However, field and archival work has brought to light historical material that provides us with intriguing insights when carefully contextualized, read closely, and approached with new methods and perspectives (cf. Hamilton *et al.* 2002; Benson and Chadya 2005: 587–91; Burrill *et al.* 2010: 18–20; Hoffmann and Mnyaka 2015; Namhila 2015). How men and women living under colonial and postcolonial rule thought about and behaved towards others, particularly those they felt close to, often did find expression – if indirectly – in words and actions. The authors here build on a broad array of empirical sources, including written, visual and oral traces, such as court and assembly records, correspondence and petitions, newspaper articles and legal documents, as well as private photographs, observations and interviews.

The geographical scope of this special issue is more focused than we initially intended. Following our call for papers for two workshops (held in June and October 2020), the many submissions reflected a strong bias for Southern African contexts. The reasons for this bias remain unclear. Yet questions of violence and intimacy have been perceived as virulent in settler-colonial contexts. Southern Africa's early colonial history was marked by clashes between metropolitan forces, groups of settlers and African communities, and this context has attracted many scholars (working, for example, on the Herero and Nama genocide and the South African War; Gewald 1999; Krüger 1999; Zimmerer and Zeller 2008; Nasson 2010). Beyond warfare, scholars have analysed quotidian practices of violence as 'core technologies of colonial rule' (Muschalek 2019). Flogging, beating, binding and shooting crucially marked the differences between colonizer and colonized, white and black (Shadle 2012; Muschalek 2019). Violent practices were central to the political order, and they drove settler economies with their land expropriation and exploitation of Africans in mining and farm work (Harries 1994; Jeeves and Crush 1997; Dooling 2009).

Many practices resulted from trans- and cross-imperial exchanges of knowledge, which contributed to a partly shared 'settler archive' of violent strategies to establish colonial rule, facilitate swift suppression of uprisings and enable excessive exploitation (Veracini 2010; cf. Lindner 2011; Kreienbaum 2015). Southern Africanist researchers have also focused on violence among Africans, pointing out how violent clashes and the import of violent technologies such as guns became the means to achieve upward mobility and wealth – and to gain and maintain political power (Lau 1983; Gewald 1999: 20–2; Storey 2008: 78–117; Henrichsen 2011).

Similarly, several of the earliest ground-breaking publications on colonial intimacies have empirically drawn from Southern African settler-colonial situations (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; McClintock 1995; Stoler 2001: 857–61). Intimate arrangements and affective relations, from the bedroom to the nursery, were central in creating settler-colonial categories and distinguishing the ruler from the ruled. At the same time, boundary-blurring intimacies – as seen in the persistent obsession with 'miscegenation' – were particularly at stake in societies where economic and political privilege hinged on skin colour.

A second regional focus of this special issue is Central Africa (Hunt, Kombo, Zeitlyn). Although large-scale warfare long shaped the region, the articles here foreground reflections on violence in everyday life (Hunt, Zeitlyn), as well as epistemic violence (Kombo). These articles contribute to a rich body of research on the complex history of colonialism, border disputes and political constellations in this

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part of Africa. In the late colonial and independence period, West Cameroon saw a decades-long violent conflict, with the uprising of the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), followed by retaliation by the newly independent Cameroonian government and the French former colonial power. As West Cameroonians moved from a nationalist war for independence into a civil war, they entered a period of 'random, unpredictable violence, looting and revenge' (Terretta 2013: 1; see also Ngoh 1987; Deltombe *et al.* 2011; Zeitlyn 2018).

The borders of eastern Congo, with longstanding contestations over territorial boundaries, population movements and violent clashes among population groups, have attracted a large amount of scholarship. The period since the country's independence in 1960 has been marked by coups, invasions and secessions, climaxing in the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the first and second Congo wars (1996–97 and 1998–2003). Many scholars have attributed such outbursts of violence to the ways in which the region became a pawn of domestic, regional and international actors and sectional interests. These 'exceptionally brutal phenomena' (Lemarchand 2013: 422) have drawn a stream of academic research (Prunier 2009; Autesserre 2010; Reyntjens 2010; Kisangani 2012; Stearns 2012; Kennes and Larmer 2016). The region, with its post-genocidal 'rape capitals' (Hunt, this issue) of Bukavu and Goma, has been subject to a tremendous wave of humanitarian intervention and NGO-ization. This focus on intimacies in Central Africa brings a fresh perspective, leading away from violent atrocities and large-scale political conflict to the ways in which violence resonated in everyday and marital relationships, as youth imagined futures or witnessed liminal, 'mad' persons.

As such, the articles here speak to contexts and themes that reach beyond their respective geographic focus, engaging questions of intimacy and violence in contexts of postcolonial warfare (Zeitlyn, Hunt), colonial capitalism (Herzog), law enforcement and legal confinement (Muschalek, Holdridge) and colonial, missionary and postcolonial forms of social engineering (Kombo).

Summary of the articles

The articles in this issue are arranged to explore small spaces as sites of analysis. They roughly follow a chronological order, with several addressing the continuities or discontinuities in interrelations between intimacy and violence.

Holdridge and Muschalek focus on institutions of law enforcement and legal confinement as sites in which the often unwanted physical proximity of strangers fed into larger questions of colonial statehood and governance. In a case study of a murder committed among convict labourers in the Cape Colony in the 1840s, Holdridge demonstrates the potential of a biographical approach in writing an integrated history of intimacy and violence within colonial and postcolonial Africa. Examining the murder of the convict Onverwagt, Holdridge demonstrates how changes in criminal justice and governance in Southern Africa were influenced by violent and affective relationships between convicts, overseers, superintendents and officials at different micro-sites across the British Empire. Reforms in penal practices in the Cape Colony were adopted from Tasmanian experiences in punishing and morally 'improving' convicts, demonstrating how cross-empire mobility and settler capitalism shaped the intimacies of colonial social worlds.

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If microhistory is practised as a concern with intimate situations rather than simply a question of scale, Holdridge contends that it engenders a perspective that 'transcends the artificial conceptual divides between the local and the global'. Moreover, by combining microhistory with a focus on individual mobility, the case of Onverwagt's murder and the perpetrator O'Brien yields insights into the productions of 'distant intimacy' (Glovinsky 2020) during a particularly violent phase of world history. At the same time, the enforced spatial proximity of convicts created a form of 'stranger intimacy' – that is, relations of distrust rather than new forms of belonging (Shah 2011). By combining his analysis of a confined space with the biographies of globally mobile colonial subjects and detailing how physical closeness led to mutual dependence as much as distrust, Holdridge explores some of the 'paradoxes' inherent in the intertwined meanings of violence and intimacy. His contribution advances recent scholarship on incarceration and convict labour in post-emancipation contexts. While existing scholarship has begun to highlight the ways in which local penal systems were embedded in trans-imperial circulations of ideas and practices of punishment and forced labour contexts (Lichtenstein 1996; Paton 2004; Penn 2008; Anderson 2011; Jean 2016; 2019; Lopes 2022), Holdridge's focus on violent intimacies sheds light on the '"messiness" of human actions' that exposed the imperfections of colonial rule.

Focusing on an isolated police compound, Muschalek's contribution analyses the role of gendered intimate violence in state building in Namibia under German rule at the beginning of the twentieth century. Through the lens of a rape case, she foregrounds policemen's contested notions of intimate violence, masculine honour and comradeship, delineating the quotidian process of African women's violent marginalization in the context of making colonial rule. As Muschalek demonstrates, allegations of the African domestic servant Sophie Meritz of having been raped by colonial policemen sparked discussions about the legitimacy of violence, governance practices and understandings of rule within the German administration. Meritz tried to insert her voice into the discussion over the meaning of sex and violence. Before court, she articulated what intimate interactions meant to her and tried to express and defend her own notion of respectability. By filing a complaint against the policeman for whom she worked as a domestic servant, the woman challenged racialized notions about African women's sexuality and the policemen's claims. Further interpreting her statements, Muschalek argues that sexual intercourse with her employer – coerced and/or consensual – might have been 'a currency' for Meritz to continue domestic service and 'to live a liveable life under colonial rule'. As Muschalek also stresses, by revealing details from her private life, Meritz spoke to local notions of social standing and morality. While the former was defined by fertility and childbearing, the latter rested on prohibition of unmarried sex and women's lead role in regulating and controlling matters of the household, the family and reproduction.

Ultimately, however, Meritz was drowned out by policemen's articulations of honour and masculinity. Officials and policemen described sexually predatory behaviour as acceptable and the woman's allegations as false, resulting in her imprisonment for perjury. Muschalek reads this microhistory as symptomatic of the ways in which the colonial state manifested itself in the realm of the intimate (Stoler 1997; 2001; 2002). Highlighting the ways in which discussions of intimate violence 'were also always negotiations over the nature of colonial power, the state and its project',

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Muschalek foregrounds the affectionate and personal inherent in colonial rule (cf. Edmonds and Nettelbeck 2018: 2). Although existing scholarship has highlighted that the police force's capacity to control the colony of GSWA was rather limited (Zimmerer 2001; Zollmann 2010; De Juan *et al.* 2017), in their intimate encounters with the population, policemen had ample scope to blend 'idiosyncratic bureaucratic technologies with "petty", normalized acts of violence', as Muschalek argues.

Herzog's contribution focuses on the capitalist workplace. His article zooms in on Namaqualand's copper-mining district, analysing the impact of sexual violence on Nama and Baster women in the late nineteenth century. Namaqualand's small copper mines and towns developed into a key destination for local female labour migration. With short distances to workplaces and their movement unrestricted, local women could reconcile domestic responsibilities with the demands of remunerative work and engage in various professional and private relationships. At the same time, however, they were exposed to male labourers' unwanted attention and sexual abuse. Lacking empathy for the suffering of African women, the Cape judiciary neglected the administration of sexual violence in Namaqualand, allowing men to abuse women without much constraint. As Herzog concludes, sexual violence thwarted women's attempts to alter the patriarchal social norms and alleviate the economic pressures of capitalism and settler colonialism through waged and self-employed labour, thus reinforcing gendered and racial hierarchies. Providing insights into the violent (re)making of colonial power asymmetries in the northern Cape in the realm of the intimate, his article expands the narratives that view settler hegemony as a result of armed conquest (Ross 1975; de Prada-Samper 2012; Legassick 2016). Moreover, by tracing the dynamics of labour opportunities, spatial proximity, enforced closeness and emotional neglect that resulted in women's violent suppression, he adds insights to the ongoing discussions on mines as sites of the (trans)formation of sexuality and intimate relations (Moodie *et al.* 1988; Harries 1990; Weiss 2011), as well as of women's agency, social stratification and state power (Moroney 1982; Van Onselen 1982a; 1982b; Bonner 1990).

Kombo addresses the domestic sphere as a site of both violence and intimacy. Kombo's article explores efforts by the French mandate administration and the missionaries of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans) to regulate intimate relationships in French Cameroon from 1916 to 1956 as a form of epistemic violence. These efforts defined the status and roles of women within partner relationships with long-term consequences. Thus, the article advances existing scholarship on the colonial impact on the family, the importance of the domestic sphere in the colonial project, and contestations over modernity (cf. Chanock 1989; McClintock 1995; Geschiere and Rowlands 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Stoler 2002; Awoh 2012; Orosz 2012; Bruner 2014; Sheik 2014; Nkwi 2015). In grappling with what Western modernity meant in an African context and struggling to align the *mission civilisatrice* with other considerations regarding religion, social order and labour needs, Kombo argues that violence was employed to 'domesticate' modernity and impose Western norms on intimate partner relationships. Examining present debates around the Family Code using Stoler's (2008) concept of 'imperial debris', Kombo further advances research that has centred on the unfinished history of colonialism. As Kombo shows, colonial epistemic violence left an imprint on present-day family law and intimate partner relations (Jean-Baptiste 2008; Dotson 2011; Sheik 2014; Burrill 2015; 2020).

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Hunt addresses the body and the mind as arenas of intimacy and violence. Through ethnographic portraits of individuals living in the eastern Congolese city of Bukavu in the mid-1990s and beyond, Hunt provides insights into intimate, familial and neighbourhood-based psychic struggles and issues of urban life and global mental health. Her ethnographic vignettes explore interconnections between madness, violence and intimacy in a context of cyclical violence and a growing humanitarian industry. The article contributes to the burgeoning literature on mental health in connection with violence while going beyond a focus on PTSD. Her examples shed light on practices of care for mad people, highlighting the ways in which intimate and affectionate relationships help such liminal people exist in a complex, post-conflict social landscape. Her portraits also challenge notions of madness as deficiency while presenting examples that suggest that some 'mad' persons of Africa's streets may be socially productive.

Zeitlyn's contribution assesses cultural representations of intimacy, focusing on studio photographs that evoke romance and friendship. They were taken by the Cameroonian photographer Jacques Toussele during and after the uprising of the UPC in Cameroon, which was violently suppressed by the newly independent government with the help of the former French colonial power. Zeitlyn's contextualized interpretation of these photographs allows us to 'see' the invisible and grasp the otherwise omnipresent violence precisely through its visual absence. Toussele's photographs, showing friends, lovers and families in various displays of intimacy and taken in the context of a decades-long armed struggle, Zeitlyn argues, were documents of achievements. Building on Trouillot's (1995) notion of archival silence, he advances the 'invisible' as a way to think about the incompleteness of visual archives, practices of exclusion and methodologies to excavate the hidden. At the same time, Zeitlyn twists existing research on archival silences by focusing on absences not created by the colonial administration and that can be read as manifestations of resistance rather than oppression. Building on existing works on colonial counter-modernities – the use of French or Western dress, music and performance as an expression of choice and freedom (cf. Behrend 2002; Argenti 2007; Terretta 2013) – Zeitlyn argues that the photographs document aspirations to a cosmopolitan lifestyle and its insignia, such as minidresses and flared trousers, as forms of 'ordinary modernity'.

Conclusion

From their individual vantage points, our articles advance recent scholarship on shared experiences, intimacy and emotions by systematically integrating the question of colonial and postcolonial violence. At the same time, they take historical and anthropological scholarship on violence to unforeseen places by using intimacy as an entry point to analyse violence. The articles assembled in this special issue thus advance recent work on intimacy in the wake of European colonialism and imperialism in Africa. In addition, they contribute to the growing body of Africanist and imperial history scholarship on violence in colonial and postcolonial contexts by approaching it from the perspective of the intimate. Violently enforced intimacy was a core instrument of colonial oppression. However, intimacy offered refuge from

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violent colonial oppression, while also exposing the fragility of colonial hierarchies, by blurring the boundaries between colonizer and colonized.

For the German farmer Carl Schlettwein, introduced at the beginning of this introduction, violence was a means to produce a form of paternalistic closeness for the sake of economic extraction. As Schlettwein advised the readers of his 1907 guidebook, deploying the 'right amount' of violence allowed settler farmers to impose themselves as masters and to exploit the labour of their African farm servants. This was, therefore, not a distanced form of economic exploitation, but one that, on the contrary, hinged on affect and proximity. Violently punishing farm servants, so Schlettwein believed, enforced close relationships based on fear as well as on respect. In a similar fashion, colonial policemen and mine labourers used intimate violence as means of oppression and control. As the archival material presented by Muschalek and Herzog highlights, men of various backgrounds sexually harassed and raped African women to enforce their ideas of the patriarchal social order.

For Africans, intimate relations presented a means to protect themselves from, or cope with, colonial violence, as seen in the example of Susanna Matroos and the care she provided for her severely wounded husband, after he had been flogged by white farmers. Washing and lubricating the swollen and sore parts of his body, she tended to her husband's wounds, while also helping him to escape his violent workplace by carrying him to another settlement. Similar instances of providing and seeking intimate care in a violent setting are reflected in Hunt's ethnographic portraits, while the studio photographs discussed by Zeitlyn celebrate friendship, love and affection in times of bloody conflict.

Interpreting intimacy as both an affective relationship and scale of analysis, we highlight its inherent ambivalence. Colonial hierarchies of race and gender were crucially produced on the level of the intimate. Power was not only won on the battlefield; it was also established through cruel floggings of farmworkers, the rape of domestic servants or police harassment. Everyday practices of violence helped differentiate colonizer from colonized, master from servant, white from black, and men from women. At the same time, intimate relations could offer refuge and healing, cross boundaries of class, race and gender, and expose the precariousness of colonial modernity. Thus, despite the pervasive violence of any colonial and most postcolonial situations, it is important for scholars to track clues, seek out traces and note the localizations of intimacy in African settings, whether enwrapped in marital relations, rape or forms of madness. To do so complicates what we know about colonial and postcolonial experiences of violence through attention to familiarity, fraught relations and love.

In future research, such complications could involve further small and everyday sites, including worksites, transport infrastructure, or hospitals and other care-giving institutions, as well as a wider array of geographic areas. Broader, comparative perspectives would then allow us to identify the ways in which different forms of colonial rule and economic exploitation created specific dynamics of intimacy and violence. Moreover, we still know little about the ways in which experiences and practices of violence and intimacy have changed over time, throughout periods of colonial oppression, anti-colonial resistance, and post-independence turmoil. This special issue attempts to lay the basis for future work on these and other issues

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connected to the intricate interplay of intimacy and violence, opening up new avenues of research, and deepening our understanding of Africa's (violent) transformation from colonial rule to the independence era.

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