Second Chapter

Between Art and Atrocity: Epistemic Multiplications
and Standardization (1885-1945)

First, we were informed that Africa, as a country, for the most part, was a dry barren, sterile desert of shifting sands. Now, Stanley comes out and informs us that Africa is the richest of all the continents.

Then again, we were told by old geographers that it was largely unwatered. But we are now told by later authorities that the same country abounds with lakes and rivers, and that these are among the largest in the world. As for its people, we were told that they were simply a lot of dwarfs, abnormally constituted, with heads, arms and feet peculiarly different from those of other peoples. But now we are told, with, as it were, bated breath of astonishment, that there are men stalwart and beautifully formed, brave and warlike, in Africa. Which of these statements shall we receive as true?

HARVEY JOHNSON/"THE QUESTION OF RACE" 1891

TEXTUAL PLURALIZATION AND THE DAWN OF NEW EPISTEMOLOGIES: AN INTRODUCTION

Harvey Johnson, the African American Baptist minister from Baltimore, wrote these words in a pamphlet responding to derogatory comments on the "black race" by William Cabell Bruce – a U.S. Senator and the infamous author of the racist monograph The Negro Problem (1891). Here, taking up discussions of the Bible,

Africa, and the slave trade, Johnson forcefully refuted Bruce's claim of "the superiority of the white to the colored race" (Johnson 1891: 6). One of his arguments in defense of the "colored race" is alluded to in the passage above, which discussed the uncertainty and changeability of white knowledge about Africa. Explorers such as Henry Morgan Stanley proved, according to Johnson, that the history and geography of Africa as it "has come down to us from the 'kith and kin' of the white man" (ibid: 9) was far from stable, objective, or accurate. Instead, Johnson saw "a vast array of misrepresentations, and historical, geographical and ethnological contradictions" (ibid). Was Africa a desert, he asked? Or was it a watery region? Were its people abnormal and loathsome, or quite the opposite? "Which of these statements shall we receive as true?" (ibid).

Read superficially, Johnson seems to have addressed Africa as a whole in this passage. His readers, however, would have understood that he was implicitly differentiating between regions. Through terms such as "Stanley" and the "rich" and watery country (that "abounds with lakes and rivers" which are "amongst the largest in the world"; ibid), the Congo region silently surfaces here as a separate geography. Johnson confirms this a few lines later when he discusses "the language of the African". Whereas it was previously held that Africans "had no language that was above the gabble of the goose" (ibid), there had clearly been some developments on that account: "Now, Dr. Grattan Guinness says he has found in the Congo and Soudan countries, languages having as many as forty tenses to the verb." These forty tenses meant to Johnson "forty modes of expressing one's thought" (ibid).

Johnson's pamphlet echoes the old adage "the more things change, the more they remain the same". The epigraph, in other words, reflects both the great stability and malleability of (African) American Congo discourses. Johnson's pamphlet indicates that the pre-colonial imagery of the Congo (as a "watery" region; cf. previous chapter) had been both transferred to and altered in the colonial context. What had changed, in contrast to precolonial times, was the more positive depiction of the Congolese, as well as Johnson's recognition that the Congo constituted a historically contingent signifier in dire need of epistemic critique. Precolonial Black historians, in comparison, hardly engaged in oppositional epistemic meta-thought; they shifted from one hegemonic Congo meaning to the next and did not express much doubt about those they employed. The Congo-as-Slave was silently replaced by the Congo-as-Savage in the late 1870s, a shift that hardly any African American intellectual cared to address. The epigraph here by Johnson suggests that this monolithic trait of the Congo discourse – moving from one coherent topos to the next – was beginning to be viewed critically at the dawn of the colonial era.

Was Johnson's representation of the Congo the exception to the Congoist rule? Or did he constitute the avant-garde of those adhering to a new set of discursive rules, potentially anti-Congoist, in African American intellectual Congo rhetoric? Was he, in other words, inaugurating the dawn of a rhetoric that was more meta-reflective, affirmative, and oriented toward the epistemic? This chapter attempts to answer these questions by identifying the leading Congo topoi in the texts of publicly active (African) American intellectuals in the heyday of colonialism (historians and journalists specifically), that is the period between 1885 and 1945. The function of the discursive Congo motifs will be analyzed by addressing the events that triggered them, discussing the epistemologies from which they stem, and by tracing the rise, evolution, and disappearance of these topoi and epistemologies. To avoid redundancies with regard to the previous chapter, this chapter discusses some of the methodical differences between itself and the rest of the work, rather than rehashing what has already been laid out in detail in the Introduction and the First Chapter.

This chapter begins with a contextualization, considered broadly, of Congo discourse in the U.S. from 1885 to 1945. Against the background of a ruthless intellectual and material onslaught against Black people on a global scale, the proliferation of Congo meanings is discussed. The chapter also takes as its subject how this onslaught was triggered and rationalized by Social Darwinian theory, exemplified by its opposite intellectual poles, Arthur de Gobineau and Franz Boas, and how its genocidal effects were rhetorically opposed and lamented in strikingly similar ways. Euro-American authors and activists who called international attention to the bloody rubber trade in the Congo Free State (such as E.D. Morel and Joseph Conrad) utilized rhetoric similar to that of Black American intellectuals, decrying the lynching epidemic in the American South, as the work of Ida B. Wells-Barnett and James Weldon Johnson demonstrates.

The existence of mutually shared, oppositional tropes, such as "redness", "horror", or "civilized barbarism", gestures towards the existence of a language shared by Black and white intellectuals. Did they share Social Darwinian arguments, too? In an age of perpetually discussed economic crises, accompanied by waves of internal and external migration and deepening social stratification, supremacist thought claiming a superior Anglo-Saxon or African American "stock" could indeed have proven particularly useful for securing one's own social status on the ladder of "civilization". This chapter asks whether, parallel to securing internal privileges, Social Darwinian thought could have also been considered a useful intellectual tool for the imperialist "open door" policies of the United States. It investigates, as well, how

Social Darwinism may have served to justify civilizing missions performed by both Black and white missionaries.

The contextualization performed in this chapter underscores, once again, the dialectics of African American history: When anti-Black oppression grew, opposition against it mounted correspondingly. Heightened activity in the political, journalistic, missionary, and artistic arenas – coined in those days as the emergence of the "New Negro" – led to an amount of textual production far exceeding previous periods. This proliferation of African American intellectual texts has proved as much an opportunity as a hurdle to overcome in this chapter. On the one hand, this explosion of texts has allowed for a detailed content analysis to be conducted based largely on primary sources. As white and Black Americans increasingly addressed their relationship to one another more directly and discussed their shared interest in the Congo, the interconnections between discourse and social structures can be established more easily in the language and terms employed by the intellectuals of the period (this is in contrast to the heavier reliance on secondary texts in the contextualization of the previous chapter). On the other hand, the sheer volume of primary texts necessitated reducing an oversized corpus to manageable proportions. To solve this problem, African American historians are once again taken as a starting point for analysis, ranging from William Alexander's 1888 History of the Colored Race in America and Booker T. Washington's 1907 The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery to Leila Amos Pendleton's 1912 A Narrative of the Negro, James Weldon Johnson's 1927 Native African Races and Culture, and Carter Woodson's 1936 The African Background Outlined.

These works of history are once again approached through both "wide reading" and "close reading". This chapter thus moves constantly back and forth between the broad Black American "archive" – containing journalistic, poetic, and historical texts – and individual works of history (cf. the Introduction and the First Chapter for a discussion of these terms). The discursive events were filtered in order to demarcate what could and could not be said about the Congo. In this wide reading, four discursive events returned systematically: (one) African American missionaries in the Congo, (two) atrocities in the Congo Free State, (three) Belgian colonialism, and (four) the ethnic art and culture of the Congo. Given the increased text production within intellectual African American circles, this chapter asks whether some of these events are evoked more easily in certain texts than in others. It investigates, moreover, whether the high volume of African American texts produced led to competing Congoes, and, if so, what these signified.

These questions are answered by comparing statements made by historians on the Congo both to those of other historians and to "counterpoints" within other text

genres (cf. the Introduction for a discussion of "counterpoints"). In this way, the particularity, selectivity, and ideological interests of these works are identified. Newspapers such as The Christian Recorder, The Chicago Defender, and The Colored American Magazine are here considered counterpoints to the works of history, along with the works of authors such as Langston Hughes, Jessie Redmon, Claude McKay, and George Schuyler. Black missionaries, including Clinton Boone, William Sheppard, and Charles Smith, round off this contrapuntal reading, which ultimately highlights the intertextual trajectories and circulation of ideas between missionaries, historians, artists, and journalists. At the same time, the silences in the texts raises the question of why these exist. For instance, amidst a flood of information in white media on the Congo "atrocities" in the Congo Free State, both Black historians and journalists remained mute on the issue, despite the activism of groundbreaking Black historians like George Washington Williams and African American intellectual gatekeepers like Booker T. Washington. This chapter attempts to find out why this was the case.

Through a "close reading", the particular textual representations of Central West Africa are discussed. As in the previous chapter, the characterization of and language used to describe the people, geography, and history of the Congo are the main analytic points of interest. The language and figures of speech used in these depictions are condensed into four topoi that regulate the overall Congo discourse in the time period under scrutiny: namely "the Congo-as-Darkness", "the Congo-as-Example", "the Congo-as-the-Vital", and "the Congo-as-Resource". These topoi demand the discussion of the truth-generating epistemologies from which they emerged and drew their authority. They also raise larger questions: To what extent did the sum total of these discursive events, topoi, argumentative strategies, and epistemologies constitute a colonial-style "Congoism"? Did discourse between 1880 and 1945 once again create a Black (sub)geography and (sub)persona called Congo, as it had in the previous century? Or were new, more critical times, spearheaded by Harvey Johnson and others, to come?

SUPREMACY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: SOCIAL DARWINISM IN THE AGE OF COMPETITION AND GENOCIDE

The Age of Competition

The period between 1885 and 1945 was marked by a succession of structural economic crises, leading up to the stock market crash of 1929, which brought the

American and European economy to a decade-long standstill and set off what later would be labeled the "Great Depression" (Zinn 2003: 286). Although this crisis was more disastrous than its predecessors – closing down about 5.000 banks, cutting industrial production in half, and putting one third of the labor force out of work (ibid: 287) – it was only a sign of how "fundamentally unsound" the global economy had become, to quote John Galbraith (2009: 177).[1] A popular, non-governmental response to the "unsoundness" of increasingly unstable global capitalist markets and the misery caused by them was mass migration (Hobsbawm 1991: 36). People from what is today Russia, Italy, the Balkans, and Greece poured into the United States at an even faster rate than the Irish and Germans had in the preceding decades. About five and a half million newcomers entered the United States in the 1880s, and another four million in the 1890s (Zinn 2003: 266). By 1920, which saw the rise of anti-immigration campaiging that put a "national origins quota" in place (which favored English, Irish, German, and Scandinavian "races" over those from Southern and Eastern Europe, Gossett 1997: 406),[2] more than 14 million had migrated to the United States (ibid: 382).

White and Black American intellectuals alike were alarmed by these waves of migration. The 1905 monograph Italian in America warned in its preface that "no concern of this country is more momentous and urgent than the national dealing with the problems of immigration" (Lord/Trenor/Barrows 1905: n.p.). The problem, according to the authors, boiled down to "congestion, distribution and education" (ibid), through which "American laborers" were "crowd[ed] out" from "avenues of employment" (ibid: 18). Contemporary authors predicted what Howard Zinn refers to as "desperate economic competition" (Zinn 2003: 265), especially amongst the have-nots. Southern and Eastern Europeans, contemporary authors feared, set in motion a wage race to the bottom that the more vocal American-born workers could not win. Frank Julian Warne's 1904 monograph The Slav Invasion and the Mine Workers described immigration as a "tremendous influence upon labor conditions" (1904: 39) in the anthracite coal fields of Pennsylvania. English-speaking immigrants (such as the Irish) were increasingly unwanted, according to Warne, since they were considered an "easily excited race, quick to resent oppression, whether real or imaginary [...] the Irish have been the leaders, or agitators, of every labor or-

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1   This "unsoundness" had already caused an economic crash in 1893, driving one in four Americans into unemployment (Zinn 2003: 277). As early as 1888, industrialization resulted in what was perceived by contemporary economists and businessmen as a prolonged "depression of prices, a depression of interests, and a depression of profits" (qtd. in Hobsbawm 1991: 36).

2   These quotas were legislated through the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924.

ganization" (ibid: 54). Warne predicted that immigrants could be used as strike-breakers, thereby undermining the increasingly organized and politicized American workers.[3]

Quite often, intellectuals of those days actively favored native-born Americans over the foreign newcomers. The influential African American intellectual Booker T. Washington, for instance, advocated the use of African American workers, not those "of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits" (2011: 207). Home-grown workers and not foreigners should be used to expand the "prosperity of the South", as he told his audience in the famous "Atlanta Exposition" in 1895 (ibid). Southern business leaders should "cast down their bucket" at home by relying on local and cheap Black labor, according to Washington. These workers would not be prone to "strikes and labour wars", Washington promised (ibid).

Black workers did not adhere to Washington's stay-at-home advice, though. Mass internal migration by African Americans was a central component of American history of that period. This served to further heighten the sense of competition for employment in the United States. Although an overwhelming number of Blacks – 90 percent of the six and a half million in the country – made their homes in the South after the Civil War (Bair 2005: 3), a massive exodus from Southern rural regions into urban areas in the North gained momentum in the 1880s. In his ground-breaking 1899 sociological study The Philadelphia Negro (one of the first academic studies by a Black American), W.E.B. Du Bois estimated that "the majority of the present immigrants arrived since 1887, and nearly 30 per cent since 1892" (1899: 79). These internal movements intensified during and after World War I, a period defined by the "Great Migration" to Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland, New York, and Pittsburgh. This mass relocation of 500.000 Black Southerners from 1916 to 1919, and another million during the 1920s (Bair 2005: 108), continued during the "Great Depression". As late as 1944, as indicated by Gunnar Myrdal's monumental An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, "Negroes ha[d] not stopped coming to the urban North" (1944: 189). The work did note, however, that this was not to the "same extent as during the period of the World War and the 1920's" (ibid: 197).

Many incentives to "push" out of the South, as well as "pull" factors from the North, led to "accumulated migration potentialities", Myrdal noted (ibid: 193). Whereas Southern white, supremacist contemporaries considered migration to be the "negro's character" (Grossman 2005: 73), Myrdal stressed economic and social

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3   In the peak year of 1886, 500,000 workers actively participated in strikes, who used their power in numbers to unionize and to advocate labor reform (Zinn 2003: 265, 273-74; Hofstadter 1993: 105).

factors. These included, amongst others, the relocation of the cotton industry from South to West, drought, and the "infiltration of whites into the types of work formerly monopolized by Negroes" (1944: 193). At the same time, increased employment opportunities offered by industrial expansion and an enlarged service sector pulled Blacks to the North. Once there, these Blacks would be pitted against other immigrants in a ruthless low-wage competition. "In many places," as Myrdal noted regarding the early 19th century, "it was a fashion among the wealthy to hire Negroes as servants in preference to European immigrants [...] many middle class whites also come to prefer Negroes – largely because they did not object to the hardest work and did not expect much in wages" (ibid: 191-192). The economic battle between Black and white immigrants frequently had the opposite outcome, as well, as Du Bois observed regarding the Philadelphia barber market.[4] A second important pull factor for Black migration to the North, as Myrdal suggested, "came from the big industries when white workers went out on strike" (ibid: 192). As usual, however, the "industrial employers found their demand for unskilled labor well filled by European immigrants. The workers themselves often resented Negro competition" (ibid: 192-193).

The influx of thousands of Black and white migrants in such a brief period not only greatly complicated the existing labor market, but also the general living and housing conditions in Philadelphia, Chicago, and other fast-growing urban centers (Tuttle 1970: 106). This led to over-crowded environments in quickly expanding urban centers – of which the "slums" of the 7th Ward in Philadelphia at the turn of the century and the rat-infested cellars of Harlem in the mid-20th century serve as prominent examples (cf. Du Bois 1899: 81; Zinn 2003: 404). These dense living environments would eventually become hotbeds for a variety of Black expression – musical, visual, and political – through which the gravity of African American culture shifted increasingly from the South to Northern cities (Grossman 2005: 108). Subsequent sections will return to this point, especially within the context of the Harlem Renaissance, a movement that deeply marked the cultural signifier Congo.

Against the background of an unsound and crisis-ridden global economy that continuously triggered mass political mobilization, mass migration, and ruthless economic competition, Euro-American "imperialism" and "colonialism"[5] blos-

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4   Blacks withdrew increasingly from this profession due to the "competition of German and Italian barbers [who] cut down the customary prices and some of them found business co-operation and encouragement which Negroes could not hope for" (Du Bois 1899: 116).

5   "Imperialism" denotes here the practice and theory of a dominating metropolitan center that rules a distant territory in order to control both the labor and resources of the latter;

somed, itself strongly driven by the idea of economic and nationalistic competition. Between 1880 and 1914, most of the world outside Europe and the U.S. was partitioned into territories under the formal rule or informal political domination of a handful of states (Hobsbawm 1991: 57), of which the Congo Free State was but one of many examples. The U.S., which, from its early beginnings, might be considered an imperial power because of its pattern of ongoing expansion and foreign intervention (Pease 1993: 22), followed the imperial trend of dominating overseas markets against competing industrial economies (Hobsbawm 1991: 67; Zinn 2003: 313). In the wake of the 1898 Spanish-American war over Cuba, the remnants of the old Spanish empire were annexed (the first "victim" of the process of slicing up the world into new chunks) – including Puerto Rico, the Hawaiian Islands, Guam, and the Philippines (Hobsbawm 1991: 57). This expansion and intervention overseas had its internal equivalent in the annexation of Texas from the Mexicans (1845) and the massacre of Native Americans, for instance at Wounded Knee in 1890, which guaranteed access to the internal frontier (Zinn 2003: 126, 298).

Successive administrations in the U.S. strongly advocated an "open door" economic policy, through which America's rising economic strength could dominate large parts of the world via an "informal empire" (Zinn 2003: 301-302). Frequently, this policy led to an "imperial anticolonialism" (Sexton 2011: 5), which was anticolonial and philanthropic in theory, but deeply imperial and commerce-driven in practice – best illustrated by the "Monroe doctrine".[6] U.S. "imperial anticolonialism" and the politics of the "open door" determined the role of America in the foundation of the Congo Free State. On April 22, 1884, President Chester A. Arthur became the first head of state to recognize Leopold's claims on the Congo, after the king had obtained cessions from local Congo leaders through Henry Morgan Stanley and lobbied the U.S. government efficiently through Henry Shelton Sanford

"colonialism", in turn, designates the actual implanting of settlements on distant territory (see Said 1994: 8; Loomba 2005: 11; Seymour 2012: xiii).

6 Issued in 1823, when the countries of Latin America were winning independence from Spanish rule (Sexton 2011: 3), the Monroe doctrine made it clear to European countries that the United States considered the Western Hemisphere its "zone of influence" and no longer open to European colonization and political intervention (Sexton 2011: 3). While the doctrine proclaimed American opposition to European colonialism due to its own experience under British rule, there also lurked a strong American imperial ambition in it (ibid). As such, the Monroe doctrine opened the door for worldwide American "zones of influence" (Hobsbawm 1991: 57) – commercial and political – that were aggressively imposed on Latin America, China, and in the Caribbean, amongst other locations (Zinn 2003: 408-409).

(Füllberg-Stolberg 2003: 200-209). Through Arthur's recognition, Leopold's strategic position in acquiring his private empire in Central West Africa was decisively strengthened (ibid). Arthur decided to back Leopold after evaluating the claims of Leopold's International African Association (IAA) in a report titled "Occupation of the Congo Country in Africa", written by the influential Committee on Foreign Relations. The report collected the Congo evaluations of academics, diplomats, and travelers, many of whom were linked to pro-imperial institutions, such as the American Colonization Society (cf. previous chapter), the Chambers of Commerce of both Manchester and New York, and the IAA itself. A number of treaties with Congo chiefs are incorporated into the document, as well (signed with an "X", tellingly). The head of this Committee, Senator John Tyler Morgan, alluded to "open door" policy throughout the report (Congress of the United States of America 1884: 7):

After Stanley had made his journey of exploration of nearly 7,000 miles across the continent of Africa, and had revealed to the world the extent and importance of this great river Congo, all the great commercial nations at once began to look earnestly in that direction for a new and most inviting field of commerce, and with the high and noble purpose of opening it freely to the equal enjoyment of all nations alike. The merchants of Europe and America insist upon this equal and universal right of free trade with that country, and their chambers of commerce have earnestly pressed upon their respective governments the duty and necessity of such international agreements as would secure these blessings to the people of Africa and of the entire commercial world.

Given the importance for the U.S. of establishing an open commercial door to the Congo (discussed here as the "universal right of free trade"), the claims of the IAA and its successor, the Congo Free State, were favored over those of the protectionist Portuguese empire (ibid: 4). The IAA and Congo Free State, in other words, were viewed as more conducive to the economic and industrial interest of a U.S. attempting to gain the upper hand over European rivals in a crises-ridden capitalist system (Hobsbawm 1991: 45, 65). Portugal's tolerance of slavery (ibid: 7) rendered it unacceptable, as the capitalist, pro-colonial argument of the United States was systematically balanced by its moral opposition to slavery. As such, the colonization of the Congo would be a win-win situation, or a blessing to "the people of Africa and of the entire commercial world", as the report wrote (ibid: 7).

Anti-slavery rhetoric constituted an integral ideological part of Morgan's report,[7] which justified the subjugation of the Congolese and the reorganization of

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7 And the pro-colonial argument in general (see Grant 2005: 26).

their social, economic, and religious structures. In the name of a Euro-American civilization that rallied around anti-slavery (which it had practiced on a global scale for centuries itself; cf. previous chapter), the "50,000,000 people" of the Congo were soon to become "most useful factors in the increase of the productions of the earth and in swelling the volume of commerce" (ibid: 2). Ultimately, the open door politics of the United States – as well as its anti-slavery advocacy – were acknowledged at the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-1885.[8] Here, representatives from the United States actively helped to legitimize Leopold's claims and legalized the borders of his Congo Free State (Füllberg-Stolberg 2003: 210-216). True to its imperial anti-colonialist leanings, however, the U.S. never ratified the outcome of the conference (ibid: 225).

Imperialism has always been more than merely a way of securing the raw materials necessary to keep up with the rapidly developing technological and consumer innovations of the age – i.e. railroads, steamships, cars, and department stores (Hobsbawm 27-28). Amidst serious internal social upheaval and competition, it was also engaged in to diminish domestic discontent. Empire, as Hobsbawm reminds us in his seminal The Age of Empire: 1875-1914, has always been "social imperialism", as well (69), as it promises economic improvements funded by semi- or fully colonial dependents (Hobsbawm 1991: 64). In short, empire offered "glory rather than more costly reforms" (ibid: 70). In "Occupation of the Congo Country in Africa", the colonization of the Congo was discussed, for instance, as a solution to the internal "problem" of African Americans (Congress of the United States of America 1884: 7):

We owe it as a duty to our African population that we should endeavor to secure to them the right to freely return to their fatherland [...] looking to their re-establishment of their own country. The deportation of their ancestors from Africa in slavery was contrary to the now accepted canons of the laws of nations and now they may return under those laws to their natural inheritance.

In this quote, the Congo is openly imagined as the "potential dumping ground for both America's manufacturing surpluses and her unwanted blacks", as the head of the Committee, John Tyler Morgan, once phrased it (qtd. in Füllberg-Stolberg 2003: 209). Cast as a matter of doing right by those formerly enslaved, the interference in the Congo is again presented as a win-win situation. By sending "our African population" back to the Congo, white Americans could make up for slavery and for

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8   The conference was initiated by France and Germany with the aim of stimulating and securing free trade in the Congo region (Füllberg-Stolberg 2003: 211).

breaking "the now accepted canons of the laws of nations" (Congress of the United States of America 1884: 7). Black Americans, in turn, could resettle in their "fatherland", to which "they may return under those laws to their natural inheritance" (ibid). The categorization of Black Americans as "Africans" who live by "natural" laws (instead of "Americans" who live by the Constitution) demonstrates how the ideology of empire might appeal to white Americans. Because it tapped into and actively shaped the idea of white superiority and domination over Blacks, both at home and abroad (Hobsbawm 1991: 70), racism's place in 19th- and early 20th-century imperial thinking cannot be overemphasized (ibid: 252). Scientific racism and Social Darwinism in particular played a fundamental role in this process, as is show in the following section.

Supremacy in Theory

In order to explain and defend their privileged position and advocate investment in global imperialism, the white American bourgeoisie actively incorporated bits and pieces from a heterogeneous corpus of scientific and pseudo-scientific texts which justified the belief in their own racial superiority. This corpus, usually labeled "scientific racism" in contemporary research, drew from anthropology, history, and sociology, among other disciplines, to construct human typologies and divide these into "races" with a set of fixed positive or negative traits, or often a combination thereof (During 2005: 161-163). Within this context, "Social Darwinism" (as those in the 19th century referred to it, too) was the leading theory; it was explicitly invoked and systematically drawn from for more than a generation, as Richard Hofstadter shows (1993: 4).

In comparison to its reception in England, Social Darwinism was eagerly and sympathetically received in the United States (ibid: 22-25). In the late 19th century, it was imperative for intellectuals to master the basics of Herbert Spencer's theoretical approach to humankind – even more so than in the previous decades (in which Darwinian thought was clearly gaining traction, as explained in the previous chapter). Spencer applied Darwin's evolutionary theory to the social arena (ibid: 33) and exerted a decisive influence on the founders of American sociology, psychology, ethnology, and ethics, in addition to deeply affecting both Marxist and liberal thought (ibid: 143, 116). Books by Social Darwinian adepts and advocates of Spencer's work enjoyed bestseller status in the United States by the turn of the century (ibid: 33-34), testifying to Social Darwinism as the leading intellectual stream in American thought during this time.

What did Social Darwinism mean to U.S. intellectuals at the turn of the century? A 1907 essay dedicated to Social Darwinism by Dartmouth College sociology professor Collin D. Wells provides at least one idea. By Social Darwinism, a term the author used explicitly, Wells understood the "general doctrine of the gradual appearance of new forms through variation; the struggle of superabundant forms; the elimination of those poorly fitted, to the given environment; and the maintenance of racial efficiency only by incessant struggle and ruthless elimination" (Wells 1907: 695). Through the notion of "gradual appearance of new forms through variation", Wells highlighted Social Darwinism's conception of American society as a slow-moving natural organism (cf. Hofstadter 1993: 7). Despite being a sociologist who grappled with the connection between biological and social factors (such as education and alcohol), Wells did not doubt that biology trumped social environment in his favorable summary of Social Darwinism.

This winner-takes-all philosophy befitted the age of competition. In terms of politics, Social Darwinism was deeply classist. As a theory, it was as if tailor-made to safeguard the bank accounts and the everyday privileges of the white bourgeoisie, as well as to deal with the "practical problem" of geographical and social movement in the U.S., that is, of Black and white mass migration (see Gossett 1997: 174). The perceived challenges that went along with this social fact – criminality, pauperism, and ghettoization (ibid: 155) – were thus explained by hereditary inferiority. Social Darwinism was thus mobilized systematically against the variety of forces that might disrupt the bourgeois status quo. As social life was framed as a "struggle" for the "survival of the physical units that are competing" (Wells 1907: 702), the losers of this struggle, along with their genes, were themselves to blame. Advocates of those not belonging to the bourgeoisie were dismissed as a danger to the "race". Socialism, as well as trade-unionism, were considered by Wells "aberrant, and it is to be hoped temporary, manifestations [since] these tend to afford an equal chance of survival and of parenthood to the incapable and weak" (ibid). Taxation was also questioned by Wells because he perceived it as having a negative "effect upon vital phenomena" (ibid: 703). The categorical repudiation of state interference in the "organic" growth of society had led advocates of Herbert Spencer's work to oppose all state aid to the poor, deeming them unworthy of attention that might slow their elimination (Hofstadter 1993: 41). Although generally dressed up in lofty scientific rhetoric – "gradual appearance", "superabundant forms", "racial efficiency", and so forth (as showed through the example of Wells) – Social Darwinian language continuously broke down into more blatantly genocidal language such as "ruthless elimination", including comments as "each species is the food of

others" (Wells 1907: 695) and "those poorly adapted to their life-conditions are eliminated" (ibid: 696).

It is important to note that, although the idea of racial inferiority gained broad legitimacy and considerable strength from Social Darwinism, it did not depend on it. Claims of racial inferiority circulated widely in the pre-Social Darwinian debates surrounding slavery and warfare against Native Americans throughout the 19th century (Hofstadter 1993: 171), as alluded to in the last chapter. This kind of racism found official sanction through concepts such as "manifest destiny", which emphasized the virtues of the American people and their institutions and highlighted America's mission to redeem and remake the world in the the special image of America under God's direction. The idea of manifest destiny was ultimately connected to Social Darwinism in the late 19th century, allowing Anglo-Saxon racial superiority to truly "obsess […] many American thinkers in the latter half of the 19th century" (ibid: 174-175).

Arthur de Gobineau's Inequality of Human Races must be considered as an influential early pamphlet in the remarkable career of Social Darwinism. As Stephen Jay Gould describes it, Inequality of Human Races turned the French aristocrat into "the most influential academic racist of the 19th century" (Gould 2014: 379). This pamphlet, written before Darwin's seminal works, exerted considerable influence in the U.S., too, and will be taken up in what follows as a way to measure the Social Darwinian influence on white and Black intellectuals. Re-published in the United States in the early 20th century when the immigration question arose, it was in fact originally translated and published half a century earlier (its first translated edition ran from 1853-1856, almost immediately after its original French version appeared; cf. Gossett 1997: 352).

Inequality of Human Races explained to its readers that the fate of civilizations is generally determined by the purity of the races that compose them; their decline and fall are attributable to dilution of "pure" stocks by interbreeding. De Gobineau divided the human species hierarchically into three types, "the black, the yellow, and the white" (1915: 152). Whereas the "negroid variety" is located at the bottom of the human ladder, whites, considered broadly, are positioned at its height. Among the latter group, de Gobineau differentiated between the various white "races", too, which are "as unequal in strength as they are in beauty" (ibid: 191). On his "descending scale" of whites, all of whom are assigned an essential and "special character" (ibid), de Gobineau placed the English, French, and Germans at the top, due to their "strength of fist" (ibid: 152). The "nameless mixture of Italians and other Latin races", were put near its bottom (ibid: 93), despite the redeeming fact that they were considered slightly more beautiful than the Germans (ibid: 152).

By dividing the white race along these lines, de Gobineau provided ready-made arguments for American anti-immigration activists. The ongoing disparagement of Italians as an inferior subgroup of the white race by American-born elites serves as a case in point. In Italian in America, a monograph written in defense of Italian immigration by three civil servants from the Census and Prison Department/The Immigration Committee (Lord, Trenor, and Barrows), the objections against labor congestion and slumification raised against Italian immigrants were critically discussed. These objections, according to Lord, Trenor, and Barrows, had been "amplified and more bluntly and bitterly urged in a current outcry against Italian immigration" (1905: 17).

The authors then examined this anti-Italian discourse in detail, identifying and explaining the rhetoric and rationale behind this "outcry" (ibid). At this point, the impact of Social Darwinian thinking on the prejudice of the time is revealed: "It is urged that the Italian race stock is inferior and degraded; that it will not assimilate naturally or readily with the prevailing 'Anglo-Saxon' race stock of this country" (ibid: 18). On top of that, the authors noted that opponents of Italian migration sought to prevent "intermixture", as this was said to "be detrimental" due to the Italian's "servility, filthy habits of life, and a hopelessly degraded standard of needs and ambitions" from centuries "of oppression and abject poverty" (ibid). This led, according to the authors' opponents, to the inability of the immigrants to espouse "any adequate appreciation of our free institutions and the privileges and duties of citizenship" as they "are illiterate and likely to remain so" and thus will "inevitably lower the American standard of living and labor and citizenship" (ibid). Many of de Gobineau's central ideas were mobilized against Italian immigrant communities here. Italians were painted as hopelessly inferior in terms of their intelligence, citizenship, and predilection to progress, and therefore their "hopelessly degraded standard of needs and ambitions" were well-deserved. Their presence was depicted as a danger to the Anglo-Saxon "race stock". Against this background of Italian inferiority and Anglo-Saxon superiority, the "wide-ranging exclusion" (ibid) of the former by the latter seemed inevitable.

De Gobineau's tendency to pitch one "inferior" group against another provided a white American supremacist bourgeoisie with powerful munition against white migrants and African Americans alike. In a striking passage of The Inequality of Human Races, de Gobineau compared Italians to "young mulattoes who have been educated in London or Paris" (1915: 191) in order to illustrate that nature always trumps nurture. Although the educated "mulattoes" may show a certain "veneer of culture superior to that of some Southern Italian peoples, who are in point of merit infinitely higher", they can never actually surpass them. "Once a mulatto, always a

mulatto", de Gobineau maintained (ibid). As a product of "intermixture", "mulat-toes" constituted the worst-case scenario within a framework that went to great lengths to promote the preservation of pure race stocks.

This mixing was considered particularly dire by de Gobineau because he viewed the so-called black race in almost entirely negative terms. He states, for instance, that "the animal character, that appears in the shape of the pelvis, is stamped on the negro from birth, and foreshadows his destiny" (ibid: 205). For the author, the Black's intellectual abilities are low and "will always move within a very narrow circle" (ibid). Despite his "dull or even non-existent" intelligence, a Black man is, however, no "mere brute, for behind his low receding brow, in the middle of his skull, we can see signs of a powerful energy, however crude its objects" (ibid).

The quality that makes this Black man less useless is thus "intensity of desire, and so of will, which may be called terrible. Many of his senses, especially taste and smell, are developed to an extent unknown to the other two races. The very strength of his sensations is the most striking proof of his inferiority" (ibid). This inferiority leads him to be "careless of his own life and that of others: he kills willingly, for the sake of killing; and this human machine, in whom it is so easy to arouse emotion, shows, in face of suffering, either a monstrous indifference or a cowardice that seeks a voluntary refuge in death" (ibid). Throughout this passage, de Gobineau transforms Blacks into simple-minded, murderous, morally defective "human machine[s]" that are, in essence, the exact opposite of whites.[9] As a true

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9 This, for instance, is how de Gobineau discussed white people in The Inequality of Human Races: "We come now to the white peoples. These are gifted with reflective energy, or rather with an energetic intelligence. They have a feeling for utility, but in a sense far wider and higher, more courageous and ideal, than the yellow races; a perseverance that takes account of obstacles and ultimately finds a means of overcoming them; a greater physical power, an extraordinary instinct for order, not merely as a guarantee of peace and tranquillity [sic], but as an indispensable means of self-preservation. At the same time, they have a remarkable, and even extreme, love of liberty, and are openly hostile to the formalism under which the Chinese are glad to vegetate, as well as to the strict despotism which is the only way of governing the negro. The white races are, further, distinguished by an extraordinary attachment to life. They know better how to use it, and so, as it would seem, set a greater price on it; both in their own persons and those of others, they are more sparing of life. When they are cruel, they are conscious of their cruelty; it is very doubtful whether such a consciousness exists in the negro. At the same time, they have discovered reasons why they should surrender this busy life of theirs, that is so precious to them. The principal motive is honour [sic], which under various names has played an enormous part in the ideas of the race from the beginning. I need hardly add

Social Darwinian, albeit writing in pre-Darwinian times, de Gobineau came to his conclusion via biology. In other words, he diagnosed intellectual and sensual abilities by reading physical attributes: The shape of a pelvis, a receding brow, a skull. With his emphasis on Black physical characteristics, de Gobineau anticipates the popular eugenics movement of the 20th century.

De Gobineau's distinct notion of racial purity and Anglo-Saxon white supremacy clearly struck an enduring chord in the post-Reconstruction era of Jim Crow. His influence, along with Darwin's and Spencer's, cannot be overlooked in the avalanche of anti-Black books, such as Carroll's The Negro: A Beast (1900), Tillinghast's The Negro in Africa and America (1902), and Shufeldt's The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization (1907; cf. Gosset 1997: 280), all of which are highly sympathetic to these scientific racists. In The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization, for instance, one of the major arguments revolves around (white) racial purity. This is discussed against the background of the "sensual instinct" of Blacks, or their ongoing "copulat[ing] solely for the gratification of the passion – for the erotic pleasure it affords them" (Shufeldt 134). One can also find this argument in de Gobineau's assertion, referred to above, of the "strength of [a Black's] sensations" (1915: 205).

In the same vein as de Gobineau and other Social Darwinian anti-Black thinkers, The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization contains frequent and overt calls to violent action. "To sustain a high standard of morals and refined ethics," the argument goes, "we must rid ourselves of the source of the immorality, of the cause of our retrogradation in good conduct with respect to the negro, this evidently remains for us to do. Suppression has never been known to eliminate or eradicate vice, or crime, therefore, we must, for the sake of mankind, resort to other means" (Shufeldt 1907: 123). One of the solutions was proposed a few pages later: "It would doubtless be a capital thing, if it could be done, to emasculate the entire negro race and all of its descendants in this country, and effectually stop the breed right now, and the horrors of their crossing continually with the Anglo-Saxon stock" (ibid: 145).

Although de Gobineau and his proponents insisted on denigrating the black race as a homogeneous whole, he indirectly produced a hierarchy within it. In comparing

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that the word honour, together with all the civilizing influences connoted by it, is unknown to both the yellow and the Black man. On the other hand, the immense superiority of the white peoples in the whole field of the intellect is balanced by an inferiority in the intensity of their sensations. In the world of the senses, the white man is far less gifted than the others, and so is less tempted and less absorbed by considerations of the body, although in physical structure he is far the most vigorous" (1915: 207).

the physique of the yellow, black, and white races, de Gobineau held up the charac-
ter of the "negro from the West Coast of Africa" (1915: 106) as prototypical for the
black race. His description recalls the phrenological Congo types discussed in the
last chapter: "[H]is colour is [...] entirely black; his hair [is] [...] thick, coarse, wool-
ly, and luxuriant" (ibid). Adding to this alleged aesthetic insult of "the self-love of
human kind" are the flatness of this "negro's" feet and hands, long bones, and a
lower jaw that "juts out" (ibid). "When we look for a moment at an individual of
this type," de Gobineau noted in his typically dehumanizing, anti-Black rhetoric,
"we are involuntarily reminded of the structure of the monkey" (ibid: 107). This
type of Black had a label: "Congo negro", who is only exceeded in including the
"most ugly, degraded, and repulsive specimens of the race" by the "Australian
tribes" (ibid).

Statements singling out and rejecting Congolese specifically can be found in
many Social Darwinian works. The Negro: A Beast illustrates the innate inability of
the black race to civilize by pointing to the "negro's facile relapses, as in the Congo
nation, into a state of abject barbarism" (Carroll 1900: 327). In The Negro: A Men-
ace to American Civilization, the same assumption is made for the sake of lambast-
ing Blacks in the United States: "Throughout the entire historic period of man's ca-
reer upon earth the chapter on the negro is practically a record of the lowest savage-
ry, soon lapsing back into mere tradition of wild and untutored tribes" (Shufeldt
1907: 42). The list of "negro" flaws was a long one, including "undiluted fetichism
[sic], with the worship of ancestors for a religion, coupled with torture, cruelty,
slavery and cannibalism, and a common belief in sorcery" (ibid). The model exam-
ple for this lowest savagery is found in the "Congo Basin", which must be "checked
by the presence of the European" (ibid). Because "many of these people see their
near relatives in the negroes of the United States" (ibid: 42), the message of The
Negro: A Menace to American Civilization was clear: As members of the same
race, African Americans were guilty of the same crimes Central West Africans had
supposedly committed throughout their history. As such, they must be kept in check
by white people (just as the Congolese needed to be controlled by Europeans).

The hegemony of militant Social Darwinian thought in the political arena was
undermined by the economic havoc it caused among the middle and working clas-
ses. Nothing is as unstable as economic success within a crisis-ridden capitalist
mode of production, it turned out, and nothing as malleable as the stance of people
whose livelihood is threatened by the menace of unchecked competition. As the
middle classes shrank in numbers under the laissez-faire economic and social poli-
cies of the day, so did the glorification of Social Darwinism (Gould 2014: 202).
"The figure of the great capitalist entrepreneur, hitherto heroic, lost much of its

glamour", Hofstadter notes (1993: 119). World War I dealt another serious blow to Social Darwinism when biological determinism, the rhetoric of superiority, and the expansionism of Germany required discrediting.

Despite these significant setbacks, by 1915 Social Darwinism had thoroughly pervaded American intellectual thought (ibid: 150) and served as the decisive inspiration for a new fad: Eugenics (ibid: 161). As a scientifically and politically motivated attempt to improve the quality of the original "racial stock" of Anglo-Saxons (ibid: 163), it became a major movement in the first half of the 20th century, particularly in 1920s Great Britain, Germany, and the U.S., whose efforts mutually influenced one another (Kühl 1994: 4). Although eugenics came in many political fractions, shapes, and forms (ibid: 84),[10] professors, legislators, and activists joined forces in their belief in genetically transmissible qualities (ibid: 4-5), which, as the story went, resulted in superior and inferior racial stocks. Like the followers of Social Darwinism, adherents of the eugenic mainstream argued that all of these races should be kept apart.

Academics critical of the biological determinism espoused by Social Darwinians and eugenicists struggled to liberate themselves from the theories, which held them in a tight stranglehold after World War I. Anthropologist Franz Boas's work in opposition to Social Darwinism is particularly revealing with regard to Social Darwinism's staying power. By questioning the hereditary and hierarchical premises of the academic mainstream, Boas stood at the vanguard of the scientific revolt against Social Darwinism (Gossett 1997: 423; Trotter 2005: 145). Specifically, he criticized the method of comparing cultures by standards foreign to them and advocated the examination of cultures on their own terms (Gossett 1997: 423).

More than the majority of white academics before him, Boas attempted to redefine the so-called "Negro problem" in the United States as a problem with the white majority and not the Black minority (Boas 1921: 273-278). Through his systematic attack on Darwinian dogma, many central African American intellectuals – ranging from W.E.B. Du Bois and Carter Woodson to Alain Locke and Zora Neale Hurston – corresponded and collaborated closely with him or sought his intellectual

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10 American immigration laws in the 20s (cf. above), which were designed to keep people from non-Northern European countries out of the United States, won special approval in Nazi Germany (Kühl 1994: 37-38). The same can be said about legislation for compulsory sterilization and euthanasia – starting as early as 1899 in Indiana and spreading rapidly from 1909 onward to California, New York, and Michigan – which forcibly affected 64,000 individuals, a majority of whom were Black women (Ward 1996: 95). Reform eugenics took over in the 30s, but the inherent belief in inferior and superior people remained intact (Kühl 1994: 84).

support in helping to counter racist attacks on their communities from a scientific point of view (Williams 1996: 37-54). It is telling that thinkers as different as Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois quoted him extensively in their seminal works The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery and The Negro.

While he did question the "degeneration" of the "pure stock" of Anglo-Saxons through its intermixture with other races, Boas's language and arguments remain marked by Social Darwinism's powerful orientation towards hierarchy (ibid: 4). His highly influential 1911 classic The Mind of Primitive Man[11] illustrates how Boas both critiques and reproduces the hegemony of Social Darwinian hierarchical thinking. On the one hand, Boas deconstructs at great length "the naive assumption of the superiority of the European nations and their descendants" (1921: 2). Differences, to Boas, should be explained in reference to "distinct economic, social, and other environmental conditions" (ibid: 40). Although openly opposing Spencer, de Gobineau, and other Social Darwinian thinkers vis-à-vis "the higher hereditary powers of the white race" (ibid: 100), in the end Boas does not abandon an essentialist and hierarchical framework. Rather, he reinforces the opposition between the inferior and superior: "The fact deserves attention that at present practically all the members of the white race participate to a greater or less degree in the advance of civilization, while in none of the other races has the civilization that has been attained at one time or another been able to reach all the tribes or peoples of the same race" (ibid: 10).

This inherent belief in the inferiority of non-white races reappears in his discussions of African Americans. Although "no proof could be given" of their inferiority (268), Boas nevertheless deems it possible that "perhaps the race would not produce quite so many men of highest genius as other races" (ibid). Boas returns to this point in his summary chapter, titled "Race Problems in the United States". "There is every reason to believe that the negro when given facility and opportunity, will be perfectly able to fulfill the duties of citizenship as well as his white neighbor" (ibid: 273), Boas notes. This relativist idea is followed, however, by a deeply hierarchical one: "It may be that he will not produce as many great men as the white race, and that his average achievement will not quite reach the level of the average achievement of the white race" (ibid), although he finishes by noting that "there will be endless numbers who will be able to outrun their white competitors, and who will do better than the defectives whom we permit to drag dawn and to retard the healthy children of our public schools" (ibid). By this point, if not prior to this, this linking of "race" and "health" indicates a return to Social Darwinian rhetoric.

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11 As its multiple revised editions attest, the wok remained highly relevant throughout the period between the World Wars.

Boas had no doubts that the average Black American could "fulfill the duties of citizenship as well as his white neighbor". At the same time, he did not expect them to produce "as many great men as the white race". He held on to this belief until his death (Williams 1996: 13). While lacking confidence in great Black men, Boas also doubted that the "average achievement" of Blacks could match that of the white race, although he did allow for the prospect of the black race doing better than the "defectives" who debilitate other "healthy" American children. Boas's reasoning thus collapses into the militant health and degeneration discourse of his days. This may also be seen in his discussion of the Congolese as the underbelly of the black race, i.e. "the pygmy Negro types", which formed "a separate division" (Boas 1921: 109).

This essential belief in the inferiority of the cultures under scrutiny persisted in the works of Boas's many influential pupils and collaborators, including Robert Lowie,[12] Melville Herskovits,[13] and Margaret Mead[14] – decisive thinkers in the fields of anthropology, as well as African and African American study departments in the U.S.

Supremacy in Action

Social Darwinian theory crucially informed practice, helping to advocate and justify the ongoing disenfranchisement, expropriation, and massacre of Black people on a global scale. This is demonstrated here by deaths in the United States from mob vi-

12 In the same vein as Mead, Robert Lowie's chapter on "Subsistence" in Boas's 1938 General Anthropology differentiates between "complex societies" and "simpler peoples" (1938: 282).

13 Herskovits, like Mead and Lowie, at first dismisses the favoring of one culture over the other in his 1941 The Myth of the Negro Past as "poor ethnology and poorer psychology" (1941: 296). This recognized, Herskovits argued, that many of the terms applied to African societies should be discarded. When examining "the cultures of West Africa, Senegal, and the Congo", however, Herskovits described them as "nonliterate, nonmachine societies" comparable "in many respects to Europe of the Middle Ages" (ibid).

14 Her bestselling Coming of Age in Samoa (1928) is particularly instructive in this regard. This influential work, with a foreword by Franz Boas, defined the method of the anthropologist as traveling to a "different civilisation and mak[ing] a study of human being under different cultural conditions in some other parts of the world" (1928: 7). Her insistence on framing the cultural conditions she found through the relativist term "different", however, did not stop her from discussing her subjects as "primitive peoples, whose society has never attained the complexity of our own" (ibid).

olence in the North and lynchings in the South, as well by the large numbers that died in Central West Africa from mutilation, starvation, or (imported) diseases in the wake of the region's forced entrance into global capitalist markets at the turn of the century (Hochschild 1998: 225-234). In the midst of global competition for resources to fire up Euro-American national economies (Hobsbawm 1991: 63), Social Darwinian ideas became imperial ones.

Tyler Morgan's report "Occupation of the Congo Country in Africa" (cf. section above) serves as one example of how the occupation by King Leopold was justified via the hegemonic narrative of hierarchy between peoples. "If the laws of Christian nations give any effect to the discovery by the subjects of a Christian power, of a country inhabited even by savages, they also require that discovery shall be followed by continuous subsequent occupation" (Congress of the United States of America 1885: 5), the document urges, distinguishing plainly between "Christian nations" and "savages". "If such occupation ceases," Tyler Morgan continues, "it is justly considered as being abandoned" (ibid). The reason for this perceived abandonment is, according to Morgan, that "the only foundation of reason or of justice" derives from those occupying it, not those that were already there. "It is," in Morgan's words, "better that the savages should have the advantages of Christian instruction and laws, than that they should continue in darkness to rule the country in their own way" (ibid). Through this official report by Morgan, Belgium received its blessing from the United States to occupy a vast region for the "benefit" of the Congolese, who were framed as "savages [who] should have the advantages of Christian instruction and laws" (ibid).

Despite its benevolent, diplomatic rhetoric, Social Darwinian thinking permeates the document, particularly the passage recommending Western intervention. It does so by imposing a hierarchy between superior Euro-American nations and the inferior Congolese, who, as soon as the Christians retreated from their country, would purportedly wander in a "darkness" devoid "of reason or of justice". Just how this "900,000 square miles of fertile territory and its 50,000,000 of people" should be turned into the "most useful factors in the increase of the productions of the earth and in swelling the volume of commerce" (ibid: 2) remained unaddressed throughout the report.

Friedrich Nietzsche, however, had foreshadowed how capitalism was to be imposed on Central West Africa. The German philosopher is noteworthy as a Euro-American intellectual who Black Americans knew, used, and discussed. Black American intellectuals loved to both loathe and embrace his writings. The discussion of the link between the German philosopher and Black America continues until today, as the essay collection Critical Affinities: Nietzsche and African American

Thought indicates. There is much truth in editor Gooding-Williams's assertion in his foreword to the volume that, at first sight, Nietzsche and Black America may seem like awkward bedfellows. "Let us assume that some of Nietzsche's writings express racialized colonialist fantasies," he begins. "Does it follow from this assumption that black and other progressives have no use for Nietzsche's writings except to castigate them?" (Gooding-Williams 2006: ix-x). Based on what was found within the scope of my own study in the African American newspaper archive, Black Americans did indeed find some value in the philosopher's thinking.

The Chicago Defender quoted him affirmatively, for instance, to condone the Black and white men in power in the mid-20th century, such as the Black Dean Kelly Miller and President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who were both considered redeemers of "accident unto order" – an adage explicitly linked to Nietzsche (e.g. 1940c: 14; 1940a: 14). Going back a few decades in The Chicago Defender's archive, however, Nietzsche was discussed quite differently. He stood "for a sullen, ivory tower thinker of hierarchy and the "materialistic 'superman'" (1915: 3). Nevertheless, it seems as if Nietzsche was not dismissed entirely. "All men are still divided as they ever have been, into bond and free," The Chicago Defender wrote, alluding to Nietzsche's binary thinking in another article, "whoever has not two-thirds of the day to himself is a slave, no matter what he may be otherwise – statesman, merchant, official or scholar – Nietzsche" (1912: 7).

As a philosopher of hierarchical oppositions (e.g. slave vs. free), Nietzsche was representative of the times in his intellectual treatment of colonized people. In The Will to Power, compiled and published posthumously from his notebooks between 1901 and 1910, the philosopher wrote: "What means one has to employ with rude peoples, and that 'barbarous' means are not arbitrary and capricious, becomes palpable in practice as soon as one is placed, with all one's European pampering, in the necessity of keeping control over barbarians, in the Congo or elsewhere" (1969: 487). Nietzsche's idea of "barbarous means" was echoed by prominent U.S. anthropologists actively involved in the eugenics-oriented Galton Society, such as Clark Wissler. He justified the superiority of the Nordic race by proudly declaring it comprised of the "wild untamed barbarians of Europe" – manifest in historical "conquest and pillage" (qtd. in Barkan 1992: 110).

Intellectuals more critical of the excessive violence in the colonies took up the idea of Euro-American barbarity, as well. Confronted with the ruthlessness of colonial policy, Edmund Dene Morel, for instance, crusaded against the Congo Free State by actively and critically taking up Nietzsche's idea of "'barbarous" means" in his seminal Red Rubber (1919: 192). Morel's work is worth a closer look, as it quite illustrative of how Social Darwinian disasters were discussed by white and

Black intellectuals alike: They not only employed similar tropes, but also followed common lines of reasoning.

Red Rubber was truly a groundbreaking account of the Congo Free State and raised mass awareness of the abuses of Leopold's regime. Although the book was an abridged version of Morel's major 1904 work, King's Leopold's Rule in Africa, its catchy title and accessible writing turned it into an instant bestseller (Cline 1981: 30). It became a powerful text in the struggle against the bloody ("red") economic and social realities of the Congo Free State. As the co-founder of the highly influential Congo Reform Association, which was active predominantly in Great Britain and the United States, where it attracted the support of major American intellectuals such as the writer Mark Twain, sociologist Robert E. Park, and educator Booker T. Washington (Dworkin 2003: 70, 112). Morel truly became the "chief propagandist of the crusade, but also its theoretician, strategist, and organizer" (Cline 1981: 30). In African American intellectual circles, Morel's major works and achievements were repeatedly lauded in newspapers such as The Chicago Defender. "A champion of justice to [the] Race", he was called in an eulogy on Nov 29, 1924 titled "Darker Races Lose Friend as Congo Hero Passes out" (1924:1).[15]

In its sixth and revised edition, Red Rubber described the "civilised barbarism" (Morel 1919: 76, 192) of the Congo Free State in the period between 1890 and 1910. "Barbarous", however, meant something different to Morel than the necessity of using "arbitrary and capricious" violence to control the "barbarians" of the Congo (to paraphrase Nietzsche). Like many contemporaries, Morel used it to designate a force that was "cruel", "merciless", and "brutal", as in the definition for "barbarian" and "cruel" from the 1899 American Dictionary of the English Language (Lyons 1899a: 29; Lyons 1899c: 87). This kind of barbarity was civilized and could not be mistaken for what the same dictionary termed "savage", which was reserved for those who were "wild: uncivilized: fierce: cruel: brutal – n. a human being in a wild state: a brutal person: a barbarian" (Lyons 1899k: 377). The example the dictionary used was: "N. American Indians and other savages" (Lyons 1899m: 475). Morel's "civilized barbarism", in contrast, was applied to the cruelty of those in the Congo who were considered civilized, i.e. white Europeans, who could not be mistaken for the "savage" Congolese barbarians.

Morel was a pivotal figure in the constitution of the discourse on the "atrocities" of the Congo Free State. His narrative was decidedly critical towards Belgian imperialism without being anti-imperialist per se (cf. Gehrmann 2003: 110). This stance

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15 Cf. the following articles in The Chicago Defender, in which Morel was lauded years after his death in 1924: "Edmund D. Morel Freed Belgian Congo Slaves" (1929b: A1) and "From the Defender Files" (1935c: 16).

was the standard rather than the exception at the turn of the century, as can be seen in Joseph Conrad's novella Heart of Darkness. Given the manner in which they influenced one another (ibid: 120-129), a number of parallels between Heart of Darkness and Red Rubber may be drawn. Conrad's text was published a few years prior to Red Rubber and was considered by Morel as "the most powerful thing ever written on the subject" (qtd. in Gehrmann 2003: 122). Morel held Conrad in high esteem as an authority, corresponded extensively with him, and publicly called the Congo a "heart of darkness" in his History of the Congo Reform Movement (ibid: 121).

As in Conrad's story, the coercive transition to capitalism in the Congo is depicted by Morel as a singular imperial disaster – a disastrous aberration in the imperial everyday. "Everything is abnormal", Morel writes (1919: 187). Like Conrad, he does not discuss violence as a mutually shared aspect of the many empires that coerced Africa into becoming a part of the global capitalist market (Grant 2005: 29). By framing Leopold's Congo Free State as "civilized barbarism" and those advocating it as the "protest of civilisation" (1919: 187), Morel's story aimed for a reform of Belgian imperialism along the lines of (morally sounder) nations such as Britain, rather than the abandonment of the Belgian colonial project as a whole. Heart of Darkness defended imperialism, too – for instance, by drawing a parallel between the Roman conquest of the savage darkness of Great Britain and imperialism in Africa (Conrad 2006: 6). The "violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, men going blind" was judged by Conrad as "very proper for those who tackle a darkness" (ibid: 7). Still, it was nothing to boast about, since it was referred to as "just an accident arising from the weakness of others" (ibid). Confronted with the murderous reality in the Congo, however, this imperial theory crumbles much in the same way as in Red Rubber. In light of what the profit-driven Belgian imperialists made of colonialism, the "sepulcher" (ibid: 9) capital city of which fittingly houses its ruthless, rubber-grabbing colonial administrators, the novella ultimately dismisses the Belgian colonial enterprise. The necessity of imperially civilizing Africa, however, is never seriously abandoned.

In Morel's Red Rubber and Conrad's Heart of Darkness, the "civilized barbarism" of the Congo Free State hinges on the topos of "horror", as in Kurtz's famous last words in the novella: "The horror, the horror" (ibid: 69). In Red Rubber, "horror" appears continuously in its collage of eyewitness accounts of the Congo Free State's economy in order to underline "the horror of it, the unspeakable horror of it" (Morel 1919: 89; cf. Morel 1919: 40, 53, 86, 164, 187). Against the background of a booming rubber market (Nelson 1994: 81-85), Morel recounts the massive appropriation and domination of the vast Congolese land by Leopold's police and mili-

tary forces, leading to the division of it into economic zones ruled by concession holders (ibid: 89).[16] As these failed to gain the support of the local leaders of the Congo, the collection of rubber had to be ensured by coercive means (ibid: 105). The tax system imposed on the Congolese and the bonus systems that were developed to motivate the agents of the Congo Free State (Morel 1919: 30, 64) constitute the pillars of the abusive system as described by both Morel and Conrad.

The failure to meet the rubber quota imposed by the private companies on the local populations (in order to pay their taxes) was punished corporeally. The range of coercions appear in great detail as reported by Morel's selection of eyewitnesses – missionaries, diplomats, travelers, and those otherwise interested in the Congo, such as the African American historian George Washington Williams (Morel 1919: 40; cf. previous and subsequent sections). The sum total of these horrific stories of violence, abuse, and sexual violence might be described as "pornographic" (cf. Baaz/Stern 2013: 92), in the sense that the reports aim at arousing emotions of pity for the victims by depicting them in demeaning ways which potentially reflect or promote racism. The next chapter will touch upon this representational ambiguity, as well.

There was plenty of material that could be used by Morel to evoke pity. Punishing the Congolese into submission had its genocidal aspects. "We must fight them until their absolute submission has been obtained, or their complete extermination" (1919: 35), Morel quotes from the diary of the Belgian district commissioner Jules Jacques. The statement comes close to Kurtz's infamous line: "Exterminate all the brutes!" (Conrad 2006: 50). The result of this genocidal method is described as an "atrocity" throughout Red Rubber (e.g. Morel 1919: 40, 46, 50, 66, 69), a label to be found in the works of American intellectuals as well.

An exemplary account of how these atrocities are described is found in the parts dedicated to the Swedish missionary Sjöblom, who wrote about his experiences from 1895 to 1897 in the central region of the Congo Free State: "I saw the dead bodies floating on the lake with the right hand cut off, and the officer told me when I came back why they had been killed. It was for the rubber. In fact the officers have always freely told me about the many who were killed, and always in connection with india-rubber [sic]" (Morel 1919: 43). It is a striking element in many of these accounts how authority is produced and maintained by "seeing", experiencing, and talking with those involved in the horrors – an epistemology of "the eyewitness" that will return in the accounts of Black missionaries. "In one village which I passed through," the missionary continued, "I saw two or three men on the

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16 The crown domain – King Leopold's private fiefdom (established in 1896) – was the most profitable of all the sectors (Nelson 1994: 94).

wayside quite recently killed – about an hour before. The sentry who had to oversee the gathering of the rubber told me they had killed the men because they had not brought in the rubber" (Morel 1919: 43).

Here, as elsewhere, Morel points at the Black troops as the willful executioners of the dirty work of the Congo Free State. Under the auspices of non-commissioned white officers (Nelson 1994: 106), whose casual attitude towards Black casualties was immortalized in Conrad's novella (cf. below), Black soldiers punished those who had not "brought in the rubber". Sjöblom concludes his horror story by describing the perversity of the rubber trade (Morel 1919: 43):

When I crossed the stream I saw some dead bodies hanging down from the branches in the water. As I turned away my face at the horrible sight one of the native corporals who was following us down said, "Oh, that is nothing, a few days ago I returned from a fight, and I brought the white man 160 hands and they were thrown into the river."

Revolting[17] mutilations (e.g. cutting off hands) were standard procedure in the Congo Free State under Leopold – a process executed by Blacks themselves, as Morel stresses. Throughout his work, he describes with indignation how "a large body of troops [was] recruited from the most savage tribes in the Upper Congo", who, after being drafted to "'camps of military instruction'", were "equipped with modern rifles of precision" (ibid: 24). Morel underscores that these soldiers were themselves forcefully "obtained by armed raids upon villages, differing in no degree from the raids of the Arabs except that they were accompanied by greater loss of life" (ibid), thus also effectively casting them as slaves. This discursive template is reinforced by Morel's explicit assertion that those captured were "a portion of the libérés – so-called free slaves" (ibid).[18]

Morel's depiction of the Black soldiers as "free slaves" fits in with his representation of the Congo Free State as a slave region, a well-known topos already discussed in the previous chapter. The other topos from the last chapter, the Congo-as-Savage, also appears often in Red Rubber. Morel's repeated condemnation of the Congolese as "savages" with guns is a case in point. "The soldiers are themselves savages," a Baptist missionary of the crown domain is cited as saying, "some even

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17 Photographic evidence of these mutilations re-energized the CRA in 1904 (Grant 2005: 66).

18 Those forcefully captured belonged to the "outcasts and inferiors" of Congolese society, as Nelson notes (1994: 106-107), many of whom were people with low status, thus adding another defaming description to the large archive of negative comments about Congo slaves within academic Congoism.

cannibals, trained to use rifles, and in many cases they are sent away without any supervision, and they do as they please" (Morel 1919: 47). An independent English explorer goes beyond even these descriptions, calling them "the lowest type of natives, almost invariably cannibals" (ibid: 58). "The savage" slips often in these accounts into the "cannibal", and this is also the case in Heart of Darkness. The passages concerning the Congolese "fireman" with "filed teeth" (Conrad 2006: 36-37) testify to this slippage, as well as anecdotes from the "enlisted" ship crew of "twenty cannibals" who were considered "fine fellows – cannibals – in their place" (ibid: 40-41). In Conrad's story, the lowest of Blacks (cannibals) serve the brutal Congo Free State, and in doing so, were considered by Conrad and others "in their place" – their alleged inhuman behavior (devouring people) was not out of place in the murderous Congo Free State.

Despite these occasional references to the Congo-as-Savage (and its variation Congo as a cannibal), however, the Congo-as-Slave is most apparent in Morel's Red Rubber. Leopold was repeatedly depicted as the "absentee landlord" (Morel 1919: 36, 133), a well-known topos associated with British planters and slaveholders in the West Indies (Morgan 2007: 34, 39; Ryden 2009: 21, 33). Leopold is said to have systematically organized and condoned slave raids in order to mobilize the necessary labor forces for his "rubber slave trade" (Morel 1919: 98). The problems with this slave economy were manifold, according to Morel. For one, the coercive, concession-driven policies of the Congo Free State had negative effects on the morality of the white man. One may point here to the cynical, laconic "white man in an unbuttoned uniform" in Heart of Darkness, whose hospitality and cheerfulness remained intact after just witnessing "the body of a middle-aged negro with a bullet-hole in the forehead" (Conrad 2006: 20). The Congolese, in turn, were, according to Morel, also wronged by Leopold and the Belgian state. When the latter took over the Congo Free State, Belgium's tactics were similarly oppressive, Morel found; both authorities, the Belgian state and the king, according to Morel, degraded the lives of the Congolese.

Morel depicted the "Congo slave" in Red Rubber as a "broken man" (1919: 217) by continuously referencing Congolese imprisoned in the hostage house, flogged by the Chicotte, raided and forced into slavery by the servants of empire, exploited in chain-gangs, and living "under the shadow of the sentry's rifle" (ibid: 86-87). A passage in which Morel attempts to paint a picture of their wretchedness serves well as an example of how the author describes the Congolese: "See these men in whom the very manhood seems stamped out dragging themselves back from the bush at the day's end after a weary search through partly submerged forest, knee-deep, waist-deep, in fetid swamp" (ibid: 84-85). As when quoting from Congo

missionaries like Sjöblom, Morel emphasizes "seeing" and "experiencing" in discussing these Congolese "men" whose "very manhood seems stamped out" (ibid: 84). Morel wrote in order to evoke the surroundings – as if he stood next to the Congolese as they experienced these horrors. This is particularly apparent when Morel continues his story by describing the miserable living conditions of these workers and the effects these had on them: "The rain invades their scanty shelter, and the night-wind chills their naked bodies racked with rheumatism and fevers, their minds a prey to superstitious fears [...] exposed, unarmed and helpless, to the attack of some roving leopard. What thoughts are theirs!" (ibid: 85). Morel did not know, but it did not keep him from making calculated guesses: "Day after day the year round until death in some form – by violence, exhaustion, exposure, or disease, or mere weariness and sorrow – closes the term of an everlasting and to them – mysterious visitation" (ibid). Morel knows little about these men, but he does know, in the end, that they do not understand death.

Through passages such as these, Morel's Red Rubber depicts the Congolese as an innocent, ignorant, helpless, and superstitious population that worked itself to death without even understanding that "mysterious visitation" (ibid: 85; a claim already at work in de Gobineau's writing). Morel balances this picture of innocence with the violence of how "in the distant village wives and children live at the mercy of the capriciousness, cruelty, and lust of the armed ruffian set there by the white man" (ibid: 84). Morel describes these soldiers as "fierce, all-powerful, speaking another tongue, tribal enemies perchance, or maybe the worst malefactors in the community" who were "specially selected for that very reason as the most fitting instruments of oppression: men whose lightest word is law, who have but to lift a finger – they and their bodyguard of retainers – and death or torture rewards protest" (ibid). Morel subsequently listed the crimes of these "exotics introduced by the white man's 'civilisation'" (ibid), ranging from "rape of the newly-married wife" (ibid) to "bestialities foul and nameless" that "satanic[ally] crushed" the Congo – the "body, soul, and spirit in a people – crushing so complete, so thorough, so continuous, that the capacity of resisting aught, however vile, slowly perishes" (ibid: 85). The discursive event of sexual violence – "rape of the newly married wife" – endures, and this story will return in the next chapter, with almost the exact same wording.

By contrasting these bestial, rapist Black helpers of white civilization to the innocent bulk of the population, Morel constructed a framework of Congolese dualities in which the worst and the best could be expected – oscillating between innocence and viciousness, between untouched by white civilization and too thoroughly permeated by it, and between a people oriented toward family and sexual predators.

Although Red Rubber undeniably attempted to incorporate Congolese into a "black humanity" (ibid: 91), the "primitive simplicity" of Congolese (ibid: 94) reduced them to ciphers for misery and victimhood. Indeed, through his friendship with Mary Kingsley and other relativist anthropologists and travelers, Morel probably did consider "African" culture worthy of respect, as Grant suggests (2005: 33). However, the essentialist opposition between "the European" and "the inhabitant of Tropical Africa" in the "actual stage of our evolution" (Morel 1919: 185) highlights that Morel's "black humanity" rang hollow. Morel's pleas for empathy by reminding the reader of the manhood, familial privacy, and social life of the Congolese by no means offset his essentialism.

The rhetorical strategy employed by Morel – "watching" and "feeling" the suffering of the Congolese – harkened back to 19th-century abolitionist discourse. Emblematic of this discourse was the 19th-century anti-slavery medallion, which depicted an enchained Black man in a supplicant posture asking the (white) viewer: "Am I not a Man and a Brother?" (Hall 2003b: 250). Morel's use of this kind of strategy was not wholly surprising, given that many Victorian anti-slavery organizations and their leadership integrated themselves into the Protestant missionary societies in Britain, which, in turn, embraced abolition as a central cause in their civilizing mission (Grant 2005: 26). As missionaries played a central role in mobilizing popular support for the Congo Reform campaign in Britain, protests against the "new slaveries", as Grant called them, reawakened paternalistic discourse expressing neo-abolitionist sympathy for the Congolese (ibid: 41). Bearing this in mind, it was no coincidence that Morel used a quotation from American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison as the epigraph of his book.[19]

While the forced labor system under Leopold and the early Belgian colonial regime caused a bloodbath among the Congolese, Blacks in the American South were facing "Jim Crow" apartheid. Disenfranchisement laws "swept like a tide over the Southern states during the period from 1875 to 1910", as the influential 1944 study An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy by the Swedish economist and sociologist Gunnar Myrdal noted (1944: 580). Through "grandfather clauses", poll taxes, literacy tests, and "white primaries", voting registration and political participation increasingly depended on free ancestry, education, and income. These restrictions were overwhelmingly anti-Black, although poorer whites were forced out of the political machinery as well (ibid: 480-484, 489). Jim Crow

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19 "The standard of emancipation in now unfurled. / Let all the enemies of the persecuted blacks tremble / I will be as harsh as truth and as compromising as justice. / I am in earnest; / I will not equivocate, / I will not excuse, / I will not retreat a single inch: / And I will be heard. / Posterity will bear testimony that I was right" (Morel 1919: n.p.).

discrimination was justified through the "separate but equal" doctrine – separating schools, railroad cars, hotels and restaurants, and other public places along perceived racial lines. Black infrastructure throughout the era, if it existed at all, was mostly underfunded or of poor quality (Bair 2005: 25; Myrdal 1944: 579-580). The rapid "restoration of white supremacy in the late 'seventies" (Myrdal 1944: 580) through Jim Crow legislation led to a renewed and steep decline in the political, civic, material, and social status of Blacks in the Southern states in the post-Civil War and post-Reconstruction era. As in the Congo Free State, the Jim Crow laws were based on coercion and violence. In an attempt to restore labor conditions to what they had been in times of slavery (ibid: 228), white supremacist Southern elites passed "lien laws"[20] and "vagrancy laws",[21] both of which were initiated to keep the labor of freedmen cheap and available. Everyday threats of psychic and physical violence towards Blacks served to further justify Jim Crow laws (Gaines 1996: 52). Given the "weak legal tradition" (Myrdal 1944: 229) of the South, police forces and courts were active agents in upholding peonage systems by supplying the necessary labor forces for white employers.

Another result of the "weak legal tradition" was that planters and other whites had few scruples about taking the law into their own hands in order to impose sanctions on the Black opposition. "Threats, whippings, and even more serious forms of violence have been customary caste sanctions utilized to maintain a strict discipline over Negro labor which are seldom employed against white labor", Myrdal notes

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20 Lien laws regulated a credit system widely applied to cotton farmers from the 1860s to the 1930s. Sharecroppers and tenant farmers who did not own the land obtained supplies and food on credit from local merchants, who, in turn, held a lien on the respective crop (Bair 2005: 3). While production levels and charges for seeds and equipment were high (ibid), the prices paid by those merchants frequently and unjustly were not, therefore creating a debt cycle sharecroppers and tenant farmers could hardly escape. The lien laws enabled debt peonage, or compulsory labor based on indebtedness (Myrdal 1944: 228-229).

21 Vagrancy laws allowed for the forced labor of apprehended vagrants (those homeless, unemployed, or involved in petty crimes, often due to the debt trap they were in; Bair 2005: 16). Convicted loiterers and vagrants were hired out to planters, mine owners, road contractors, and turpentine farmers, sometimes in chain gangs (Myrdal 1944: 228; Bair 2005: 16-17). The brunt of this "convict-lease system" was borne by African Americans, as they constituted 60 to 90 percent of the prison population in Southern jails (Bair 2005: 16-17). Although these numbers gradually declined at the turn of the century, by 1940, Blacks still represented 44 percent of the male prisoners in the Southern States, though only 23.8 percent of the total population was Black (Myrdal 1944: 554).

(1944: 229; cf. Bair 2005: 28-29). Without fear of legal reprisal, a pattern of violence against Blacks developed (Myrdal 1944: 559). Lynching constituted one type of extralegal violence, increasing in the late 1880s after its initial rise from 1830 to the 1850s as a way of punishing white men (ibid: 560). In addition to escalating this violence to "epidemic" numbers (Grossman 2005: 81)[22] and contributing to the dehumanization of Blacks, it had a devastating effect on the Black opposition and its white supporters, as well as on the legal and political mainstream.

Anti-lynching activists in the United States took up topoi and employed argumentative tools similar to those of Morel and Conrad. Eyewitness accounts of horror, savagery, barbarism, and extreme violence were also used in the influential work of Black journalist and Civil Rights leader Ida B. Wells-Barnett, the 1895 pamphlet "A Red Record", which tackled lynching in the South. She addressed the subject via statistical evidence (not regarding the number of victims, but the rationale behind the violence) of "Negroes [being] whipped, scourged, exiled, shot and hung whenever and wherever it pleased the white man" (Wells-Barnett 1996: 77).

She also discussed case studies based on reports from white newspapers: "Out of their own mouths shall the murderers be condemned," she wrote (ibid: 82). In the main body of her pamphlet, Wells-Barnett provided detailed descriptions of the lynchings. Moving case by case, Wells-Barnett turned to white newspapers, such as the Memphis Commercial, for information on how, for instance, prisoners were taken from the "county jail" with little to no resistance against the "patrolmen" to be hanged on a "telegraph pole just north of the prison" (ibid: 113). In that same case, Wells-Barnett quoted the newspaper's description of how the alleged rapist was "half dragged, half carried to the corner of Front Street and the alley between Sycamore and Mill, and hung" (ibid), all the while being beaten, cursed, spat at, and cut into pieces by the mob. The newspaper wrote in gruesome detail, "One or two knife cuts, more or less, made little difference in the appearance of the dead rapist, however, for before the rope was around his neck his skin was cut almost to ribbons" (ibid: 114). Nauseating eyewitness reports like these were used frequently by Wells-Barnett to make her point.

Wells-Barnett often described the stabbing, burning, and mutilation of Black people as "horrors" and did not hesitate to label it in ways that stung contemporaries: She called lynching a savagery and a "Southern barbarism" (ibid: 76) that was executed by "barbarous people" (ibid: 106). The barbarism of lynching was fre-

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22 While the lynching of Black people averaged near two hundred a year in the 1890s, by the 1940s it had dropped to 4 (Myrdal 1944: 561). In the end, lynching cost the lives of about 3,800 Blacks (Gossett 2005: 270).

quently referred to by her as a "revolting savagery" (ibid: 108) or "savage orgies" (ibid: 100) which demonstrated a "contempt of civilization" (ibid: 82) that would not have gone unnoticed in "non-civilized" areas of the world. "If it were known that the cannibals or the savage Indians had burned three human beings alive in the past two years," Wells-Barnett wrote, "the whole of Christendom would be roused, to devise ways and means to put a stop to it" (ibid: 74). Since the lynching did not occur "in the wilds of interior Africa" but in the "American civilization" (ibid: 112), it could "be passed by unnoticed, to be denied or condoned as the requirements of any future emergency might determine" (ibid). While these comments aimed at highlighting the one-sided interest of white Americans in oppressing minorities, Wells-Barnett implicitly created, or at least gestured toward, a dichotomy between American civilization and the "cannibals" and "savages" from interior Africa.

Wells-Barnett and journalists from The Chicago Defender mobilized a vocabulary similar to Morel's to address white cruelty, too. On September 27, 1930, the article "Southern Savages" reported on the lynching of two accused robbers while they were being transferred to another town for a court hearing. These "chaps were murdered [...] to satisfy the blood lust of brutal, cruel, stupid men, far closer to the beast – nearer the ape –than their black brothers" (1930a: 14). This explicit reversal of stereotypes (Blacks calling whites "apes" instead of the other way around, as seen in de Gobineau's writing) is reinforced by the final statements made in the article. "Southern whites are given to ranting about their superiority over the Negro race," the article maintained, but "that boast becomes a hideous joke when they sink to such barbarism as this" (ibid). This appropriation of supremacist slander and vocabulary is even more demonstrable in "On with Democracy", an article published on June 30, 1928, two years prior to Wells-Barnett's pamphlet and just after another lynching in Houston. In this case, the article ended by openly ridiculing "the better class of white people of Houston" (1928b: A2). Because this "better" class distanced itself from the lynchings by "white hoodlums", but did not manage to produce adequate legislation against this kind of violence, The Chicago Defender accused them of being "Hypocrites – Anglo-Saxons, Nordics, southerners, aristocrats, whites, Democrats – Hypocrites" (ibid).

This bold language returned in the context of urban violence as well, in both the North and the South. Although instances of this violence were referred to as "race riots" by many contemporaries, Wells-Barnett maintained in "A Red Record" they were as much an "appalling slaughter of colored people" (1996: 73) as in more rural areas. She stated: "It was always a remarkable feature in these insurrections and riots that only Negroes were killed during the rioting, and that all the white men escaped unharmed" (ibid). The list of riots shows how big of a national problem this

actually became in the early to mid-20th century, including riots in New York City in 1900, Springfield (Ohio) in 1904, Atlanta and Greensburg (Indiana) in 1906, Springfield (Illinois) in 1908, Tulsa (Oklahoma) in 1921, Watsonville (California) in 1930, and Detroit in 1943 (cf. Tuttle 1970: 11). Standing out in this period of mass violence and death was the "red summer" of 1919, as James Weldon Johnson famously called it in his autobiography Along this Way, which saw "bloody race riots" between April and October 1919 in "Chicago, in Omaha, in Longview, Texas, in Philips County, Arkansas, in Washington, and other communities" (1969: 341). About 120 people died, the majority of them Black (Tuttle 1970: 14).

Like the lynchings in the South, riots in the North had a decisively corrective, disciplinary trait. In Chicago, for instance, the tensions surrounding the housing and job markets had been made worse by the influx of thousands of returning veterans (about 50.000, Tuttle 1970: 106 suggests) and Black Southern immigrant workers drawn to the job opportunities in the booming war economy of the Illinois metropolis. Mob violence aimed at keeping these Blacks "in their place", as James Weldon Johnson phrased it in his autobiography (1969: 341). In the competitive post-war economy, marked by rising unemployment and the worst labor strife since the 1890s (Tuttle 1970: 19), Black and white Chicagoans battled the streets for five days. The riot was set in motion by the death of eighteen-year-old Eugene Williams, who was knocked into Lake Michigan on Sunday, July 27, 1919. His drowning, and the lack of assistance by a white police officer, ignited "a battle royale", as The Chicago Defender had it in its article "Riot Sweeps Chicago" (1919a: 1), resulting in the death of twenty-three Blacks and fifteen whites. Over 500 Chicagoans were injured, and the homes of thousands, Black and white, were burned to the ground (Grossman 2005: 119). In its discussion of the "underlying cause" of this "disgrace of American civilization" (1919b: 16)), The Chicago Defender explained the riot by pointing to white prejudice, economic and social discrimination, and renewed Black confidence. It was one of the first times that Blacks pushed back violently, the newspaper suggested, thus leading to the death of fifteen whites. The Chicago Defender stated: "America is known the world over as the land of the lyncher and of the mobocrat. For years she has been sowing the wind and now she is reaping the whirlwind" (ibid).

The reason why Blacks pushed back, even through counter-violence, was that World War I had, according to The Chicago Defender, changed things. "The Black worm has turned. A Race that has furnished hundreds of thousands of the best soldiers that the world has ever seen is no longer content to turn the left cheek when smitten upon the right" (1919a: 1). The newspaper thus connected the confidence that many African American soldiers brought home from their tour of duty in

World War I to the increased political and social activism at home. The Chicago Defender went on to assert that particularly "the younger generation of black men are not content to move along the line of least resistance as did their sires" (ibid).

Thus, despite living in the land of the "lyncher and of the mobocrat" (ibid), African Americans had gained new self-confidence from their constructive contributions in the military and as a labor force in the war economy of the United States, according to the paper. This explained why Blacks resisted the violence of the whites. "We have little sympathy with lawlessness, whether those guilty of it be black or white," the editorial continued, "but it cannot be denied that we have much in the way of justification for our changed attitude" (ibid). This changed attitude pervaded the 20th-century African American communities, which bore witness to what would be labeled the "New Negro".

Supremacy Opposed (and Re-affirmed)

African American intellectuals responded systematically to the omnipresent anti-Black stereotypes and derogatory naturalizations in American culture described in previous sections. To derail cultural stereotypes was an enormous task, however – especially because Black Americans possessed limited control over the mass media, despite the successful establishment of major African American newspapers such as The Washington Bee, The Richmond Planet, and The Chicago Defender (Bair 2005: 53). A new leading catchphrase among African American intellectual activists was the "New Negro". Like many Black American activisms before and after, the New Negro employed a double strategy of "Pushing B(l)ack" – or Blacks fighting back against white "social terrorism", as Locke phrased it in his introduction to the collection The New Negro, while at the same time strengthening their own identity through "race pride" (Locke 1992: 6-7).

The figure of the New Negro circulated constantly and was propagated by authors with widely differing ideological programs. For instance, Marcus Garvey rejected Booker T. Washington by calling him "the great Sage of Tuskegee" (2006: 41) and criticized him posthumously for failing to strengthen the "political voice of the Negro" (ibid). The nationalist organizer claimed: "No leader can successfully lead his race of ours without giving an interpretation of the awakened spirit of the New Negro" (ibid). Garvey overlooked however, at least rhetorically, that the accommodating Washington actually had addressed the New Negro in his collection A New Negro for a New Century in 1900. Other works addressing this figure would follow: William Pickens's The New Negro: His Political, Civil and Mental Status and Related Essays (1916), and Alain Locke's seminal collection The New Negro:

Voices of the Harlem Renaissance (1925) were books by highly educated authors who mobilized the topos of the New Negro as much as Garvey and Washington.

Differences in how the New Negro concept was used cannot be overlooked, either. Washington and Pickens employed it as a quintessential "contributionist" tool for discussing (inter)national Black achievers in the field of industry, education, and particularly the military. Locke, on the other hand, took up this topos for his very local, "romantic, apolitical movement of the arts", as Gates and Jarret describe it (2007: 13). Locke thus focused on the cultural production of Black artists in Harlem, which constituted the self-proclaimed "pulse of the Negro world" (Locke 1992: 14).

Despite their differences, central ideas kept returning in the discussion about the "New Negro". On the one hand, the New Negro expressed a "concern with time, antecedents, and heritage", as Gates and Jarrett suggested (2007: 4). On the other hand, it indicated "a concern for a cleared space, the public face of the race" (ibid). Against this framework of glorious pasts and fresh starts, the proclamation of "newness" asserted a conscientious beginning that depended fundamentally on a negation of an earlier type of Black American (ibid) – "new" is constantly pitched against "old". The "Negro of to-day," as Washington's introduction to A New Negro for a New Century states, "is in every phase of life far advanced over the Negro 30 years ago" (1900: 3). Those old Blacks were the "ignorant Negros" from the "Reconstruction days", as Pickens also claimed (1916: 38).

"Old Negroes" included those of the slave period. Fannie Barrier Williams's contribution on the Black women's club movement,[23] "The Club Movement Among Colored Women of America", which appeared in Washington's A New Negro for a New Century, provides an excellent example of how this distance from the slave era was established. In her essay, Williams discussed the movement as the producer and hotbed of a "new" Black woman who "succeeded in lifting herself as completely from the stain and meanness of slavery" (1900: 424). For Williams (and other "New Negro" thinkers), slavery was more than an economic system; it was a submissive subjectivity inherited from the past that strongly marked contemporary mentalities. Locke wrote, for instance: "The day of 'aunties,' 'uncles' and 'mam-

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23 The club movement itself was a model example of newness, of course, since it contributed strongly to the ascent of female voices in the debates in African American bourgeois communities. This manifested itself in a wide variety of political and cultural societies, such as the fast-growing and influential National Association of Colored Women (Grossman 2005: 91). On top of this, it enabled the emergence of numerous authors of fiction and non-fiction, such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Fannie Barrier Williams, mentioned above (Bair 2005: 57-66).

mies' is equally gone. Uncle Tom and Sambo have passed on" (1925: 5), referring to the dismissive and dehumanizing labels employed by white and Black Americans in times of slavery and the Jim Crow laws.

The case against the slavish "Old Negro" was made repeatedly in this period. For instance, George S. Schuyler's essay "The Rise of the Black Internationale" still alluded to this image of slavery in 1938 when he wrote that the New Negro, with whom he associated both African Americans and their "cousins in India, Malaysia, the Caribbean and China", is "no longer blindly worshipful of his rulers", as opposed to those "who dropped [their] shackles in 1863" (2007: 153). Although he also claimed that the New Negro was "no more courageous than the Old Negro" (ibid), it cannot be overlooked that the New Negro was, at least in Schyler's discourse, an entity superior to the old one. The "ignorance" and "lethargy" of the past was substituted for the slickness of the New Negro, who was "better informed, privy to the past, understanding of the present, unafraid of the future" (ibid).

Turning away from the "Old Negro" – including the "patient, unquestioning, devoted demi-slave" from Reconstruction times (Pickens 1916: 236) – signified a move towards the embrace of a "self-conscious, aspiring, proud" Black persona (ibid). The notion of self-help abounded in this discourse. While Fannie Barrier Williams stressed the autodidactic quality of the women's club movement, Locke highlighted the idea of transcending the racist status quo through "self-expression" (1925: 5), which would finally bring an end to the "old epoch of philanthropic guidance, sentimental appeal and protest" (ibid: 7). The "New Negro" would no longer take the ongoing racial derision lightly. This was exemplified by Fannie Barrier Williams's story in her essay "The Club Movement Among Colored Women of America" of the nation-wide response by Black women to "some obscure editor in a Missouri town" who published a "libelous article in which the colored women of the country were described as having no sense of virtue and altogether without character" (1900: 397). By contrasting this overwhelming response with the probable lack of one "twenty years prior to this time [when] a similar publication would scarcely have been noticed" (ibid), Williams elevated her own times, describing how this "vulgar attack" was met with "mass meetings [...] held in every part of the country to denounce the editor and refute the charges" (ibid). It is this "frankness and open expression of opinion", as Pickens termed it, that was the overt expression of the "New Negro" (1916: 37).

Another dominant idea was that the "New Negro" should be an interracial persona. One might turn here to Fannie Barrier Williams's assertion that the club movement in general, and the National Association of Colored Women in particular, aimed to emancipate Black and white women alike. The aim was to integrate

Black women in the "classification of progressive womanhood in America" and to help white women to "emancipate" themselves from "the fear and uncertainty of contact and association with women of the darker race" (1900: 402). Education was the path to freedom. "In considering the social advancement of these women," Williams noted, "it is important to keep in mind the point from which progress began" (ibid: 382). That starting point was self-education. These women, Williams asserted, "have been mainly self-taught in all those precious things that make for social order, purity and character" (ibid). The "progress" announced (and practiced) here, as well as the emphasis on "order, purity, and character" (ibid), also highlighted the staying power of Victorian mores. Respectable reproductive sexuality, as practiced within the safe confines of marriage and the home, were still very much de rigueur, it seems (cf. Gaines 1996: 12), along with restricted entry to professions beyond teaching children.[24]

Locke, too, emphasized education, albeit with quite a different slant than Williams's. In his introduction to the collection The New Negro, education was considered to liberate "the minds of most of us, black and white" from the stereotypes of oppression, which barred the road to "true social self-understanding" (1992: 4). Education, however, meant formal education to Locke, not self-schooling (which African American female leaders advocated). Locke, instead, asked for a "scientific rather than an emotional interest" to be invested in Black America (ibid: 8) – a view that was seconded by Pickens, among others, who underscored the need for a "scientific spirit, which seeks the facts, all of the facts, and faces the full meaning of those facts, regardless of prejudice or preconception" (1916: 206). The insistence on the primacy of "scientism" (Hall 2009: 192) blocked those who lacked academic credentials from entering public discourse (Jardins 2003: 122). "Self-taught" women were among the first who suffered from the opposition between thinkers and doers, the trained and untrained, and professionals versus amateurs. These oppositions were created by first-generation academics like Locke and Du Bois (ibid), and, as a consequence of these oppositions, they distanced themselves from women as interpreters of social and historical processes (ibid).

This epistemic gatekeeping by, and shifting of authority to, roughly two percent of the Black male population (Gaines 1996: xiv), was highly noticeable in the academic field of history, which was a closed, male world until the 1940s, when Black women obtained their first PhDs in the field (Jardins 2003: 141; Dagbovie 2010:

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24 Exemplified by the skepticism and hostility of Black ministers to Ida B. Wells-Barnett's anti-lynching campaign (Gaines 1996: 13).

101).[25] Black women did write histories, however. Many were "historians without portfolio", as Dagbovie noted (2010: 103). They taught and wrote about Black history as schoolteachers, club women, reformers, novelists, authors of children's books, or journalists for local newspapers (ibid: 123-124). The works of the novelist Pauline Hopkins and of educators such as Leila Pendleton (e.g. A Narrative of the Negro) and Drusilla Houston (e.g. Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire) testify to the hands-on approach applied by African American women as "disseminators, populizers, researchers, and catalogers" (Dagbovie 2010: 147). However, gender bias deeply affected the professionalization and institutionalization of science and Black literacy in general, the resources and jobs required for which (those of librarians and school teachers excepted) were overwhelmingly controlled and taken by Black men (Jardins 2003: 122-124).

This was particularly visible in the thriving discipline of history, which was dominated by male historians (Hall 2009:190). These men gained prominence in the broader context of the proliferation of academic departments from the 1870s onward (Burke 2012: 169). Noticeable markers for the success of history departments in the United States were the foundation of Black historical organizations at the turn of the century (e.g. Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915), as well as university presses (e.g. Tuskegee's Yearbook Publishing Company in 1913), journals (e.g. Journal of Negro History in 1916), Black libraries (e.g. at Atlanta University between 1907-1919), and the strengthening and development of history departments in Black colleges and universities (e.g. Howard University by 1905; cf. Hall 2009: 88-198). The historical work of the handful of Black PhDs in white elite institutions, such as Du Bois and Alain Locke at Harvard, was distinctly different from the avocational work of the earlier Black intellectuals, although they were still required to build upon these earlier histories (Hall 2009: 191).

All of these institutional, content-related, and personal changes and achievements, however, were made possible by a broadening of the base of literate and educated Blacks. Between 1870 and 1910, literacy rates went up from 19 percent to 61 percent (Grossman 2005: 81), which led, among many other changes, to the long-term establishment and proliferation of the Black press. The journalistic landscape was diverse – from independent weeklies such as the "fearless" Chicago Defender (Grossman 2005: 109) and monthlies such as the Colored American Magazine to institutional publications like The Crisis from the civil rights organization National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP hereafter).

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25 Social activist Anna Julia Cooper became the first Black American woman to receive a PhD in history, awarded by the Sorbonne University in Paris (Dagbovie 2010: 117).

The underlying philosophy of the ongoing Black organization and institutionalization – from the women's club movement to the male-dominated Black history movement – was the ideology of "uplift". "Among colored women," Fannie Barrier Williams explicitly wrote in "The Club Movement Among Colored Women of America", "the [black women's] club is [...] only one of many means for the social uplift of a race" (1900: 383). "Uplift" continually reappeared in later writings on the "New Negro". For instance, the increasingly left-leaning W.E.B. Du Bois remained loyal to this concept from the early 20th century all the way up to the middle of it – addressing the concept both in "The Negro Mind Reaches Out", Du Bois's contribution to Locke's collection The New Negro (1925: 390-397), as well as in his essay "Prospect of a World Without Race Conflict" two decades later (1944).

"Uplift" reflected heavily the idea of the "progress of civilization", as Pickens phrased it (1916: 13). The role of the "race" was discussed through the lens of "race solidarity" (Locke 1925: 7). Despite this call for unity, uplift ideology also reflected and reproduced the social tensions within the African American community. Class stratification pervaded the "New Negro" discourse. "Among colored women," Fannie Barrier Williams asserted, "the club is the effort of the few competent in behalf of the many incompetent" (1900: 383), subsequently discussing the latter as the "many unprotected and defenseless colored girls to be found in every large city" (420). The same dichotomy of many versus few is evoked by Locke, who distinguished between the "multitude" and the "thinking few" (1925: 4). This "thinking few" consisted of the "more intelligent and representative elements of the two race groups" (ibid: 9). A similarly elitist split is produced for white America by Pickens, who, in discussing the critical public opinion makers regarding Blacks, boiled the problem down to "the ignorance of the better class of white people" towards the "better class of colored people who live in their community" (1916: 225).

In his seminal The Negro of Philadelphia, which does not employ the label of the "New Negro" (it appeared too early) but already alludes to its major characteristics, Du Bois openly called for interracial solidarity between the "better classes" (e.g. 1899: 39, 348, 350, 357), identifying them as the Black "middle class" throughout his work (e.g. ibid: 7, 58, 117, 317, 444). Du Bois wrote, "In their efforts for the uplifting of the Negro the people of Philadelphia must recognize the existence of the better class of Negroes and must gain the active aid and cooperation by generous and polite conduct" (ibid: 397). In the typical interracial, classist vein of "New Negro" discourse, he added: "Social sympathy must exist between what is best in both races and there must no longer be the feeling that the Negro who makes the best of himself is of least account" (ibid). Du Bois ended by stating who belonged to this better Black class, namely "men and women educated

and in many cases cultured [...] but their active aid cannot be gained for purely self-ish motives [...] and above all they object to being patronized" (ibid).

All in all, the trope of the "better" classes suggested a common ground between white and Black middle classes based on a bourgeois morality and social capital. Education and culture, self-sufficiency, and individual ambitions are returning elements that bridge the territory of white and Black. Pickens added another set of elements to the list – "pride, ambition, self-respect, un-satisfaction with the lower positions of life, and the desire to live in a beautiful house and to keep his wife and children at home and out of 'service'" (1916: 229).

The dominant ideology of material and professional progression through self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, and the accumulation of wealth (ultimately leading to a "beautiful house", as Pickens imagined it), allowed for little solidarity with the "happy-go-lucky life of the lowest classes", as Du Bois phrased it in The Philadelphia Negro (1899: 60). Describing the lowest strata of Black life as "cheerful" and "good-natured" (ibid), Du Bois came close to evoking the minstrel stereotypes that saturated American popular culture throughout the period. By occasionally and strategically embracing these stereotypes, Black opinion asserted the superiority of their own class. Crime, prostitution, and dependence on aid organizations (Blair 2005: 14) could be sharply contrasted to the (allegedly) independent middle-class way of life. Black independence, however, as the critical sociologist Franklin Frazier wrote in his "La Bourgeoisie Noire" at the end of the 20s, was mainly rhetorical, especially for large parts of the Black intelligentsia. Whereas the "Negro business [...] can boast of the fact that he is independent of white support," Frazier wrote, "the Negro artist still seeks it" (2007: 140).

Frazier wrote these words in the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance, when New York-based Black artists successfully claimed their turf in mainstream American culture. More books by Blacks were published during the 20s and 30s than ever before (Singh 2004: 25-26). The central figures of the movement were deeply dependent on and indebted to the white middle and upper classes, who acted as patrons and were instrumental to the financial survival and intellectual development of the Renaissance (Kellner 2004: 53). Despite the "New Negro's" push for independence and self-empowerment through control of the imagery of Black people (Feith 2004: 278), the taste and preference of white boosters, publishers, and audiences did ultimately greatly affect the overall production of the Renaissance. Claude McKay's exotic urban Bohemia, as presented in his bestselling novel Home to Harlem, was clearly favored above the down-to-earth bourgeois Black characters in Jessie Fauset's Plum Bun. In the milieu of the Harlem Renaissance, Black authors sought means of self-expression while white sponsors simultaneously nur-

tured a taste for the exotic and celebrated a Black primitivism and vitality that re-
duced Blacks to their bodies, otherness, and instincts (ibid: 283). It is against this
background of Black sensualization, idealization, and downright cliché that a set of
images of the Congo could emerge.

Apart from interracial cooperation and dependence, elite Black rhetoric was
deeply marked by conservative gender politics, allocating women to the domestic
arena and men to the public sphere. Amidst the continual push by Black women to
gain access to the male-dominated public discourse, "uplift" often pitted Black men
against Black women, in the process reflecting and reproducing the prevailing mi-
sogynist and late Victorian attitudes (Gaines 1996: 13). "To keep his wife and chil-
dren at home and out of 'service'", as Pickens described it (1916: 229), clearly be-
longed to the core of required discursive attitudes. Fannie Barrier Williams would
cater to this stance by discussing "colored women as mothers, as home-makers"
(1900: 379). The male counterpart to this domestic, "pure" womanhood was the
role of the Black protector – both of women and of the country (cf. Gaines 1996:
52). The central topos in this context is the confident, reliable, able, and patriotic
African American soldier, which was a continuation of the late 19th-century fasci-
nation with military prowess and national loyalty as a rare outlet for courageous
masculinity (ibid: 27). In this "New Negro" rhetoric, Black soldiers figure promi-
nently. For instance, they are discussed in the context of the Spanish-American War
in Washington's A New Negro for a New Century. Pickens saw the "Negro soldier"
as the "decisive blow" against the Confederates in the Civil War (1916: 135).

The ideology of "uplift" did not merely pertain to the national arena; it also
manifested itself in a view of international politics that had strong imperialist and
colonialist motives. As an ideology rooted in class, gender, and ethnic inequality,
"uplift" neatly fitted into U.S. imperialism (Gaines 1996: 4). Black nationalists such
as Martin Delany linked Black progress and humanity strongly to territorial expan-
sion and nation building, civilization, and patriarchal authority (Gaines 4; cf. last
chapter). In an 1877 speech, Alexander Crummell voiced strong support for the ef-
forts of King Leopold II's AIA (Association Internationale Africaine) as "eminently
practical, both with respect to the physical and moral needs of the continent" (qtd.
in Füllberg-Stolberg 2003: 228).

Other intellectuals were in touch with colonial powers more directly. At the turn
of the century, European powers such as Germany and Belgium flirted with cooper-
ation with internationally renowned Black American intellectuals, such as Booker
T. Washington. His focus on uplift, physical and practical work, thrift, and sobriety
in Tuskegee's industrial education was seen as a panacea for the "negro problem"
within colonialism (Zimmerman 2010: 21-22, 176). The racist American South, and

Washington's accommodation of it, became a model for European colonial rule be-
cause of its high agricultural productivity enabled by submissive, hardworking, seg-
regated, and poorly paid Blacks. Washington sent an expedition to Germany's Togo
in 1901 to investigate the possibilities of a cotton economy in what Germany
planned as a "model colony" with ostensibly humane and "progressive" rule (ibid:
172). Washington would go along with this scheme, as he (and the African Ameri-
can mainstream in general) believed that Black American intellectuals could lead
"underclass" Blacks at home and abroad.

Washington and the slave-free "New South" became important landmarks for
liberal colonialists who were attempting to build a "humane colonial system in light
of the patent economic and social failures of the Congo Free State, whose crimes
were increasingly revealed at the turn of the century" (ibid: 204). The Congo Free
State, in turn, attempted to revamp its own public profile by associating itself with
African Americans in general, and all-Black institutions like Tuskegee and Hamp-
ton specifically. Leopold and his proxies, for instance, planned to recruit African
American workers as early as 1877 (ibid: 179). Later on, Leopold II approached
Washington multiple times (both in 1903 and 1905) to develop a Congolese cotton
industry and sent an invitation for him to speak in Brussels (which Washington ul-
timately declined). Leopold also offered Hampton a collection of books (ibid).

Leopold II's ongoing interest in African American elites was partly due to the
fact that the Congo was becoming more and more like the American South. When
the rubber economy finally collapsed through the genocidal exhaustion of the Con-
golese labor force and the over-tapping of rubber vines (Nelson 1994: 115), Bel-
gium assumed sovereignty over the Congo in 1908. It responded to the breakdown
by imposing a Southern-style plantation economy on the Congo via its Programme
Générale in 1909 (Zimmerman 2010: 116). In 1912, Belgium even announced,
though never executed, a plan that it would set up a Tuskegee institute in the Congo
(ibid: 179). It strengthened its plantation efforts when commodity prices fell in the
1920s due to the worldwide market crisis and because Katanga's "mineral revolu-
tion" (Nelson 1994:126) could no longer finance the colonial state. The 1933 plan
for a "total civilization" included the vast expansion of infrastructure and palm,
rubber, and coffee plantations based on compulsory, low-wage workers, just as in
the American South (ibid: 132-165).

Another similarity between the Belgian Congo and the "New South" was its
overt racism. Institutionalized racism and the vast number of statutes and regula-
tions that defined the do's and don'ts of the interaction between the different "rac-
es" were the most obvious commonalities. In the Congo, as in the South, the ideol-
ogy of white supremacy led to de jure racial discrimination, including limitations on

the free movement of the Congolese in white areas, restrictions on Black ownership of land, punishment in cases of disrespect towards Europeans, separate labor legislation, and a ban on the consumption of hard liquors for the Congolese. De facto forms of the color bar resulted in the segregation of the public sphere – including trains, hotels, and soccer stadiums – and an unofficial ban on interracial sex, which did not apply to white men (ibid: 183). This was very reminiscent of the American South indeed.

American-Congolese interaction also took place through the Black missionary movement. This was another result of the outward-oriented "uplift" philosophy of the Black American elites. In the wake of worldwide Christian expansionism in the late 19th century, through which the number of American missionaries of all denominations doubled from 1885 onward, at least 113 Black American missionaries were sent to Africa between 1877 and 1900 (Williams 1982: 4-5, 85). These missionaries were overwhelmingly middle class and highly educated in predominantly (white-sponsored) all-Black institutions, such as Lincoln University, which was co-established by northern Presbyterians with the aim of training Black American missionaries (ibid: 41). Since tropical Africa was considered the white man's grave, it was predominantly Blacks who were sent to areas, where the death toll through disease was substantial. This was very much in accordance with the genocidal anti-Black atmosphere of those days, which, in turn, made it difficult to convince well-educated African Americans to go to Africa (ibid: 9, 35).

Starting with the missionary work of Amanda Smith in Liberia (ibid: 14), who promoted her profession continually through speaking tours, African American missionary sentiment seems to have developed in the late 19th century. By the end of the century, the African American missionary movement was in full swing, twenty representatives of which went to the Congo (the second largest contingent, after Liberia)[14] and founded the American Baptist Congo Mission in 1881 (ibid: 19, 85). It is the accounts of (and on) Black missionaries that considerably shaped and influenced the broader Congo discourse at the turn of the century.

FRESH TOPOI, NEW EPISTEMOLOGIES, OLD MEANINGS

First Topos: The Congo-as-Darkness

The arrival of Black and white missionaries constituted a distinguishable discursive event in the overall Congo discourse in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This continuous attention was part of a larger missionary hype to which most historians

and journalists responded affirmatively – at least roughly up until the late 1910s. Although there were notable exceptions to this celebratory attention, such as the reverend Rufus L. Perry's 1888 pamphlet The Cushite; or the Children of Ham (The Negro Race), which flatly ignored the subject,[26] there clearly existed a consensus among Black historians on the desirability and importance of the missionary movement.

The response of Black intellectuals to the movement was instantaneous. Although hardly any Black missionaries worked on the African continent at the time when William T. Alexander published his 1888 History of the Colored Race – Amanda Smith in Liberia, Susan Collins in Angola, and Theophilus E. Scholes in the Congo Free State were the exceptions (Williams 1982: 14, 19) – the author nevertheless lauded the missionary drive of "colored schools" (1888: 530). These schools, Alexander suggested, were "the great hope of Africa's evangelization by her children in America" (ibid). Other historians, spearheaded by Booker T. Washington, sought to integrate this educational connection between Black schools and Africa's evangelization as well.[27]

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26 This book aimed at proving the ability of Black Americans to progress based on biblical and "ancient literature and archaeology" (Egyptian and Ethiopian ancestry of Black Americans in particular). In the same vein as mid-nineteenth century forefathers such as Lewis with his Light and Truth, Perry used biblical and classical narratives to make a number of theoretical claims about the "the oneness and brotherhood of the human family" (1887: 7) and to draw attention to the fact that "ancient Cushites were the world's magnates and the world's schoolmasters. Those of Ethiopia taught art, science, and theology to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians taught the Eastern nations and the Greeks and the Romans" (ibid: 25). Through his Afrocentric and contributionist approach, Perry aimed at "inspiring the Africo-American with an ambition to emulate his forefathers" (ibid: 31).

27 The 1909 Story of the Negro described Washington's own Tuskegee mission to Togo at length. Washington frequently alluded to Black missionaries (such as Alexander Crummell) in his work, basing his own agricultural and social knowledge on accounts produced by white missionaries (such as Leighton Wilson: Washington 1909a: 44-48, 72). This embrace of missionary work can also be seen in Crogman and Kletzing's 1898 Progress of a Race (the expanded 1920 edition of which is consulted in this work), which incorporated the missionary efforts of the various religious African American churches into its story – such as the "praiseworthy work" of the Baptist missionary societies, leading to the applauded establishment of "mission stations" (1929: 321). William H. Ferris's 1913 The African Abroad referred to the work of missionaries in much the same way, identifying with approval an "aggressive missionary spirit" stirred up by what he identified as the "missionary movement" (1913a: 34).

This considerable discursive attention to Christian expansionism was encouraged by the Black journalistic newsmakers of the time, illustrated here by The Christian Recorder. As discussed in the First Chapter, The Christian Recorder was a widely disseminated, nearly nationally distributed Philadelphia newspaper that was sponsored by the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Christian Recorder had always shown interest in (mainly Methodist) missionary work in Liberia (Lapsansky-Werner 2006: 268), but an all-out endorsement and advocacy of the missionary ideology first developed at the turn of the century. Through reporting on events such as "Missionary Day" on March 5, 1885, The Christian Recorder itself became an advocate for the missionary movement. It noted that the time of "visionary talk so popular a few years ago" (1885a: n.p.) had become insufficient and openly called for the support of a mission on the "'dark continent'" (ibid). The paper argued, "There is no estimating power that can calculate the good we might do there" (ibid). A few weeks later, on March 26, 1885, The Christian Recorder reproduced a speech which announced the establishment of "an African Fund", asking for financial support from the readership. "The fields are already white unto harvest and the laborers are ready to go, but where is the money?" (1885b: n.p.), the paper asked.[28] Throughout these early years of the missionary movement, The Christian Recorder maintained a steady flow of reporting on missionary efforts.

Secular African American journalistic publications, such as the Boston-based The Colored American Magazine or the weekly The Chicago Defender, joined The Christian Recorder in its frequent reporting on Black missionaries. The Colored American Magazine became the "most widely distributed Black-oriented journal" in its short-lived career between 1900 and 1909 (Aberjhani/West 2003b: 65). Alongside it bourgeois orientation and expressed faith in educational "uplift" (see previous sections), the magazine alluded to missionaries in the context of colleges such as Spelman and Talladega, just as subsequent sections here will show many other historians did as well. The latter college, according to William Pickens, the author of the article "Talladega College" from April, 1906, (as well as the 1916 The New Negro: His Political, Civil and Mental Status and Related Essays, discussed above), had been "brought forth in that day of American history when the spirit of patriotism and the spirit of Jesus Christ were running exactly parallel" (1969: 244). This "spiritual impulse", Pickens continued, had carried the college "through one generation and now sweeps it along the second with a power for good that is felt in every section of the United States and among the heathen of the Congo" (ibid).

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28 This appeal for funding would return in many contexts, for example in the travelogues that individual missionaries would write to attract financial support for their work overseas.

With remarks such as these, the magazine mobilized the real-and-imagined geography of the Congo to highlight the depth of Black involvement in the missionary movement. In doing so, it also linked the Congo to heathenism and African American, male-dominated institutions to the "power for good".

The interest and support for this movement among historians, as well as other intellectuals, had waned by the 1920s, after a period of growing doubts. Brawley's 1918 *Africa and the War* demonstrates the skepticism increasingly expressed towards missionaries. On the missionary upside, Brawley dedicates a full chapter to David Livingstone's thirty-year scientific-religious contribution and applauds Livingstone's "scientific exploration" of the "interior of Africa" as well as his "'unwearied effort to evangelize the native races'" (1918: 18). While praising the explorer, however, Brawley raises serious questions about the potential for progress in these areas through missionary efforts: "To what extent after sixty years have we advanced toward [Livingstone's] ideals? With what justice are we the inheritors of his renown?" (ibid). By reminding colonial nations to take up their educational responsibility in order to turn "Africans" into intelligent citizens (ibid: 41), Brawley called for "education given by missionaries, but also something broader than that" (ibid: 40).

The skepticism towards the missionary movement that crept into Brawley's story only acquired strength among many of his successors, who stopped focusing on the movement altogether. Whereas Carter Woodson's 1922 *The Negro in Our History* still discussed in passing the missionary phenomenon, James Weldon Johnson's 1927 *Native African Races and Culture* abandoned the topic altogether. The strong decrease in interest in missionary topics suggests that the missionary ideology as a whole was under pressure. Historians grew increasingly impatient with the missionaries' inefficiency in bringing morality to Africa. The army of traders that trailed behind them was cause for major concern, for instance. Du Bois's 1915 *The Negro* praised "white missionary societies" for "accomplishing much good", particularly in the educational arena (2001: 139). Traders, however, were harshly criticized. In contrast to the missionaries, "white merchants are sending at least twenty million dollars' worth of European liquor into Africa each year, and the debauchery of the almost unrestricted rum traffic goes far to neutralize missionary effort" (ibid: 139).

The discursive event of missionaries received less attention over time, but Black missionaries did not stop going to Africa and, more specifically, to the Congo. This we know because newspapers such as *The Chicago Defender* did continue to focus on them, although the subject received dwindling attention there, too, and the tone surrounding it was less and less celebratory. Founded in 1905, *The Chicago De-*

fender had become one of the most influential Black American publications in the first half of the 20th century with a national circulation that peaked at a quarter of a million publications in the 1920s and 1930s (Aberjhani/West 2003a: 62). If literate African Americans knew any newspaper, in other words, this would be the one. As late as 1943, the paper discussed the considerable success in the schooling of African natives by Methodist "church schools and in probationary classes" in Southern Rhodesia, Angola, and South Africa (1943d: 22). In the preceding decades, considerable attention was given to a Spelman-trained "native African girl" who visited the U.S. in 1938 (1938: 3). The seventy-seven Presbyterian missionaries on the "dark continent" in 1926 also appeared in the news, four of which, The Chicago Defender announced, "are members of our race" (1926: 2). Increasingly brief and anecdotal as they may have been, articles such as these kept the discourse on missionary engagement alive.

Although historians and journalists grew impatient with missionaries, the question remains as to what drew them to the topic in the first place, especially in late 19th and early 20th centuries. To examine this in more detail, this work turns to A Narrative of the Negro, a text book published in 1912 by Leila Amos Pendleton. While contextualizing the book with regard to the literature of the time, the stakes that African Americans had in the missionary movement will be discussed: How did they explain their engagement? And what does this say about Black intellectuals in the broader discursive context?

Pendleton's book is an interesting case study, as it was published in a time when critical voices towards the missionary movement were gaining strength, but had not yet led to the silencing of the discursive event as a whole. A Narrative of the Negro also stood as both a deviation from and an affirmation of how history was written in Black intellectual circles in the early 20th century. Pendleton was one of the few female African American historians of that time firmly dedicated to inscribing Black female achievers in the American historical record. She focused particularly on women involved in the larger struggle against slavery – such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman (Pendleton 1912: 114-115, 140-141) – as well as those women active in the "women's club movement" or "the National Association of Colored Women" (ibid: 185-186). Pendleton was also interested in contemporary female writers, most notably Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (ibid: 142).

Typical for the time in which she was active, Pendleton was hardly taken seriously as a historian. She was important and well-known enough to be granted an entry in the 1915 Who's Who of the Colored Race. In it, however, only those of her roles considered befitting to women at that time were discussed: She was described as a "teacher in public schools" and the founder and leading member of the Alpha

Charity Club and the Social Purity League in Washington (Mather 1915: 214). As a female historian without a portfolio (and a husband who was her publisher), she produced a very modest mission statement in her own book. In the preface, she announced "a sort of 'family story' to the colored children of America" (Pendleton 1912: n.p.). With such humble rhetoric, she was easily dismissed by fellow historians (Dagbovie 2010: 110-112).[29]

How can we explain Pendleton's particular interest in the missionary movement? Put bluntly: Pendleton and others felt that an inferior Africa was in dire need of salvation by more enlightened Blacks. How did she, and others, pull this off, it must be asked, in times when the unity of the "black race" dominated contemporary rhetoric?

To be sure, Pendleton was committed to overhauling the rhetoric on Africa. Though it assumed a less personal tone than Booker T. Washington's, her vindictive and contibutionist "race story" attempted to save the African "Motherland" from degrading imagery, including that of the "'the Dark Continent'" (1912: 7, 16).[30] There were a number of other strategies, too, through which Pendleton and others[31] engaged affirmatively with Africa and its diaspora. For instance, she proudly highlighted "the Egyptians and other people of northern Africa" (ibid: 15), peoples from whom "the neighboring countries of Europe obtained their first instruction in the arts and sciences and received their first ideas of a written language"

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29 Pendleton received some attention as a historian through an article in The Crisis by fellow female author Jessie Fauset, who saw in her a "historian who has arisen in answer to our need" (qtd. in Dagbovie 2010: 112).

30 Washington, too, made this point by contrasting his old, unlearned beliefs to those he acquired through education. "I had always heard Africa referred to as the 'Dark Continent'," he wrote in The Story of the Negro, "I pictured it to myself as a black, sunless region, with muddy rivers and gloomy forests, inhabited by a people, who, like everything else about them, were black" (1909a: 18). Through his "study of the native races of Africa" (ibid), however, Washington claims he revised his opinion.

31 Others used their own strategies. In his Progress of a Race, Crogman aligned "personalities and careers of men" as different as Benjamin Banneker, Frederick Douglass, and Alexandre Dumas (Crogman/Kletzing 1920: 14). Washington's strategy, in turn, was to stress those alleged elements in African peoples that were laudable or recognizable in Black Americans, such as a "distrust for the city, not unlike that distrust of the Africans in the bush for the coast towns" (1909: 62). It goes without saying that Washington's assertion was interest-driven: As he focused in his life and work on the African American rural community, he obviously had a stake in it.

(ibid). What lay beneath this evaluation of Egypt was the ideology of the unity of the race.

The unifying ideology employed by Pendleton and others explicitly rejected absolute racial inferiority or superiority in theory, but failed to do so in practice. Crogman, for instance, asserted in his monograph Progress of a Race, or the Remarkable Advancement of the Afro-American Negro that "there is no absolute or essential superiority" (Crogman/Kletzing 1929: 14) in short sections such as the one entitled "No Inferior Races". However, this claim is followed by its outright denial: "[T]here are races with inferior conditions and these may be black or white" (ibid). Against this discursive background, it hardly comes as a surprise that Pendleton's work also produced dichotomies between Africa and the rest of the world. She did this through the idea of historical degeneration: "What has been in modern times called the Dark Continent [was] in olden days a light which lighted the world", she wrote (Pendleton: 15-16). According to Pendleton's story, however, those glorious ancient days were over. In fact, the tables had turned: "Civilization moved northward into Europe rather than southward into the heart of Africa" (ibid: 16). As this chapter will go on to demonstrate, this "heart of Africa" was a common way of discussing the Congo.

Historians such as Pendleton were not alone in their belief in "African" inferiority. The idea of an uncivilized African darkness produced by degeneration returned systematically in journalistic texts, as well, thus suggesting an attitude that was pervasive in Black American intellectual contexts. The Christian Recorder published speeches and articles that continuously referred to Africa as "the dark continent", which had to be restored "to its primitive glory in art and lead in civilization" (1886c: n.p.). Africans were discussed in ways that pitted them against the light of Christianity: "The attitude of the Christian world toward the darkest, we do not say the darker, race is a significant, loud and certain call to our church to go in and possess the land" (1889a: n.p.). The Christian Recorder thus divided Backs into "darker" and the "darkest" races, demarcating "darker" African Americans from the "darkest" Africans.

In contrast to the "dark continent", African Americans and other Blacks in the Americas (Jamaicans and Brazilians, for instance) had developed rapidly from the 18th century onward, according to Pendleton's textbook. This progress was achieved through various forms of "racial uplift" by "Negro churches, schools, benevolent societies and other organizations" (Pendleton 1912: 180). Via the rhetoric of "light" in her chapter titles – which range from "The Dawning Light" to "The Light Grows Brighter" and "The Light Diffused" – A Narrative of the Negro

stressed that African Americans were bearers of civilization (represented by the trope of "light") due to their perceived progress since the time of slavery.

With this global uplift narrative – African Americans who were enlightening "Africans" – Pendleton aligned herself with other historians and journalists. Booker T. Washington openly discussed African Americans as a Black avant garde that could light up African darkness. [32] The Christian Recorder, in turn, echoed Washington's and Pendleton's stance in a range of articles in 1885, that is, on the brink of factual colonization. It contended that "there is a bright destiny awaiting [Africa] in the near future, when her exiled and once lost, but now free and enlightened children, will return home and carry with them the civilization which has been imparted to them through the two hundred years of training" (1885d: n.p.). In the article "The Duty of the Hour" from April 23, 1885, The Christian Recorder elaborated upon the characteristics of those who should go to Africa, turning uplift issues (such as temperance) into a key aspect of the missionary discourse: "We need men who will unfurl the banner of intemperance, drive out the drunk fiend," the paper intoned, "men who can tame the Red Dragon of lust, who will open fire upon pride, vaulting ambition, heartless avarice, scorpion slander, velvet-lipped falsehood" (1885e: n.p.). Seen alongside the bourgeois ideals of temperance, chastity, and general ambition, the perversity of the rum trades, which came along with the missionaries, becomes particularly obvious.

It was in this broader context of racial hierarchies refuted and re-affirmed that the missionary movement found its advocates among historians and journalists alike. The two-volume 1913 history The African Abroad or His Evolution in Western Civilization, by the historian William Ferris, connected notions of racial superiority with missionary movements. Ferris urged African Americans here to "acquire the aggressiveness and tenacity of purpose of the Anglo-Saxon race", whom he

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32 For instance, Booker T. Washington told his readers in The Story of the Negro that Africans "are watching closely the progress of these American Negroes" (1909a: 35). The reason for this observation was that Africans "are beginning to realise that if it is possible for the ten million black men in America, surrounded by modern machinery and all the other forces of civilization, to get into line and march with the procession that it is also possible for them, in time, to follow, somewhat more slowly, perhaps, but in the same direction" (ibid: 35). Washington's story was awash in the vocabulary and argumentative strategies of the Social Darwinian dogma of his days. One discursively unified group of people ("black men in America") is compared to another alleged homogeneous group of that same race in Africa. While the former is said to lead the "procession" of "progress" and the "forces of civilization", the latter is discussed as barely able to march along, let alone at the same tempo.

considered the "advance guard of civilization" (1913a: 34). According to Ferris, from this Anglo-Saxon attitude "the great missionary movements have sprung", from which he hoped a crossover between white and Black would develop for the benefit of the latter "stock", leading to an improved specimen called the "Negrosaxon" (ibid: 34-35).

By invoking the light-dark dichotomy between Africans and Black Americans, at times in crude evolutionary terms, the rhetorical superiority of the latter was established. This found its clearest expression in the Black American historiographical discourse, as the next section shows.

Human Darkness: Cannibals, Drunks, Murderers

Central West Africa played no substantial role in Pendleton's missionary account (nor in the works of others), despite harboring the second-largest missionary contingent in the early 20th century. When they were mentioned, Congo missionaries mostly served as a template for ideas and interests reflective of African American sensibilities rather than Central African ones. Given the obvious underrepresentation and particular framing of the Congo missionaries in works of history, one is prompted to ask why this was the case. I will again turn to Pendleton's textbook to elaborate on this issue, discussing her intertextually vis-à-vis other works of history and journalism.

Apart from Pendleton, no historian reached a rhetorical level of specificity in their claims regarding the geography, history, or people called Congo within the context of Black American missionaries. Reductiveness, allusions, metaphors, and general vagueness were the standard. Booker T. Washington's first 1909 volume The Story of the Negro is a case in point. In his story of early missionary efforts in the "Kongo", with which he presumably meant the Kongo kingdom region around the "Kongo river", [33] Washington explained that "the Catholics were the first to

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33 Geographical vagueness pervaded Washington's texts and those of fellow intellectuals. The Congo was reduced to its river. Reading Washington's passage alongside others highlights to what extent this had become the standard. Like Washington, who focused on the area of the "Kongo" river, The Christian Recorder also approached the Congo via its watery parts, discussing it as "a rich region watered by the wide Congo and its twenty tributaries" where missions were established "on the banks of the Congo" near places called "Stanley Pool" (1885f: n.p.). The newspaper assigned contradictory traits to the river, simultaneously painting it as a source of legitimate pride and an embarrassment. According to The Christian Recorder, the Congo belonged to the "three great river systems" of Africa, along with "the Nile and the Niger". In this September 10, 1891 article,

send missionaries to Africa" (1909a: 271). Washington added that the Catholic Church was "the First Christian Church into which Negroes were received as members" (ibid). He continued by taking his readers back to the time when it all started for the Catholics in Central West Africa: "As far back as 1496, two years before the discovery of America, Catholic missionaries visited the mouth of the Kongo River. For several centuries after this a Negro Catholic kingdom existed in that part of Africa" (ibid).

Through quotes as these, the Western presence and activity in the Congo right now was legitimized by Washington through the longevity of Western engagement back then. Through this long-term engagement, the continuation of Euro-American meddling with the region was justified. Moreover, the Congo was strongly linked to the slave trade; Washington continued his account by reporting that this Catholic Congo kingdom was "eventually overthrown, as a result of wars with neighbouring peoples [...] Some of the first Negroes to reach America were Catholics. They came over with the early Spanish discoverers" (ibid).

Washington strongly instrumentalized missionary history to highlight the progress of African Americans. His suggestion that internal "wars with neighbouring peoples" brought down the century-old "Negro Catholic kingdom" of the Congo, highlights that a religious standard was destroyed by the natives themselves. This breakdown of Christianity is implicitly contrasted with the Black community in the Americas, which had turned itself into a religious success. "The first Negroes to reach America were Catholics" (ibid), Washington states, stressing the humble and dire beginnings of his enslaved ancestors in order to aggrandize African American achievements through time. Washington mentions the existence of "great Negro organisations" (such as the Black church) in this passage, which supported the "progress of the masses" (ibid: 278). Thus, by contrasting the failure of Christianity in the Congo with African American advancement, the author's message was clear: African Americans progressed from slavery to highly organized religious state, whereas the Congo was in a state of retrogression and in urgent need of re-evangelization.

The sole instance of concreteness to be found in Washington's discussion of the Congo occurs in his mention of the African American missionary William Shep-

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"Africa – Its Resources and Possibilities", the Congo river clearly bore the promise of progress through capitalist trade. "Stanley, in tracing the course of the unknown river and proving it to be the Congo," the article stated, made known "the possibility of reaching the heart of the continent by a waterway instead of by a long, tedious and dangerous land march, has conferred a benefit on Africa, on the world, the result of which only future years can measure" (1891: n.p.).

pard in the second volume of The Story of the Negro, who, according to Washing-
ton, was "one of the most successful of the missionaries of Africa today" (ibid:
338). Washington's interest in Sheppard was clearly not impartial: He noted,
"[W.H. Sheppard] was a student in my day at Hampton Institute, and later at the
Stilman Institute at Tuscaloosa, Alabama" (ibid). Washington wrote with pride on
the interracial cooperation between Sheppard, who "went out to the Kongo in 1896
with Reverend Samuel N. Lapsley, of Alabama, as a missionary of the Southern
Presbyterian Church [...] Mr. Lapsley chose a station to establish his mission at
Luebo, far in the interior of Africa, and Mr. Sheppard remained and worked with
him there until Mr. Lapsley's death" (ibid). Washington celebrated Sheppard as the
embodiment of aspects of "uplift" and the "New Negro", celebrating Black-white
cooperation and Sheppard's autonomy and success, even after the untimely death of
his white supervision (an aspect celebrated by Crogman as well, albeit with respect
to another missionary).[34]

A final outstanding element in Washington's passages is his awe for the discur-
sive authority with which Sheppard discussed his work in Africa "throughout the
South". "Mr. Sheppard has returned to America several times [...] and spoken
throughout the South in the interest of his work in Africa. Everywhere I hear him
referred to with the greatest respect, and even affection" (ibid: 338-339) What
Sheppard actually related about the Congo was hardly of any interest to Washington
or others. What mattered was that he had been in the Congo and talked about it as
an authority.

In contrast, Pendleton's A Narrative of the Negro went beyond Washington's
instrumental interest in Congo missionaries. She focused on Sheppard as "a colored
man and a citizen of the United States" (1912: 33) who possessed discursive author-
ity and brought pride to his colleagues and community, stating, "in 1911 he re-
turned to America from the Congo region and tells many interesting things" (ibid).
But she did more with Sheppard; she also hinted at the content of the Black mis-
sionary's story. When she talked about his tribal experiences, we gain potential in-
sight into why many historians felt uneasy integrating concrete information about
the Congo into the missionary strand of discourse. Pendleton writes (ibid):

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34 Crogman evoked this sense of a self-confident, self-sacrificing missionary service by nar-
   rating the story of "Miss Gordon", a Spelman Seminary graduate who "was appointed
   missionary to the Congo, in 1890, where she remained until 1894, when she was com-
   pelled by ill health to leave her work, and returned to Spelman. She hopes again to take
   up her chosen work after regaining health" (Crogman/Kletzing 1920: 409).

Among them [Congolese tribes] there was a tribe which he was the first civilized man to visit. The king of this tribe had heard of foreigners and their cruelties to the natives, and as he thought they were all alike, he issued an edict that no foreigner should enter his kingdom. But Dr. Sheppard had won the love of the tribes around Stanley Pool, and accompanied by some of them, he finally made his way into the forbidden land. He found the natives weaving their own cloth, making their own farming and domestic implements, and living very contentedly. He also came into contact with a tribe of cannibals, whose lives were, as a matter of course, on a much lower plane. He preached to them the Gospel, and after many years has the happiness to know that he and his helpers have been the means of bringing many to Christianity and civilization.

A Narrative of the Negro created a strong dichotomy here between Sheppard and the Congolese people, who were labeled both as a "tribe" and as "natives". The latter designation turned them into "original inhabitant[s]", as the 1899 The American Dictionary of the English Language testifies in its entry of the word (Lyons 1899j: 280). Natives were not citizens and could not be treated as such, although discussing the Congolese as citizens with certain rights was a potential discursive path that could have been taken: Pendleton, after all, did also label and discuss the Congo (i.e. the Congo Free State) as a state, in her work. As "natives", however, Congolese could be more easily subjected to the arbitrary rule and random cruelness of "foreigners".

Central to Pendleton's work was casting the Congo as "tribal" – a highly charged notion that turned Congolese "natives" into people in desperate need of evangelization. The American Dictionary of the English Language clarifies that "tribe" had strong ethnic and racial connotations, defining it as "a race or family from the same ancestor: a body of people under one leader: a number of things having certain common qualities" (Lyons 1899l: 455). It becomes apparent from the use of the word throughout the dictionary that this straightforward and balanced definition, however, did not apply for every "race or family from the same ancestor". Contemporary Euro-American races were not included in the descriptor; it pertained only to those from a distant past such as the "Franks" (Lyons 1899e: 181) or non-Euro-Americans in the present who were described as "savage", "primitive", "migratory", or "wandering" (Lyons 1899h: v; Lyons 1899b: 67; Lyons 1899g: 224).

Contemporary tribal people, according to The American Dictionary of the English Language, were in a "state of having husbands or wives in common" and were ruled by a king, "the father of a tribe" (Lyons 1899b: 67; Lyons 1899i: 257). In its more general meaning, tribes signified animals of the same kind, such as pelicans

and other water birds, or gorillas (the "largest of the monkey tribe, found on the west coast of tropical Africa"; Lyons 1899f: 201). As savage, stateless people who were autocratically ruled by a king (and were also linked to animals), tribes were not worth much as far as the dictionary was concerned. In its explanation of the word "Extermination", for instance, The American Dictionary used as an example for the "destruction of the prevalence or influence of anything", explicitly exemplified by "the extermination of inhabitants or tribes" (Lyons 1899d: 135). At this point, the ideological convergence between the dictionary and texts from its contemporaries cannot be overlooked – Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, for instance, also alluded to tribal extermination, invoked king-like figures (i.e. Kurtz), and dehumanized, as well as assigned animal characteristics to, the Congolese.

Through the tribal label, Pendleton successfully framed the Congolese as untouched by "civilized man" (exemplified by Sheppard). The so-called civilized man was thus framed as the first to enter "the forbidden land" in order to bring "Christianity and civilization" (Pendleton 1912: 33). The tribal aspect of the Congolese defined Sheppard's civilizing place in the world, as a bearer of light. This was done through the notions of civilized/uncivilized, heathen/Christian, and known/hidden. In a typical Congoist move, Pendleton split the Congolese into the worst and the best possible. On the one hand, she highlighted agreeable, industrious Congolese people who were "weaving their own cloth, making their own farming and domestic implements, and living very contentedly" (ibid). On the other hand, she used "cannibals" who were "on a much lower plane" (ibid) than the thrifty weavers as counterparts to this – hardly inspiring – image of native craftsmen.

Pendleton's weavers would be acceptable to many Black American contemporaries. Booker T. Washington was interested in them as well; while referencing "Mr. Verner's mission station" in "the heart of savage Africa" (1909a: 48), Washington identified people who have "never been touched by the influences of either the European or Mohammedan civilisations" (ibid), but who were remarkably gifted blacksmiths and craftsmen. Washington did not praise the Congolese for qualities inherent to them, of course, but rather in order to explain the notable Africanness of Black American craftsmen in the South, the privileged territory of Washington's activity. "Just as everywhere in the Southern states today, especially in the country districts, at the crossroads, or near the country store," Washington wrote, "one finds the Negro blacksmith, so, in some of the remote regions in Africa, every village has, according to its size, from one to three blacksmiths" (ibid).

Like Washington, Pendleton hardly mentioned the Congolese craftsmen and farmers in question for their own sake. She granted them the ability to perform self-sustaining manual labor to keep themselves afloat. She did this to underscore that

Congolese were not beyond redemption (brought to them by Sheppard). Pendleton did not breach the subject of whether Sheppard's salvation actually succeeded. "He preached to them the Gospel," Pendleton remarked, "and after many years has the happiness to know that he and his helpers have been the means of bringing many to Christianity and civilization" (1912: 33). The happiness of faith belonged to Sheppard, in other words, not to the Congolese, who, for all we know, may have been wandering in darkness ever since.

The "cannibals" who were "on a much lower plane" (ibid: 33) than the thrifty weavers and the farmers further testify to Pendleton's evolutionary framework. At the same time, these Congolese cannibals indicated that rock bottom had been reached in terms of human decency, as well as Christianity and civilization. The frequent "cannibal talks" in Euro-American intellectual thought, as Obeyesekere has noted, were effective in turning barely-known people into utter savages (2005: 1). The obsession with groups of people threatening to eat a Western traveler or missionary constituted a fantasy with little foundation in empirical fact (ibid: 15-17).

Cannibals were nevertheless an important cultural topos in American intellectual culture when Pendleton wrote her history. Almost every white or black intellectual cited in the contextualization sections of this chapter alluded to cannibalism, whether The Negro: A Beast to Red Rubber, "A Red Record", or Heart of Darkness. Additionally, numerous books linked the Congo specifically to cannibalism, such as Herbert Ward's Five Years with the Congo Cannibals (1891), Melville William Hilton-Simpson's Land and Peoples of the Kasai; Being a Narrative of a Two Years' Journey Among the Cannibals of the Equatorial Forest and Other Savage Tribes of the South-Western Congo (1911), and John H. Week's Among Congo Cannibals: Experiences, Impressions, and Adventures (1913). The cannibal was a discursive figure that justified any number of actions, including violent conquest and a sustained conversion effort. This is why Pendleton inserted the mention of cannibals from Sheppard's account – to re-affirm and stress the need for civilization and evangelical redemption in the Congo, on the one hand, and to elevate Sheppard's bravery and willingness to sacrifice himself for the greater good of enlightening the savage heart of the continent, on the other.

Central West Africa was not only "the shame of a christian Nation" (Crogman/Kletzing 1920: 175) due to cannibalism; the alcohol trade, too, turned it into a disgraceful geography. Alcohol abuse was used both as an affirmation and a rejection of evangelization by foreign missionaries. The historian Crogman wrote: "It is estimated that Christendom has introduced 70,000 gallons of rum into Africa to every missionary" (ibid). This was particularly the case in the Congo Free State,

where there were, according to the historian, "one hundred drunkards to one convert" (ibid). Crogman concluded his passage with a devastating critique of the alcohol-induced violence of the Congo: "Under the maddening influence of intoxicating drink sent from New England two hundred Congoans [sic] slaughtered each other. One gallon of rum caused a fight in which fifty were slain" (ibid). As a land permeated with alcohol, Crogman described the worst of possible missionary scenarios. Instead of bringing light in this case, they exacerbated the darkness of the place.

The Congo played a central role in the questioning of the missionary movement. From 1888 onward, The Christian Recorder illustrated the disastrous influence of alcohol on Africa through the signifier Congo in an article titled "The Dark Continent Made Darker" from May 24. It featured statements such as the following (1888b: n.p.):

Better, a thousand times, that Livingstone and Stanley had never gone to Africa; that King Leopold, the founder of the 'Congo Free State,' had never lived; that the millions of poor, ignorant savages, who have thus been brought into contact with European civilization and commerce, had been left in the darkness of the 'Dark Continent' than that they should now be deluged by millions of gallons of vile intoxicants.

It is not to expand the market for alcoholic beverages, The Christian Recorder lamented, "that these brave, and, we hope, Christian explorers 'hazarded their lives' for years, amid arid waters and burning sands, in peril of wild beasts and more savage men" (ibid). Articles such as these framed the Congo as a disappointment to the original idea of bringing civilization to Central West Africa by the founding fathers of the Congo Free State, such as Livingstone, Stanley, and Leopold. The "stealthy serpent of intemperance", caused by the importation of "one million of gallons of intoxicants" (ibid; 1890a: n.p.) led to the image of a Congo thoroughly drowned by alcohol. This topos never left the missionary discourse as a whole, contributing to the gradual disappearance of support for the movement as a whole among historians and other Black intellectuals.

This questioning of the legitimacy of Black missionary efforts in light of massive transgressions called into question the larger discourse surrounding "the dark continent". As soon as missionaries stopped being bearers of light, could "Africa" be re-framed too? Newspapers such as The Chicago Defender certainly began deviating from the standard derogatory stance assumed towards Africa as a whole. Articles that openly questioned the idea of the "dark continent" and the "darkest race" appeared with increasing frequency. Telling titles such as "Natives of Africa not Uncivilized" (Graham 1925: A1) and "How Africa is Rising" (1925a: 13), as well

as "Dark Continent Lures" (1928a: 2) and "Says Africa Not A Dark Continent" (1935a: 10), indicate that the image of the "dark continent" was challenged.

If one reads all statements about the Congo in the works of history and journalism together, very little concrete information was transmitted in the context of the missionary movement. Geographically, the Congo was imagined through metaphors of "darkness" and the "heart". A tangible feel for the Congo cannot be extracted from historical accounts, despite the occasional reference to places such as the "Kongo" river, "Luebo", or "Stanleyville". As far as the Congo's environment was concerned, Central West Africa was discussed as a space of disease and death. Historically, the Congo was reduced to a defeated "Christian kingdom" that was turned into a Free State with abusive tendencies. Socially, the Congolese were depicted as cannibals, murderers, drunks, or craftsmen (the latter analogous to African American workers). In accord with the missionary narrative (bringing Christian light to Congolese darkness), Central West Africa constituted both a place of horrible failure and near-hopeless natives: It was a thoroughly vague place, without any concrete or affirmative traits. The Congo's only redeeming quality was its rich environment and the missionary women and men overseas who sought to save it.

This begs the question: Were there alternatives to this discourse? In the following section, this will be discussed by reading the missionary discourse against eyewitness reports by Black American missionaries. What kind of knowledge did these missionaries disseminate and to what extent do their accounts differ from historical narratives that did not build on personal experience (such as Pendleton's and Washington's)?

Eyewitness Epistemology and the Textuality of Experience

Until the late 1880s, Black writers drew from the works of white journalists, travelers, and explorers, such as Stanley and Livingstone, to make "truthful" claims about the Congo and its supposed darkness. The "opening" of Central West Africa, as well as the push factors of oppression in the U.S. under the Jim Crow laws, motivated Black Americans to leave their homes to visit the Congo or work in it, in the process producing additional reports on Central West Africa. Missionaries, in particular, transmitted their thoughts to the wider Black world through various media, including newspapers (illustrated here by The Christian Recorder), travelogues (embodied in the accounts of Smith, Sheppard, and Boone), and public speeches (which, in turn, were reported in media outlets like The Chicago Defender).

Text production on and by missionaries who were sent to Africa already began to appear at the start of the missionary boom. The Christian Recorder instantly in-

corporated their experiences and voices into its pages, whether these missionaries were from one's own denomination or not. Human interest was a central aspect of these articles. Two personal stories in particular were followed by The Christian Recorder: L.C. Fleming's and Charles Smith's. "Miss Fleming" sailed for a three-year mission to the Congo "under the auspices of the Baptist Missionary Society", The Christian Recorder noted in 1886 (Fleming 1886: n.p.). It published Fleming's letters to the Black historian William Still, informing readers about her health, her words of farewell, and her first impressions of the Congo (Fleming 1886: n.p; Fleming 1887a: n.p.; Fleming 1887b: n.p.).

Fleming's reports and letters contain many personal anecdotes. Of particular note is the petite histoire of Bishop Taylor's broken "Congo steamer" (1887b: n.p.). Fleming tells her constituency how "two men out from America" failed to repair it. In the end, "the boiler-maker" was "discharged", which provoked a strong reaction in Fleming: "We were all very sorry for him. Has no work as yet" (ibid). The letter continues in this personal tone by describing the mission station, the general mood ("we are all very well"), her housing situation ("I am not situated at all as yet"), and the classes she taught aimed at civilizing the local population (ibid). In her letters, Fleming relies on a rhetoric of uplift, advancement, and "savagism" (Obeyesekere 2005: 2) characteristic of the mainstream of her day: "I asked one of the boys of my class to write you a letter, which you will find enclosed [...] The letter is poor English, but when you think of the dear little fellow being a wild savage ten years ago you would look in wonder on him now" (1887b: n.p.).

Money is also a frequent subject in Fleming's letters, which highlights one of the purposes of these eyewitness texts: to rally for funding. The failed efforts to repair Taylor's ship were significant to her since it was considered "a waste of time and money" (ibid). In her letters, the cost of her house in the Congo is openly announced and legitimized. Fleming writes, "A very loving English lady, whose husband died here last Christmas and whose companion I am in the school work, kindly opened her doors until I could build, or have built, a house" (ibid). Then, in the following lines, Fleming shows her spirit of the "New Negro's" self-reliance by stating that "I have written to friends asking that they afford my house. It will cost only two hundred dollars" (ibid). As she imagined she would be more at home in a house "given me by friends out of love and sympathy than have my Board make an appropriation for it" (ibid), the appeal for adequate funding could not be ignored. The money issue came up often in eyewitness accounts by Smith, Fleming, Sheppard, and Boone, too – the latter two writing for this reason a considerable time after their experiences: Boone's account, written in 1927, announced his fund-raising ambitions right at the start of his book (1927: vii).

The level of human interest in the Black missionary Charles Smith was such that when he prepared to leave (a process discussed in detail), The Christian Recorder listed the possessions he took along, such as a "large number of Bibles, hymn books, love feast tickets, church and Sunday School class books, local preachers' and exhorter's licenses, catechisms, handy songsters, primary lessons, children's day lithographs, souvenirs, dedicatory services" (1894: n.p.). More so than in its articles on Fleming,[35] The Christian Recorder bathed the atmosphere surrounding Smith's departure in the rhetoric of heroism: One of the articles on Smith was titled, tellingly, "On African Shores; The Man with an Iron Will" (1894: n.p.).

Smith's story showcases how (African) American self-confidence and -importance was boosted through the missionary movement. This mentality was reinforced by Smith's reports to The Christian Recorder: Smith wrote on his departure, "I was to attempt to travel eighteen thousand miles by sea, single-handed and alone" (Smith 1895b: n.p.). He continued, "I was to endeavor to traverse the West and Southwest Coasts of Africa for more than six thousand miles – to pass through the meridian line and under the equatorial line to a point about five hundred miles south thereof" (ibid). To stress the enormous scale of the enterprise, Smith mentioned that he was to be "borne upon the mighty Congo from Banana Point to Matadi – the southwest terminus of the Congo railroad" (ibid). Smith left no doubt that the Congo signified an Other very far removed from himself, exclaiming, "Strange land, strange people, strange scenes!" (ibid).

The "stars" of the missionary accounts were the missionaries and their superiors[36] themselves. Those who drew their authority from their presence in the Congo

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35 The exception is when Fleming represented herself as a potential martyr in her goodbye poem, bidding farewell to her loved ones for the sake of philanthropy: "Millions dying without Christ! […] This cry has so aroused my heart / That I find here no place; / I must arise and go to them, / O, may they be released!" (Fleming 1887a: n.p.).

36 In the article "Has Methodism Fulfilled its Duty to the Extreme of Society?" from February 2, 1888, The Christian Recorder answered the question posed in the title by comparing the Methodist Bishop William Taylor to Livingstone and Stanley. The latter two were certainly applauded for their "heroic courage" and life-time service to "remove the veil which has so long shut out the light of civilization" (this was the standard discursive mode of The Christian Recorder when it came to white travelers such as Livingston and Stanley). The service by both men, however, faded "into insignificance" (1888a: n.p.), the article claimed, in comparison with the achievements and discoveries made by Taylor. In hyperbolic language, Taylor is described as "the greatest apostle of the nineteenth century, who with the spirit of a Paul and the physical strength of a Sampson, the courage

constantly wrote about their own experience, not the Congo. Their documents attest to their own accomplishments, through which the missionaries presented themselves as fine examples of Black bourgeois life at the turn of the century. These accounts regularly read like straightforward "New Negro" pamphlets. When Fleming published her poetic adieu in The Christian Recorder, she dedicated paragraphs to her "Alma Mater", which she framed as "A home of training dear" (Fleming 1887a: n.p.). A similar connection between education and the missionary spirit is present in the accounts by Sheppard, who also integrated his own life story, emphasizing the (very questionable) racial peace in his home state of Alabama.[37] In addition to this focus on interracial harmony, Sheppard evoked the spirit of uplift by highlighting his fine schooling in Hampton (1917: 16) and at the Tuscaloosa Theological Institute (ibid: 18), which had taught him two things in particular. First of all, it taught him an "ideal of manhood" (ibid: 17) through his interaction with the teachers at those institutions, who carried themselves "erect" and had "deep, penetrating eyes, pleasant smiles and kindly disposition" (ibid). This attitude would be helpful for his own Congolese "children" as well, it was implied. Second, this education incited in him a longing to "do something for the uplift of the colored ministry" (ibid: 18), a desire that resulted in his missionary work. As such, Sheppard emphasized self-reliance, interracial collaboration, education (in short: "uplift") as key elements leading to his missionary engagement.

Why did well-educated, Black, bourgeois Americans undertake a voyage as hazardous and dangerous as the one to the Congo, according to their own texts? Black missionary narratives demonstrate that personal and institutional desires, fascinations, and politics all played an important role. Charles Smith, for instance, explained that he embarked upon his 147-day "tour of the West and Southwest Coast of Africa" (1895a: 5) in order to gratify a "long-cherished desire to see Africa" (ibid). Second on Smith's list of his reasons was his wish to see what Europeans, Africans, and missionaries were actually doing on the continent. Furthermore, Smith said he wanted to "make some meteorological observations" and to "see if there are any openings for employment of the skill and energy of intelligent and industrious young Americans of African descent" (ibid).

Just as his white predecessors had done (cf. previous chapter), Smith justified his travels with a mixture of the scientific, economic, and personal, making his ac-

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of a Daniel, the willingness of a Ruth" had turned his back "upon the civilizing influences of his country" (ibid) to go to Africa.

37 Adhering to the interracial harmony propagated by "New Negro" pamphlets, Sheppard wrote in Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo, "The white people were always very kind to us – as they were to all colored people" (1917: 15).

count recognizable and believable to an audience. Like Reade, Stanley, and Livingstone, Smith insisted that his personal observations were scientific. To convince the reader, he laid bare his "sources of information" through which the "intelligent reader" could judge his story of Africa, its ancient races, and the efforts of the Europeans to colonize the continent (ibid: 6). In the retributive tradition of George Washington Williams and E.L. Lewis (see previous chapter), his observations were meant to correct the many errors concerning Africa that had been "propagated in consequence of writers generally not confining the subject of their looks to their own observations" (ibid).

Besides presenting himself as an agent of science and progress, Smith insisted on being considered a privileged eyewitness who deserved credit for having visited Africa. Smith begins the first chapter of Glimpses of Africa with a poem that emphasized just how much authority the eyewitness was considered to obtain in order to shed light on the Congo: "To see Africa from America is one thing; / To see Africa through books and magazines is one thing; / To see Africa through reports and hearsay is one thing; / To see Africa through dreams and visions in one thing; But to see Africa in Africa is another thing" (ibid: 21).

Smith's offhanded remarks throughout his work made it clear, however, that he was first and foremost a systematic reader of Africa and the Congo. Before Smith started traveling, he already acquired knowledge of the Congo that shaped the selection of topics and topoi he mobilized. Many names we encountered in the last chapter resurface in Smith's account: James Tuckey, Leighton Wilson, George Washington Williams, Henry Morgan Stanley, and documents from the ACS, as well as fellow travelers such as W.H. Sheppard. The historical contextualization of the Congo in Smith's work (but also Boone's and Sheppard's), moreover, suggests the extensive use of secondary literature. For instance, Smith wrote at length about the early missionary efforts in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries through accounts decidedly outside the realm of his own eyewitness observation.

Smith was not alone in admitting his heavy reliance on other authors. This formal characteristic appears in all of the missionaries' accounts, resulting in similar, but not identical texts; to call them "canonized stories", as Poletta does, seems accurate (cf. Introduction). Variations did occur, but they were fairly minimal. In contrast to other missionaries, for instance, Sheppard read the record of Henry Morgan Stanley's voyages into the Congo quite critically. Remembering Stanley's journey near Matadi, the Black missionary "found a road" which had been passed by "Mr. Stanley" (1917: 28). Sheppard was not pleased by what he observed, as he "saw some of Stanley's heavy iron wagon wheels lying by the roadside; also sunbleached skeletons of native carriers here and there who by sickness, hunger or fa-

tigue, had laid themselves down to die, without fellow or friend" (ibid: 28). Despite these ideological variations, eyewitness accounts very often reproduced existing representations of the Congo. If you've read one travel account, you've read them all, in other words, and it will be shown in what follows what this means in terms of their depiction of the Congo's geography, history, and people.

Geographically, the missionaries described the Congo the way historians and journalists represented it – water-centered and oscillating between the best (rich valley)[38] and the worst one could imagine (impenetrable, mythical[39] "jungle"). The label of the Congo Free State was gradually accepted.[40] Fleming's letter to The Christian Recorder described the "Congo River and country", on the one hand, as "picturesque" and "more beautiful than anything I have ever seen in nature" (1887b: n.p.). On the other hand, the "delightful climate" of the Congo resulted in an "excessive growth and decay of vegetation". Fleming thought that this caused the land to be suffocating, disease-ridden, and deadly: "This I think poisons the air" (ibid). Variations on this ongoing tension between the best and the worst can be found in Boone's and Sheppard's accounts.[41]

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38 In the course of discussing the potential of the Congo river, the metaphor of the "valley" – very much in vogue in the imperial build-up between 1880 and 1885 (cf. the last chapter) – was repeatedly invoked by The Christian Recorder. For instance, on June 14, 1888, citing a speech of the A.M.E. board of bishops, an article reported on an "opening of the Valley of the Congo" that would bring "to us increased responsibilities, as well as enlarged opportunities" (1888c: n.p.). As soon as the Congo region actually was "opened" for missionary work, however, the "rich valley" was increasingly replaced by its official colonial names, the Congo Free State and the Belgian Congo.

39 Jan Vansina notes that the "jungle" should be considered a "myth" that expresses "the European or North American hostility toward milieux that were utterly foreign to them" (1990: 39).

40 The Christian Recorder had moved to the label of the "Congo Free State" by 1890, for instance when it discussed the death toll of missionaries within it or when it announced the departure of new missionaries out of Spelman (1889b: n.p.; 1890b: n.p.). In the same vein, The Colored American Magazine consistently referred to the region as the "Congo Free State", just as The Chicago Defender systematically moved from the designation of the "Congo Free States" in 1918 to the "Belgian Congo" in 1925 the latest (e.g. 1918b: 4, 1925b: 4). These shifts mattered, as they stabilized the meaning of the Congo from a promising, barren, rich, watery valley to an accepted European possession.

41 The former saw the Congo both as a "land of perpetual spring" (Boone 1927: 8) and the negative emblem of the disease-permeated "'Dark Continent'" (ibid: 47). Sheppard, in

Missionaries produced few new representations of the Congolese; quite often they opposed the geography of the Congo to its inhabitants. Fleming's "admiring eyes" for Congo's nature, for instance, were openly and sharply contrasted "to the benighted minds of the inhabitants" (ibid). Although Sheppard reported more sympathetically and humbly about the Congolese than any other missionary did, his depiction of the Kuba contained topoi similar to those applied by historians and journalists. Whenever he discussed the common natives, their nudity was almost always described, with expressions ranging from "almost naked" and "half-clad" to "naked" (e.g. Sheppard 1917: 21, 48-49, 70, 81, 96). Fleming was subtler on this score, portraying the "dress" of the Congolese as "very simple, consisting only of a loincloth for the common people" (1887b: n.p.).

Fleming and others, however, stressed the existence of another, royal, "good" Congo – that of the "rich" and "the royal families" who "wear long choice skirts down to the ankle and a shoulder wrap besides" (ibid). Sheppard depicted the royal house of the Kuba in favorable terms, as well. At the same time, this allowed him to take up the topoi of the Congo-as-Slave and the Congo-as-Savage. Of particular significance is Sheppard's story about "a slave woman" (1917: 129) who was going to be buried with her recently deceased master. Sheppard "protested and ventured to rescue the woman" (ibid: 130), but was overpowered. His interfering with the men who were dragging the woman to her death was reported to King Lukenga, who was not amused. "He mentioned it to me," Sheppard wrote, saying that "'the burying of the living with the dead was far beyond the Bakete, who only bury goats with their dead, and that is why we bury slaves; they serve us here and then go with us on the journey to wait on us there'" (ibid: 131).

Sheppard's response was scathing: "I told the king in the strongest language I could command that it was wrong without the least shadow of justification" (ibid). Sheppard's response shows how rapidly his benevolence and cultural relativism crumbled in light of rituals he did not understand. Although he would openly state that the "natives" "know death" (ibid: 135), contradicting Gobineau's infamous assertion to the contrary, Sheppard's indignation worked to show that Congolese customs were amoral and evil and dark, and that he, as a bearer of light, must reject them.

Congolese royals and commoners were separated by how they looked, but were re-aligned in terms of their superstitions and idolatry, as well as their tolerance for cannibalism, alcoholism, and gender-bending. "Their religion consists of all kinds of superstitions. They have a different fetich for nearly every thing [sic]," Fleming

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turn, assigned a touch of mystery to the Congo forests and jungles, which he described as so "dense and impenetrable" that "everything must be imaginable" (1917: 59).

reported, which she corroborated by recounting the trust Congolese place in "witches" (1887b: n.p.). Cannibalism – a topos already at play in historical texts – is another classic missionary topic. A third returning topic was alcoholism, which also frequently appeared in the missionary discourse of the historians.[42] Gender bending, too, pervaded the accounts by Sheppard, Boone, and Fleming.[43]

Missionaries considered themselves credible eyewitness throughout their accounts, even when describing phenomena beyond their own observational horizon. Depictions of Congolese history, which remain largely unobservable in the field, were integrated in order to provide a credible justification for the missionary enterprise. Smith did this by openly discussing the unsuccessful history of the missionary efforts made by the Roman Catholic Church in order to underscore "how futile are all efforts to Christianize the African without the aid of civilizing forces and to instruct him in matters of religious faith before teaching him the necessity and value of labor" (Smith 1895a: 96). With much of contemporary discourse accusing the Congolese (via the signifier Africa) of being uncivilized and lazy, the missionaries blamed the "natives" for their heathenism, as it was their own "indignity" towards the missionaries that "obliterated every trace of Christianity from the land" (ibid: 101).

Rare were the Black missionary utterances that focused on the history of the Congolese in and by itself. In an exceptional passage, Sheppard provided information on the origins of the Bakuba, whose "real name" (Buxongo) is mentioned, along with their typical appearance, their essential character ("conservative and proud"), their migratory history, and their mythologies (1917: 114). Sheppard's story ran counter to the usual accounts debasing the Congolese. Sheppard took a step back in his story, leaving more space for the Congolese who, he stressed, "do not speak in 'baby language', but in a "full, highly intellectual and musical" one (ibid). Remarks such as these raise the question as to whether Sheppard developed ele-

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42 This became a topic in Smith's journey as soon as Congo travelers boarded the ship, an affliction of both Black "civilized natives", as well as white missionaries and traders (1895: 123). Smith noted, "The missionaries confined themselves to wine and beer; the others covered every form of drink that was obtainable" (ibid).

43 "The women, as in all heathen lands," wrote Fleming, for instance, "have all the heavy work of the family to do. The men do the sewing for the family, but the women do all the farming, bring all the water and wood and do the cooking. They do their farm work with the baby of the family tied on their back, as a rule" (1887b: n.p.). The opposition between do-nothing, slightly effeminate Congolese men (who do the "sewing") and sturdy Congolese women was already present in the material investigated in the last chapter and outlasted colonial times.

ments of a counterdiscourse through his interaction with the Congolese. In the end, his critical attitude towards a number of colonial attitudes was outweighed by his many strategies of imperial dehumanization.

Sheppard painted a picture of himself that resembled Livingstone more than Stanley (whose trigger-happy explorations Sheppard remarked upon critically, cf. above). Although the Black missionary aimed for control and command in most of the intercultural encounters, he refused to do so in Stanley's brash, violent fashion. Sheppard stressed instead the importance of remaining a gentleman, whose main characteristics were benevolence, humility, and empathy. "A kind act brings its reward, even in Central Africa", Sheppard remarked when he bought two ducks from a native who remembered Sheppard fondly because he had "given him hippo meat" (ibid: 54). Instead of shooting his way through to the wilderness, as Stanley had literally done, Sheppard tried to mingle with the "natives" and figure out what the Congolese were "thinking" (ibid: 127), as well as learn their language and "curious customs" (ibid: 67).

According to Sheppard's story, paternalistic and bigoted stances towards the natives only brought trouble. "Many times in Central Africa foreigners get into serious difficulties from which they cannot extricate themselves by disregarding the advice of natives" (ibid: 39). Through passages such as these, Sheppard repudiated derogatory portrayals of indigenous people. He also did this, although not exclusively, in order to portray himself as humane and disinterestedly benevolent. Mary Louise Pratt's seminal Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation labels this as an attitude of "anti-conquest" (1993: 37-83). Sheppard's "anti-conquest" strategy also included belittling the Congolese. They might be worthy of some respect, but they most definitely and desperately needed assistance from Sheppard in order to be elevated to his level of civilization. Sheppard took the Congolese seriously in the relativist fashion of his day, which allowed for a discussion of the Congolese as human equals (theoretically at least), while simultaneously deeming their culture inferior. As a consequence, the Congolese mostly function as add-ons in Sheppard's story. The Congolese are Sheppard's informers, the carriers of his supplies, or the subjects of anthropological investigation, whose words and practices were translated and transmitted through Sheppard. This raises the question: To what extent could Sheppard actually translate what he found? Did he actually understand what was going on around him?

Although Sheppard gave the impression that he grasped the language spoken by the "natives" by quoting snippets of their native tongue in his account – a habit that was (and remains) common in ethnographic practice (Fabian 2000b: 135) – what

was it that he understood? [44]If he was able to truly read his surroundings, should it not be considered surprising that Sheppard felt isolated in the Congo, despite being surrounded by so many Congolese he would frequently call his "friends" (e.g. 1917: 47, 76, 84)? "Alone with God, no friend, no companion, no one. Alone! Alone!", Sheppard wrote at one point (ibid: 94). Since Sheppard would never talk to the Congolese as equals (he essentialized them, placed them in hierarchies, and depicted them ironically),[45] his isolation was understandable and persistent.

Sheppard's benevolent (but dismissive) take on the Congolese emerges most strongly in his many speeches on Central West Africa in the United States. The Chicago Defender described the first of his spoken accounts on July 6, 1918 in the article "Grace Presbyterian Church Celebrates Thirtieth Anniversary" (1918a: 10). The article discussed a church anniversary on which Sheppard served as the "principal speaker". The title of his speech, "In the Forbidden Land of King Lukenga and into the Camps of the Cannibals", was revealing in terms of how he communicated his own work in the Congo as heroic missionary work caught between a despotic African king and the cannibal Congo masses. The article stated that the returned missionary held the attention of his audience for an hour by telling "how he started with a few school children under a bamboo tree, and after twenty-give years there are now 900 teachers of those same people" (ibid).

Sheppard thus stressed his own cultural proficiency (which should be questioned in the first place). This was to be understood as an amazing achievement, given the enormous challenges he encountered (such as the many "African languages" he had to master). Six years later, The Chicago Defender reported on another speech by Sheppard, this time at Hampton on January, 19, 1923, on the "baffling problems which face the missionaries in Africa" (1923a: 3). As far as just what these problems were, the reader was not told; missionary uplift was "out" by then, and secular civilization efforts were the talk of the day.[46] Cannibalism nevertheless reappeared as a topic in this article. The newspaper reported how Sheppard

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44 An epistemic question also raised by Jan Vansina's Paths in the Rainforests: "Outsiders had to rely on inside informants, often on only a single major informant who remains unnamed, and they were likely to misinterpret what they saw and to misunderstand what they were told for lack of knowledge of the local language" (1990: 24).

45 Irony is also part and parcel of Boone's account. "Would you believe me if I tell you that those people have lawyers that plead for their clients; and question the witnesses just as we do in our courts," Boone asked in the section "Habits and Customs" (1927: 31).

46 In that same article, the newspaper described how much the former Congo Free State had changed after "King Albert has come to the throne […] He is building railroads, bridges, hospitals and schools" (1923a: 3).

"vividly described some of his experiences with African wild animals and strange peoples, including the cannibalistic Zappa Zaps" (ibid), therefore again stressing the topic of cannibalism. Only hinting in passing at the highly-cultured Bakubas, Sheppard seems to have continued his lecture, according to The Chicago Defender, by showing a "valuable collection of African curios" which are described as "trophies" of "African customs and superstitions" (ibid), thereby underlining how "heathen" the Congo remained. Sheppard's release from prison after protesting Leopold's regime was discussed as a heroic deed. Sheppard is reported as having said, "When I came out of prison in Leopoldsville after eight days of trial 3,000,000 of our people and yours came out of slavery into the light of liberty and true freedom" (ibid).

If Sheppard's account and that of other missionaries illustrate anything, it is the textuality of eyewitness Congo experiences. Whether authors actually had been in the Congo or not was not decisive in how they wrote about it, in other words, since they were socialized through texts that would shape their vista in very similar ways, almost independent of their experiences. This vista focused on Congolese "lack" – people that should be helped by "us" to overcome their own inability – in an environment that was abundant. This "lack" varied from alcoholism to cannibalism, from the upper to the lower strata of Congolese societies, from changeable to immanent traits. Due to the many textual similarities, the distinction between "new knowledge" and "old knowledge", or between eyewitness accounts (such as Sheppard's) and accounts written by historians in the 19th century (cf. the last chapter) was not as clear-cut as one might suspect. Often, these pieces of knowledge built upon and reinforced each other, turning knowledge on the Congo into a "bricolage", or a reconfiguration of knowledge both from the past and present (Burke 2012: 86).

Despite the production of similar texts by those able to visit the Congo, eyewitness knowledge nevertheless played an important role in Congo discourse. Its emergence led to personal observation becoming increasingly privileged in the discussion of the Congo: It became imperative, in other words, to go to Central West Africa if one wanted to make claims about it, as becomes increasingly apparent in this work (cf. the next chapter and Conclusion). This eyewitness epistemology reinforced the scientific positivism of earlier decades, as discussed in the previous chapter. The belief in understanding other people and their cultures through "imaginative sympathy" (ibid: 77-79), as well as hermeneutics, objective observation by those with the right academic credentials, the right gender, or the right religious or humanist intentions, reached new heights in the colonial age, however. Imperialism profited and drew massively from the eyewitness epistemology. The imperialist knew the Congo: s/he had anecdotes to tell, truths to claim, networks of "natives" to rely on (cf. Said 2003: 112). Imperialism thus increasingly produced a privileged

body of knowledge that drew on the authority of those who went to the Congo be-
cause they had stakes in it – missionaries, colonists, adventurers. This privileging of
those in the "field" versus desktop intellectuals (i.e. academics, activists, editors
with no means of actually going to the Congo) became increasingly important in the
colonial age (Burke 2012: 35).

Missionaries were extremely credible knowledge brokers and disseminators of
truth, both in their own churches and beyond. Hidden behind this knowledge pro-
duction were interests that went far beyond a humanitarian interest in the Congo,
however. The Congo was a template that enabled the casting of oneself, in contrast
to it, as heroic, moral, and civilized. In the course of this staging and self-styling,
the observable Congo was left by the wayside, producing the Congo in known and
very specific and detrimental ways. This instrumental narrative was strengthened by
another discursive trait within the broader Congo discourse: The Congo-as-
Example, which gained traction when the atrocities of the Congo Free State began
receiving public attention.

Second Topos: The Congo-as-Example

White eyewitnesses, particularly missionaries, played an important role in alerting
the world to the Congo's forceful transition to global capitalism. Despite the fact
that there existed Black Americans who participated in the critique of Belgian im-
perialism in very concrete ways, exemplified in this section by the historian George
Washington Williams (author of History of the Negro Race; see last chapter) and
the missionary William Henry Sheppard (author of Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo;
cf. previous section), their activism hardly attracted any attention from fellow
American intellectuals.

By 1889, George Washington Williams had become increasingly involved in
Leopold II's colonial project, leading to a personal encounter with the king, who he
initially discussed as "one of the noblest sovereigns in the world" (qtd. in Franklin
1998: 182). Williams even proposed recruiting Black Americans from Hampton, an
enterprise that ended disappointingly, since none of the students showed any inter-
est in traveling to the Congo Free State. What was missing from a convincing case
to emigrate, according to Williams's biographer John Hope Franklin, was firsthand
knowledge of Africa (ibid), and so the historian went there in order to obtain eye-
witness authority.

On his way to Africa, Williams visited the White House (where he promised to
prepare a memorandum on whether the U.S. should ratify the Berlin Act or not). He
also visited the royal Palace in Brussels, where Leopold attempted to dissuade him

(in vain) from traveling to the Congo (ibid: 148-179). Both visits illustrate the cultural capital wielded by Williams. Once in the Congo Free State, his two-month stay in 1890 gave him a firsthand impression of the abusive situation there (ibid:180-221). This resulted in "An Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo" (Williamms 1985), as well as "A Report on the Proposed Congo Railway", which was added to the letter (Williams 2006). These texts appear to have been generally accessible and debated in Europe and the United States by the autumn of 1890 (Franklin 1985: 208), making Williams one of the first intellectuals to publish a widely read, all-out indictment of the Congo Free State.

In his "Open Letter", Williams drew on his status as a Congo traveler (and on the observations of other "competent and veracious witnesses"; Williams 2006:121) to firmly dismiss Leopold's humanitarian claims. The claims of acting in the Congo out of "humane sentiments" in order to build a "Christian civilization of Africa" (ibid) were, according to Williams, a travesty. Williams charged Leopold with twelve offences in his "An Open Letter", faulting him for violating the General Act of the Conference of Berlin, permitting the slave-trade to flourish, allowing for the misrepresentation of the Congo as fertile and productive through the works of Henry Morgan Stanley (quite the contrary was true, according to Williams), and lacking the "moral, military and financial strength, necessary to govern a territory of 1,508,000 square miles" (ibid: 125).

Williams depicted the Congolese through discursive elements already used by contemporary Black missionaries, as well as those Morel would employ a few decades later. A double strategy is at work in the depiction of the Congolese in Williams's letter: The Congolese oscillate between innocence and savagery.[47] Williams thus wrote his letter using discursive strategies and rhetoric quite similar to

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47 Congolese are, on the one hand, willful executors of "cruelties of the most astounding character", of which Williams foregrounded the atrocity of "burying slaves alive in the grave of a dead chief" (Williams 2006: 125). Stories of cannibalistic cruelty highlighted Congolese savagery: "[B]etween 800 and 1,000 slaves are sold to be eaten by the natives" (ibid). To Williams, the "greatest curse the country suffers" from at the time of writing was the "black soldiers, many of whom are slaves" (ibid: 126), who the Congo Free State hires from Zanzibar in order to do its dirty work. On the other hand, Williams's letter depicts the Congolese as a faceless, majority of silent victims with "unexplained patience, long-suffering and forgiving spirit, which put the boasted civilisation and professed religion of your Majesty's Government to the blush" (ibid: 130). This majority did not take militant action against their oppressors – "during thirteen years only one white man has lost his life by the hands of the natives" (ibid).

Morel's and Conrad's, both of whom were in the Congo around that same time (but would publish their seminal work considerably later than Williams's). The letter of Williams, however, did not have the impact that Morel's and Conrad's work did. One reason for this is that Williams's accounts were published more than a decade earlier, when major newspapers such as The New York Times had not yet paved the way for an accepted critical perspective on the Congo Free State. By the time Morel and Conrad published their texts, the Congo Free State had already been discredited.[48] A second reason for the ignoring and open dismissal of Williams's letter was his biography and, above all, his perceived "race". Led by Henry Morgan Stanley and Leopold II, Williams was accused of being a blackmailer of the Belgian king.

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48 By May 31, 1897, The New York Times had firmly taken up the term "atrocities" to discuss the brutalities in the Congo Free State. In an article with the title "The Congo Atrocities", the Swedish missionary "Sjoblon" was featured as he spoke in New York on "West African Christian missions" (1897: n.p.; that same missionary already quoted by Morel, albeit with a different spelling; cf. section above). In that same article, The New York Times concentrated almost exclusively on the missionary's view of the brutalities. "He admits many of the charges are true," The New York Times wrote, "such as the mutilations and the severing of hands by the soldiers" (ibid). As with Morel and Williams, the ultimate responsibility for this extreme violence was placed with the Congolese, since "native custom [are] extremely difficult to eradicate", as The New York Times paraphrased the missionary. The newspaper did not issue any kind of verdict on the murderous role of Europeans, even defending the white officials. It indicated that the offences of the natives were punished and that Sjoblon ultimately provided a "justification of the Congo administration." Over time, this apologeticism disappeared in The New York Times. Indeed, as more and more eyewitness came forward, The New York Times covered the Congo Free State increasingly critically. An article on January 3, 1902 reported on an ex-official of Leopold's state (named Captain Burrows) who claimed that the "conditions prevailing in the Congo Free State were a disgrace to civilization" (1902: n.p.). The core of the article was the story of an unnamed "American missionary" who had told the official that the state "employed 500 cannibals" who were used against the natives (ibid). Burrows knew this because he drew from eyewitness stories: "'I have a sworn testimony,'" Capt. Burrows is quoted as having said, "'of the Belgians handing over natives to cannibal tribes for the express purpose of being eaten" (ibid). Similar articles from The New York Times appeared in the same period with revealing titles such as "Oppression in Congo State: Belgian Government gets Rich at the Expense of the Natives" from January 1, 1899 (1899: n.p.). As more and more articles confirmed Williams's analysis of the situation in the Congo Free State, it became harder to dismiss the substance and persuasiveness of his early reports, as also expressed by Morel and Conrad.

Allegations of Williams's criminality were accompanied by racial slurs, as he was dismissed internationally as "a mulatto", a "colonel noir", or an "unbalanced negro" in many media on both sides of the ocean (qtd. Franklin 1998:209-212). The New York Times of April 14, 1890 rounded off this assault on his character (and on the assertions he made in his reports) by framing him as opportunistic and unreliable. A flat-out denial of Williams's claims was the result. "It is reported that some parties here have substantial pecuniary reasons for regretting that Williams ever came here", The New York Times asserted about his presence in Middletown (1891: n.p.).

Unlike Williams, Sheppard was taken quite seriously by The New York Times and other white newspapers. Although Williams and Sheppard reported on similar events in similar ways, Sheppard's accounts was based on his credibility as a missionary (which, at that time, still made a great difference) and were backed up by powerful whites and Blacks. The Times did not allude to his race or doubt the truthfulness of his assertions in the article "Trouble on the Congo". Sheppard's narration of "the reign of terror", as well as "slave raiding and plundering" in the Congo Free State (ibid), was actually conveyed by the white missionary in charge, Morrison, who had spoken to the press about what Sheppard had seen; at the same time, Booker T. Washington supported Sheppard's authority by quoting from his accounts in his own articles on the Congo Free State cruelties. In one of Washington's exemplary articles, "Cruelty in the Congo Country", appearing in the white magazine Outlook on October 8, 1904, Washington cited Sheppard extensively as a reliable "eye-witness" [sic], whom he identified (as he had in his other work) as "a fellow-student at Hampton Institute" (1904: 88). In Sheppard's quote, the cannibalistic atrocities of the Zappo-Zaps were spotlighted. "'Why are the people carved so, leaving only the bones'", Sheppard was said to have asked the chief, who answered "My people ate them" (ibid: 89).

In contrast to white news media such as The New York Times or Outlook, Black American newspapers like The Christian Recorder, The Colored American Magazine, and The Chicago Defender remained nearly silent about the Congo atrocities as they were happening.[49] In the same vein, few Black historians dis-

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49 The first mention of the atrocities in The Colored American Magazine appear in October 1909, in the context of the acquittal of the Black missionary William Henry Sheppard of "libel by a Congo concession company" (1909: 248). This charge was made because the missionary publicly faulted the Congo Free State in one of his articles for "tyrannically impressing whole villages for gathering rubber, for levying oppressive taxes and wholesale inhuman torture of the natives" (ibid). In this short text, the magazine showed an awareness of the longevity of the atrocities, as well as the activism against them. Famed

cussed the atrocities in detail. The few exceptions included Pendleton, Woodson, and Du Bois (the latter will be discussed in more detail in the final sections of the chapter).[50] The reluctance of Black intellectuals to focus on the Congo atrocities be-

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author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a long-time critic of the Congo Free State, was said to have "sent to the London Times a ringing appeal" to help free the missionary (ibid). In that same article, the acquittal of Sheppard was discussed as "the most important and perhaps helpful trial ever conducted in the Congo" (ibid). The reason for this is that the Belgian government in reality "admits the heinous crimes to long charged against it" (ibid). With these statements, the magazine hinted at its awareness of the atrocities and indirectly highlighted its silence about them.

50 Pendleton approached the crimes in the Congo from a decidedly Western perspective. Stanley's explorations, as well as the Berlin conference, were interpreted in much the same way as the official rhetoric of the United States' administration had framed them, as exemplified above by John Tyler Morgan's report "Occupation of the Congo Country in Africa" (cf. above). Pendleton discussed the Berlin conference with this idealistic rhetoric by discussing the initial aims of the Congo Free State as the Euro-American push for economic and human freedom: "Trade should be free to all, the navigation of the Congo river should be free and the natives should not be oppressed, but encouraged to make the most of themselves" (1912: 32). Pendleton then contrasted the idealism of the official rhetoric to her perceived reality. This reality entailed, for instance, evil personified by the character of Leopold II. Things went awry in Central West Africa, Pendleton's story went, because the king of Belgium was an amoral leader. Pendleton discussed Leopold as a failed "kind of guardian" (ibid) who could not live up to his philanthropic duty. Leopold "was a wicked, cruel king, sly and crafty and by degrees obtained absolute power over every soul in the Congo" (ibid). "He [Leopold II] claimed that the Congoland and everything in it was his and that the natives were simply his tenants and, strange to say, the thirteen other countries allowed him to do so" (ibid: 32-33). As a cruel, ruthless, absolutist landlord (a slave topos that already appeared in the abolitionist writing of Morel and other Congo Free State activists), Leopold would not hesitate, according to Pendleton, to employ "wicked white men" as heartless and cruel as himself, who in turn would send "cannibal soldiers" to "burn the huts and kill and eat the natives" (ibid: 33). The end of Pendleton's Congo Free State story was a lament on the state of current Euro-American civilization. According to Pendleton, "The terrible things that were reported from the Congo, horrified the civilized world, and more than once Leopold pretended to stop them, but recently accounts of awful conditions have been published" (ibid). The inability to act according to one's own principles is reflected in the works of other historians, too. Historian Carter Woodson confirmed and reiterated this lament, writing, "the civilized world,

trays their refusal to report on the region as a whole. It was not a matter of numbers of victims that guided intellectuals to the topic. The "twelve million natives" (2001: 45) mentioned in Du Bois's The Negro were, in the end, hardly decisive. What mattered was the Congo's usefulness within one's own social and political sphere. The Congo would only be discussed if a credible Black eyewitness from the right walk of life (e.g. Sheppard) happened to be testifying. Central West Africa thus served as a template or an example of a political point that one truly cared about. Congo atrocities would be mentioned to draw attention to the irresponsibility of white civilization, for instance – a deficiency that Black Americans were all too familiar with and to which they would respond. In their discussions of the Congolese, hardly any identification took place with them. The representations of the Congolese oscillated between impotent innocence and murderous savageness – two traits American intellectuals could not incorporate into their own "New Negro" philosophy. This highly selective and instrumental talk about the Congo atrocities foreshadowed Central West Africa's full absorption into an all-out African American local episteme.

Parochial Epistemology

The Congo-as-Example became common sense through the widespread dominance of the local: Whatever happened globally, the local mattered more. This is a phenomenon well known to media scientists, of course. International news is often domesticated and particularized for local audiences by anchoring foreign reports within narrative frameworks that are already familiar and recognizable to those audiences (e.g. Claussen 2004: 25-28). Thus, most reports maintain both global and culturally specific orientations by constructing the meanings of these events in ways that are compatible with the culture and the dominant ideology of societies they serve (ibid: 28). The treatment of the Congo within the American archive goes well beyond "domestication", however. Since the Congo was increasingly absorbed by a variety of American situations, it ultimately and literally became "the American Congo", displacing Central West Africa to such an extent that it became at times almost completely unrecognizable.

As a multifunctional signifier, the Congo was used to designate, first of all, the racially justified mass murder of Blacks by individual white Americans. The correspondence between America and the Congo is quite obvious here. Since the atrocities in the African Congo were understood by African American intellectuals as the responsibility of Leopold II, American situations were labeled as Congo as soon as

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then, threw up its hands in holy horror; and the very name of Leopold II became anathema" (1936: 135-136).

they involved a powerful, unscrupulous, murderous, white male in an oppressive, anti-Black context. In the article "First Picture of Georgia Murder Farm" of April 2, 1921, The Chicago Defender recounted the story of John Williams, a plantation owner who "Kills 11; Buries 6 Alive". Like the king of Belgium, Williams is framed as an absolute and ruthless ruler of his farm. The equivalent of severing hands (as was the case in Leopold's Congo Free State) was "pour[ing] acid" in the mouths of Blacks and knocking them unconscious with an ax, after which point they were dumped into the local river (1921b: 1). The Chicago Defender labeled the ruler of this "murder farm" the "Leopold of Georgia" and began the article by telling its readers that "The Belgian Congo has been outdone" (ibid).

The newspaper never clarified why the crime in Georgia ought to be considered worse than those committed in the Belgian Congo. But in the final paragraphs of the article, The Chicago Defender pointed to why it found the analogy fitting. Because John Williams's practice was depicted as "prevalent throughout Georgia in the backwoods towns" (ibid), the newspaper framed the case as a model example of a "system" of anti-Black killing: "Bodies of men have been found in deserted spots all during last year [...] farm hands are separated from their wives and children by white plantation owners as in the days of slavery, and children born out of wedlock are common under the peonage rule" (ibid). The same catchwords employed to describe Leopold's mode of ruling thus reappear in the American context. Leopold's American counterparts treated their subordinates cruelly through a system of exploitation very similar to slavery. The "hands" that were cut off in the African Congo by Leopold were in this way aligned with the maiming and killing of "farm hands" in The Chicago Defender.

The Congo was explicitly mobilized, moreover, to provide a label for the overall system of anti-Black violence in the United States, exceptions to violence against Blacks on the international plane notwithstanding (e.g. Haiti).[51] The Congo therefore designated the economic, social, physical, and psychological violence of Jim Crow laws as a whole – not just individual cases of violence perpetrated by murderous white males. In his seminal The Negro Faces America, the white American writer, Civil Rights activist, and long-term publicity director of the NAACP

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51 While discussing a potential "naval base in the Haitian Republic", The Chicago Defender was quick to advocate sending Black American troops. The reason was that Blacks would not make the same mistakes as white American soldiers. "Already we have seen the fruits of American missionary work in Haiti", The Chicago Defender wrote December 11, 1920 in an article titled "The Call of the Blood". It continued, "The investigation now going on at Washington has revealed a condition equaled only in brutality by the treatment meted out to the natives of the Congo by the soldiers of king Leopold of Belgium" (1920b: 12).

(1919-1932) Herbert Seligmann actively used the Congo as a metaphor for this purpose. In a chapter titled "The American Congo", Seligmann lists the "innumerable brutalities" against Black people (1920: 219), ranging from "lynchings" (ibid: 220) and "black codes" (ibid: 221) to all-white courts (ibid: 237) and the peonage system, which kept Blacks in a "condition of servitude and oppression" (ibid: 223).

Seligmann's 1920 book was a remarkable case of how the Congo no longer referred to Africa: The author himself did not mention the continent once in his book. The remarkable malleability of the Congo signifier, therefore, was not only consumed by the signifier "Africa", as demonstrated earlier in this book, but also by the signifier "America", or any part of it that was oppressive enough to earn that label. The Congo stood in practice for many horrific geographies. It could signify the South as a whole, or just a part of it – ranging from whole states, such as Alabama or Georgia, to individual regions, such as St. Louis or the Mississippi area. Central West Africa was thus incorporated into an American geography of horror, including famous judiciary scandals such as the trial of the Scottsboro boys in 1933, which elicited scathing comments in The Chicago Defender, including "Watch Alabama go Congo" (1933b: 1) or "The American ruling class stops at nothing to perpetuate [racial oppression] [...] It has turned the South into an American Congo, inflicting upon the Negro people torture equaled to the most unbridled savagery of the colonies" (1933c: 10).

In contrast to the African American discourse on the atrocities in the African Congo, the American Congo signified brutalities committed by white people only. Whereas "native cannibals" constituted a major factor in the ideological defeat of the Central West African Congo, this was not the case in the discourse of the Congo as a metaphor for national horror. An article from February 12, 1921, titled "Civilized Savages", illustrates this aptly. Using language highly skeptical of missionary work in general, the article asks: "where is missionary work more needed than at home?" (1921a: 12). According to The Chicago Defender, "The sending of missionaries to so-called heathen peoples by the church in America is one colossal joke" (ibid). The reason why this was the case was that some white Americans were more in need of civilization than their Black counterparts abroad: "Are the heathen peoples of Africa and China any worse than the half savage human monsters of the South? Are the bushmen of the Congo or the head-hunting Igorottes of the Philippines any worse than the night-riding Ku-Klux?" (ibid). Just like Morel, who was lauded as an influential activist in The Chicago Defender because he is said to have "expose[d] the horrors perpetuated upon the natives in the Congo under Belgium administration", the newspaper would evoke the topos of "civilized savages" to criticize those involved in the American atrocities. Whereas Morel used this phrase de-

rogatorily in relation to Belgians in the Congo (ibid), the newspaper applied it to oppressive white Americans. In contrast to the discourse on the African Congo, the American Congo offered no active role for Blacks; they were merely the silent victims of white racism.

With this one-sided indictment of white perpetrators, the Congo signifier also enabled a rhetoric of global Black solidarity. As such, the "millions of people of India, the inhabitants of French and British possessions in Africa, and the millions of persecuted of the Belgian Congo" were mentioned in one and the same breath to highlight the need for a "common bond", as The Chicago Defender stated on September 11, 1943 in an article titled "A Common Bond" (1943b: 14). This kind of identification took place when the Congo appeared as an item on a list of other places of horror. Through statements such as these, the Congo again became an example for a crime against Black people in general, rather than a concrete, specific event in Central West Africa. As a consequence, while discussing the military presence of the United States in Haiti in 1922, The Chicago Defender aligned Egypt, India, Morocco, and Korea with the Congo in order to highlight the "same sort of pretensions set up by imperialists in every age" (King 1922: A3). In this passage, the U.S. is said to offer the same excuses "by which King Leopold of Belgium sought to cloak his atrocities and plunder the Congo" (ibid). In what follows, this idea of identification will be taken up in more detail, particularly in terms of how artists linked themselves positively to the Congo, while at the same time distancing themselves from it.

Third Topos: The Congo-as-the-Vital

Handicraft was one of the few elements portrayed positively in Congo discourse between 1885 and 1945, highlighting the importance of folklorist culture as a whole in casting the Congo in a more flattering light. Folklore had strong local elements, too, as will be shown, turning the Congo into a signifier of original "African" energy capable of revitalizing one's own African American culture. Historians such as Washington and Ferris alluded to the Congo in this sense by drawing on the works of Franz Boas, who had related a number of anecdotes on this subject. For instance, Washington's first volume of The Story of the Negro shared the anthropologist's experience with "the artistic industries of the native African" (1909a: 47). "A walk through the African museums of Paris and London and Berlin is a revelation", Washington quotes Boas as saying, "I wish you could see the scepters of African kings, carved of hardwood and representing artistic form; or the dainty basketry made by the people of the Kongo River and of the region of the Great Lakes of the

Nile, or the grass mats of their beautiful patterns" (ibid). Ferris quoted the same passage in the second volume of his 1913 The African Abroad. Additionally, he highlighted "the beautiful iron weapons of Central Africa, which excel in symmetry of form, and many of which bear elaborate designs inlaid in copper, and are of admirable workmanship" (1913b: 550). Congolese handicraft was depicted by Washington and Ferris as "dainty" and "beautiful" – both adjectives possessing positive aesthetic connotations of "taste", "refined" forms, or "delicacy", as Laird & Lee's Webster's New Standard American Dictionary of the English Language (1911) tells us in its entry on "Dainty" (Roe 1911: 324).

From the 1920s onward, craftsmanship was increasingly re-framed and re-interpreted as "art". Against the background of a broader Euro-American "vogue nègre",[52] African tools from the past and of the present were no longer considered curiosities, but works of art. For instance, Alain Locke's seminal "Art Lessons from the Congo", published in the magazine The Survey on February 1, 1927, depicted and discussed Congolese cups, lutes, horns, and other objects of everyday life. In his essay, Locke raised these tools to the level of an "art creed" (as the explanation of one picture of an armlet goes; 1927: 588). This re-evaluation of Congolese craftwork was driven by powerful African American interests rather than a thorough rethinking of Central West Africa. "Art lessons from such a primitive source as this seem ludicrous" (ibid: 587), Locke stated in his article, thus emphasizing that the quintessential drive behind revaluing Congo art is not the art itself. What made Congo art so interesting was its "already mature influence upon the practical technique of modern art", of which Locke mentioned "Cezanne, Picasso, sculptors like Lipcitz [sic] and Brancusi" (ibid). As such, Congo tools became a subject of interest because they had already entered the Western art scene.

The "message" (ibid) of Congolese tools to the American art scene was of great interest to Locke. The "importance of beauty in the ordinary", he suggested, rendered the Congo valuable for "American art" (ibid). This was particularly the case when one considered "the current revival of interest in the decorative and craft arts" (ibid). A second lesson that was to be taken from Congo craftsmanship was that it demonstrated "the superiority and desirability of an art that is native, healthy, useful as well as ornamental, and integral with life, as contrasted with an art that is artificial, borrowed, non-utilitarian, and the exclusive product and possession of cliques and coteries" (ibid). Locke pointed out that Euro-American civilization had a deeply devitalizing trait, which could be countered with African art: "We have discov-

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52 As the fashion for Black, primitive, wild, elemental, and erotic art in that same period was termed in urban France, for instance (Boittin 2010: 12-13).

ered that to capitalize Art, we have robbed it of some of its basic values and devital-
ized its tap-roots in the crafts" (ibid).

This new focus on "Africa" explained why the "Negro" came into style, accord-
ing to literary scholar Amritjit Singh. What interested Black and white Americans
was their nostalgia for a simple, forceful, and unmechanized existence (Singh 2004:
24). Fears of modernity and technology gave the "cult of the primitive [...] an ex-
traordinary foothold on this continent" (ibid). The Congo was part of this cult. The
"unexpected source of the folk crafts of Congo tribesmen", as Locke suggested, was
considered "an astonishing demonstration of vital art values" (1927: 587).

Elevating Congolese craftsmanship to art produced "counter-stereotypes" (Feith
2004: 278), heightening the sense of history and value of African Americans, not
the Congolese. Evoking the well-known topos of the Congo-as-Slave (cf. previous
chapter), Locke stressed in his essay that exhibiting Congo art meant that "we are
bringing over the cultural baggage of the American Negro that was crowded out of
the slave-ship" (1927: 587). Regaining this tradition was akin to rehabilitating "Af-
rica in general esteem and opinion", Locke wrote, once again reducing the Congo to
an example of the continent and African American roots, rather than an art scene in
and of itself. "More important still," Locke continued, "it has a very vital mission as
a recovered and reinterpreted racial heritage, of stimulating and inspiring the ex-
pression of the artistic genius of the American Negro, particularly in the arts of his
ancestors" (ibid). With these statements, Locke also highlighted the fact that Congo
art was artistry from a bygone age, of interest because it stood for a desirable Black
American heritage. The Black American might draw great "benefit from this pow-
erful lesson from his own past" (ibid), the author concluded.

When Locke and other proponents of the Harlem Renaissance transformed
Congo art into a useful emblem of desirable and essential African roots (building on
the idea of the Congo as the original home; cf. previous chapter), a frenzy surround-
ing Congo naming developed in American (popular) culture. If we take The Chica-
go Defender as a measure, the mid-20s already bore witness to a massive amount of
Congo references in American culture (the break with the pre-20s is considera-
ble).[53] The color of blouses and accessories was described as "Congo brown" and

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53 There are only a handful references to Congo naming practices in The Chicago Defender
prior to the 20s. The "famed boxer 'Congo Kid'" was the most notable example (e.g.
1914a: 6), who was remembered up until the 40s (1940b: 4). Another exceptional refer-
ence to the Congo before the Harlem Renaissance was a dance called the "Congo schot-
tische" (Jefferson 1914: 7).

advertisements tried to market incenses with the name Congo (1936: 6; 1933d: 5).[54] Popular music and night life were particularly prone to the fad. References to events, musicians, and the rise and fall of night clubs bearing the name Congo exploded in the 30s and 40s – from "Club Congo" in Chicago and Milwaukee in the 30s to similarly named clubs in Long Beach, Detroit, and other big cities in the 40s (e.g. Fulton 1937: 2; Hayes 1939: 9).

In the African American dance scene of these days, female dancers were called "Congoettes" and Congo bands and orchestras performed in Congo rooms, Congo lounges, or Congo halls, where they played songs like "Congo Lament" or "I go Congo" (e.g. Levette 1934: 9; Oglesby 1938:19). In the film arena, Oscar Michaux was mentioned and discussed in The Chicago Defender as the director of the film Daughter of the Congo in the late 20s; Paul Robeson was alluded to as a major character in Congo Raid in the 30s; and movies such as Drums of the Congo were announced in the early 40s (1942: 3).

Tracing what exactly the Congo signifies in all these instances is challenging, since these names were hardly accompanied by further explanation. That these names were employed so casually indicates, however, how normalized and naturalized the use of the Congo label in American culture had become. In one case, The Chicago Defender commented on the song "I go Congo" by the composer Clarence Muse as "a tom-tom, measured rhythm melody of powerful, insistent beat" (1933a: 5), connecting the song to emblematic primitiveness ("tom-tom") and to musical sensuousness ("insistent beat"). This reading is supported by texts written by the same Clarence Muse, who would become a Hollywood watcher for The Chicago Defender in the 40s. Throughout his articles, Muse commented on the works of jazz musician Duke Ellington, whose inspiration, according to the author, "will never run dry like the imitators, because he is true to his heritage" (1940: 21). The Hollywood watcher told his readers in subsequent lines what this heritage meant: "He lives and thinks in the culture of brave Blacks, deep in the Congo, close to the beat of the drum" (ibid). The equation of the Congo with the tom-tom, and therefore with a desirable African American heritage, seems to have been the formula behind the naming hype in the cultural industry of the 20s, 30s, and 40s.

The Congo as a designation for one's own commendable primitive origins and cultural legacy was evoked in poetic texts as well, most noticeably in novels, satires, and poems. One of the most famous poetic manifestations of the idea of the Congo as a homeland was Langston Hughes's 1921 "The Negro Speaks of Rivers".

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54 Although these instances occurred in the mid-30s, the Congo as a lifestyle label had already popped up in the nineteenth century, when it was marketed as a black tea, as described in the previous chapter.

Through this poem, a timeless and essential Black "soul" is proclaimed that "has grown deep like the rivers" through the ages (1973: 72). Hughes referenced these rivers explicitly and, in doing so, pitted the Congo against the Nile: "I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep. / I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it" (ibid). In this direct comparison, Egypt is associated with cultured and monumental activity ("raising pyramids"), while the Congo is linked to simple, hypnotic sleepiness ("hut", "lulled me to sleep"). Although this sleepiness could be read as a disabling force, it should be interpreted as a reference to the energy of Central West Africa that provides "depth" to African American history and identity. This sense of deep, historic belonging and heritage returned in the poetry published in The Chicago Defender, as well.[55]

Along the same lines as Hughes, Frank Marshall Davis's 1935 poem "Chicago's Congo" evokes the sense of an imaginary Central West African homestead called Congo, which connects to the poet's American home town of Chicago. "From the Congo / to Chicago / is a long trek" goes the refrain, locating the real-and-imagined roots of the Chicagoan Black community in Central West Africa. In the next lines, Davis presents Chicago and the Congo as parallel geographies: "Sing to me of a red warrior moon victorious in a Congo sky... / show me a round dollar moon in the ragged blue purse of Chicago's heavens... / pick me the winners… / in Chicago?…/ in the Congo?" (2002: 5). Whereas the Congo is linked here to a "warrior moon" (ibid), Chicago is discussed as "a round dollar moon" (ibid), thus implying that it is a city that is spoiled, "money mad" (ibid), especially vis-à-vis the simplicity and nobility of the Congo. "Ask me if civilization produces new forms of biting and tearing and killing… / see three million whites and two hundred thousand blacks civilized in Chicago" (ibid), Davis lamented in the next lines his critique of Euro-American civilization. Davis's goal in linking Chicago to the Congo was to celebrate African Americans' assimilation of the capitalist and social mores of the United States, while at the same time retaining the essentially desirable African traits they had brought with them: "You should be proud of me Chicago / I've got a lion's heart and a six-shooter / I've got a fighter's fist and five newspapers / I've got an eye for beauty and another for cash / Nothing you've got I can't have" (ibid: 6). Davis's African American Chicago was thus a desirable cross between the United

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55 A reader named "HAMOWI" sent the poem "Lights and Shadows: Mirth" to the newspaper, in which he described "Mother Congo" as a "river of gold". In the same vein as Hughes, the poet expressed a feeling of belonging and inter-racial solidarity based on blood: "deep in my body flows thy blood / for centuries untold have I loved you" (HAMOWI 1928: A2).

Sates and Africa – merging "a lion's heart and a six-shooter", and implying that the rich heritage of Black American rendered them superior to whites.

Claude McKay's 1928 bestselling novel Home to Harlem also evoked a sense of transnational belonging through his celebration of the Congo Club in Harlem, which it describes as "a real throbbing little Africa in New York" (1965: 29). Through this description, McKay allowed the Congo to stand for the overarching sign of Africa and turned it into its synonym. Through the Congo Club the novelist expressed a "blackness" that was as racially exclusive as Hughes's Congo hut. "The Congo was African in spirit and color: no white persons were admitted there" (ibid: 30), McKay writes, and he adds adjectives to his description that were very commonly applied at the time: "[T]he Congo was thick, dark, colorful, and fascinating. Drum and saxophone were fighting out the wonderful drag 'blues' that was the favorite of all the low-down dance halls. In all the better places it was banned. Rumor said it was a police ban" (ibid).

By hinting at the police interference in the Congo Club and by presenting it in contrast to the "better places" (ibid: 36), McKay allowed the place to acquire an air of danger. Although McKay describes the music played at the club as old (which again hinted at its "African" roots), it nevertheless revitalized the African American club scene: "But at the Congo it lived fresh and green as grass. Everybody there was giggly and wriggling to it" (ibid). The cabaret singer Congo Rose is described in Home to Harlem as a "rearing wild animal" (ibid: 71), who "flirted with many fellows" at the night club (ibid: 113). Apart from her promiscuous behavior, the descriptions of Congo Rose suggest a sensuous animality: "[S]he moved down on him like a panther, swinging her hips in a wonderful, rhythmical motion" (ibid: 118).

The texts that produced the Congo-as-the Vital incited a considerable amount of critique. Home to Harlem was faulted in a 1928 review in The Chicago Defender for its tendency to represent Black people the way white people stereotypically saw them: "Again, white people think we are buffoons, thugs and rotters anyway. Why should we waste so much energy to prove it?" (Harper 1938: 6). In the era of "uplift", McKay's representations of the real-and-imagined hedonistic and sexualized side of African American club life were offensive to the idealized bourgeois values promoted by the newspaper. Female authors and poets, such as Anna Julia Cooper and Frances Harper, also questioned this essential, Black, primitive, promiscuous, violent male identity attached to the signifier Congo. They did so very early on, suggesting that this topos had been accumulating for quite some time.[56] The re-

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56 One example is Cooper's discussion of "Voodoo Prophecy", an 1892 text by the white poet Maurice Thompson, in Cooper's seminal A Voice From the South. In it, the voice of the "prophet of the dusky race / the poet of wild Africa" (1892: 214) speaks of the sava-

sistance to the Congo signifier as constructed by the Harlem Renaissance reflects the larger opposition to Congo romanticism within the Black community. Jesse Fauset's 1928 novel Plum Bun questioned the tendency to celebrate pure-blooded Congo blackness. "And I can tell you this; I wouldn't care to marry a woman from the Congo," Fauset wrote, "but if I met a coloured woman of my own nationality, well-bred, beautiful, sympathetic, I wouldn't let the fact of her mixed blood stand in my way, I can tell you" (1928: 327). The writer George Schuyler, in turn, expressed discomfort about the mania surrounding the Congo by ridiculing the alleged danger, sensuous spontaneity, and militancy bound up with it. Not coincidentally, Schyler's 1938 Black Empire described the music in the temple of the Black Internationale – a militant Black organization with the goal of taking over Africa and world leadership – as "evil, blood-stirring rhythms born in the steamy swamps of the Congo" that "grew wilder and wilder" (2007: 62). The hyperbole involved in Schyler's

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gery, heathenism, and feelings of hate and revenge by Black people towards their former slave masters: "As you have done by me, so will I do / By all the generations of your race; / Your snowy limbs, your blood's patrician blue / Shall be Tainted by me, / And I will set my seal upon your face!" (ibid). In times in which Social Darwinian concepts of race purity and degeneration ran rampant, the threat of a militant voice announcing Black mastery and miscegenation was more than disconcerting for whites. It went on: "Yea, I will dash my blackness down your veins, / And through your nerves my sensuousness I'll fling; / Your lips, your eyes, shall bear the musty stains / Of Congo kisses, / While shrieks and hisses / Shall blend into the savage songs I sing!" (ibid). In this poem, "Congo kisses" constituted the zenith of Black boldness, a threat to white supremacy and racial purity. In her discussion in A Voice from the South, Cooper called this poetry "simple and sensuous" and illustrative of a "fine poetic madness" (ibid: 215). At the same time, however, she considered it untruthful. What it did, Cooper asserted, was merely underline the poet's "secret dread and horrible fear" of Black men. "The Negro is utterly incapable of such vindictiveness", Cooper wrote, "such concentrated venom might be distilled in the cold Saxon, writhing and chafing under oppression and repression such as the Negro in America has suffered and is suffering. But the Black man is in real life only too glad to accept the olive branch of reconciliation" (ibid). The trope of "Congo kisses" returned in Frances Harper's "A Fairer Hope, A brighter Morn" from her collection Light beyond the darkness – a poem she wrote as a response to "Voodoo Prophecy". In it, Harper used "Congo kisses" to represent "phantoms of dread and pain" for white people: "fancies wild of your daughter's shriek / With Congo kisses upon her cheek?" (1890: 3). In the end, Harper and Cooper treated the Congo-as-the-Vital as a white fantasy of Black male militancy and sexuality, with little footing in reality.

work, and his description of Congo music in particular, are a sharp critique of the use of the signifier Congo.

When Langston Hughes grew older, he, too, started questioning his Congo essentialism and idealism. He would also turn to satirical irony. As Hughes wanted a glimpse of the continent of origins "to be touched and seen, not merely read about in a book" (1988: 10), he went to Africa as a mess-boy on a freighter in 1923, which he described almost two decades later in his autobiography The Big Sea. Confronted with Africans who considered him a white man, Hughes grew increasingly disheartened about his earlier Pan-African identity claims – a disappointment expressed through the signifier Congo. The pesky and expensive monkey he brought from Africa was dubbed "Congo devil" by his mother in the United States (ibid: 137), for instance. Once Hughes actually had the chance to see the Congo River, moreover, he hardly discussed it, turning the river into a slapstick setting: "A couple of weeks later, I got soaking-wet again, when I fell into the Congo, trying to climb down a rope at Boma. Since I couldn't swim, I got out, without being drowned, by paddling dog-fashion" (ibid: 117). On the one hand, this irony possessed substantial critical potential with regard to the appropriation of the Congo in African American discourse. On the other hand, it was another expression of the stigmatization of Central West Africa. This double action was typical of African American discourse of the time and is elaborated upon in what follows.

Culturalist Epistemology and the Limitations of Reversal

Within the increasingly industrialized mass commodity market of the United States at the turn of the century, the Congo appeared an appealing and useful term. "Congo": Containing two syllables and an internal rhythm, the noun was quickly recognizable, easy to remember, and even faster to sell, qualities that made it particularly tempting for artists and entrepreneurs in search of a broader market. The name Congo was a ready-made and flexible concept. The alliterations constantly formed with it were no coincidence; Congo club, Congo kid, Chicago's Congo, Congo kisses, and so forth were designed for their rhetorical flair. This did not mean that the patchy and stereotypical knowledge of Africa was cast aside altogether. "Congo kid" did not just label himself as such for aesthetic reasons, but also because a believable threat was evoked through the term Congo. "Congo club" applied a similar trick; the hypnotic, spontaneous, wild dancing associated with the name was an asset for nightlife culture.

This versatile Congo signifier was not a fully free-floating one, however. It did have its moral and social limits; not every primitive trait could be assigned to it.

Savageness was acceptable only because of changing social, racial, and cultural politics in the U.S. The morals of Victorian "uplift" were decidedly undermined by the Freudian and anthropological relativist turns. But primitivism was desirable only as long as it could be applied to one's own advantage. Thus Frank Marshall Davis's "Chicago's Congo" was an acceptable metaphor, whereas McKay's Congo Rose was not. "Chicago's Congo" could be easily connected to the Black middle class mainstream of the 30s, which was growing increasingly critical of the idea of Euro-American civilization, interracial cooperation, and unchecked capitalism. By 1938, The Chicago Defender was celebrating Davis by comparing him to the poets of the Harlem Renaissance such as McKay, who, according to The Chicago Defender, wrote in a time "when it was the custom for the smart white literary set and pseudo-intelligentsia who wielded plenty of influence to fawn upon a black person as a genius who was able to scribble his name" (Harper 1938: 6).

Another example of unacceptable primitiveness was the movie Ingagi, a would-be documentary about the "Heart of Africa" produced by Congo Pictures, Ltd.. According to the many articles and letters in The Chicago Defender, the movie was particularly "race-slandering" because it featured Black women mating with a gorilla. As one reader (the director Hilton A. Philips) noted in a letter to the newspaper: "I am an American Negro and have never been to Africa, yet I do not know of any part of Africa where people of our race have offsprings through consorting with gorillas, I do not know anything of Black women 'lower than gorillas themselves' and who fondly caress the wild 'Ingagi' from a husbandly point of view" (Philips 1930: A2). Although the movie depicted the usual primitive Black women in the wilds of Central West Africa, it did not find an appreciative audience because of its animalistic overtones and insinuations of gender-bending running counter to the accepted Black gender roles and respectable Black bourgeois identity (much as McKay's Congo Rose had done).

The Congo-as-the-Vital took up the stereotypes against Black people and turned them upside down. Primitiveness was re-cast as a positive feature that upgraded one's real-and-imagined roots. The reversal of anti-Black stereotypes had serious implications, however. Turning the Congo into a commodity traded in order to construct a certain vision of African American heritage did not rid the signifier of the essentialist, Social Darwinian stereotypes it conjured up. These stereotypes stayed firmly in place and were reaffirmed rather than rejected. Claiming primitiveness as a positive quality was as good as claiming the opposite; the assumption that Central West Africans were "not quite like us" remained.

Desirable savageness should not be read as a decisive turn away from the Social Darwinian idea of modern civilization, as it was by no means irreconcilable with

the imperial, colonial times in which Black artists lived. On the contrary – the savage was one of the great ethnographic paradigms developed by European writers during the colonial age of exploration, as Ter Ellingson shows (2001: xiii). The symbolic opposition between wild and domesticated peoples, between savages and civilization was constructed as a part of the discourse of Social Darwinian hegemony. All discourse of savagery, as Ellingson noted, is essentially political, as the term demands a counterbalancing (ibid: 219); savagery, either as an affirmative or a derogatory characteristic, created a polarity that was useful for domination as it required a "civilized" counterpart (ibid). Dealing with civilized or semi-civilized societies required diplomacy and negotiation; dealing with savages, by contrast, required simpler and more direct steps toward conquest, control, territorial extirpation, and, in some cases, extermination (ibid: 220). As such, artistic production also played a useful role in enabling the expansion of colonial control, as it contributed to the growing generalization and dismissal of the savage (ibid). To what extent Black intellectuals were able to counter colonial, Social Darwinian Congo imagery is the topic of the next section, which deals with African American discourse on the Belgian Congo.

Fourth Topos: The Congo-as-Resource

Neither the CFS nor the Belgian Congo managed to become economically successful colonies. This circumstance does not, however, override the long-term idea behind these projects: To mine the Congo for the sake of Western capitalism. The founding fathers of the exploitation of the Congo made it perfectly clear that to think like an empire is to focus on Central West Africa through an economic prism. Livingstone and his militant counterpart Stanley wrote in commercial terms about the Congo, just as the 1884 Senate report "Occupation of the Congo Country of Africa" did (cf. discussion above). Their intentions might also have been humanitarian, but their talk was, first and foremost, oriented towards exploitation. The Senate report, for instance, talked about "all the great commercial nations" (Congress of the United States of America 1884: 7) which were looking for a "new and most inviting field of commerce [...] with the high and noble purpose of opening it freely to the equal enjoyment of all nations alike" (ibid). Only in an apologetic afterthought did the unspecified "blessings to the people of Africa" also receive mention (ibid).

Black historians, missionaries, and journalists made strong humanitarian and moral arguments whenever they talked about Central West Africa. However, their sustained focus on the Congo-as-Resource exemplified how deeply imbedded they were in the imperialistic mainstream of their days. Exemplary historians such as

Washington (1909a und 1909b), Pendleton (1912), Ferris (1913a und 1913b), and Woodson (1936) recounted the story of the Congo in much the same way as official colonial sources. Pendleton's A Narrative of the Negro, for instance, discussed the Berlin conference as an appointment amongst commercial friends for the benefit of the Africans. "Representatives from fourteen countries, the United States included, met and agreed that in that part of Africa, at least, trade should be free to all" (1912: 32). These noble ideals of imperialism and honorable colonial entrepreneurship were also stressed by Woodson, Washington, and Ferris. The latter saw how a "brighter day is rising upon Africa" (Ferris 1913b: 438), and the reason for his optimism was commerce brought by Europeans. Africa's "Congo and her Gambia" were "whitened with commerce, her crowded cities sending forth the hum of business, and all her sons employed in advancing the victories of peace – greater and more abiding than the spoils of war" (ibid: 438-439). Pacification through commerce was Ferris's reading of colonialism, a stance shared by Washington, who added another positive moral-economic aspect to the imperial equation: Congolese Blacks would learn to work and could thus become the backbone of African modernization. Washington proudly asserted, "It is he who builds the railways and the bridges, digs the gold in the South African mines, and collects the rubber in the Congo forests" (1909a: 29). All in all, peace, commerce, and Black workmanship were the keywords with which historians related to their readers the story of colonialism as positive exploitation.

The Chicago Defender openly celebrated the mineral and human wealth of the Congo as a blessing for Euro-American civilization. While King Leopold's regime of forced labor was considered a profit-driven slaughterhouse, the Belgian Congo was increasingly framed as a developing state with high potential. This country was being developed, it was consistently implied, with the aim of managing its wealth efficiently for the benefit of the United States. Initially, skepticism reigned in The Chicago Defender's articles. The newspaper feared the devastating effect of a lack of infrastructure (1922: 13), harsh working conditions (1925b: A1), or a downright return to the protective and abusive days of the Congo Free State. "The present rate of exploitation", The Chicago Defender stated on July 21, 1928 with respect to the "exploitation of the Congolese agricultural and mineral resources", will fully revive "the dreadful days of King Leopold II" (1928c: A1). Those dreadful days of the Congo Free State were mainly an economic issue, an issue boiling down to channeling the wealth of the Congo to a handful of private European shareholders. The anxiety about the Belgian Congo was caused by the fear of not getting a sufficiently large piece of it. The newspaper observed with concern how a "company has been

organized with the approval and co-operation of the government" to exploit "territories" of the Congo, for instance (ibid).

Gradually, The Chicago Defender invested more confidence in the "open door" strategies concerning the Belgian Congo, which, by World War II, essentially sought to guarantee the accessibility of Congo resources to the United States. The colony was discussed as one of many nations in Africa which was drilling "sinking holes" to find much-needed oil in the 30s (1930b: 4). By the start of World War II, the Belgian Congo was considered a solid partner of America's, as shown in articles with subtitles such as "Rich Congo Colony Supplies America with Vital Mineral Ore" (1943a: 4). The production of tin, copper, and, above all, radium and uranium was of great interest to The Chicago Defender because of their strategic importance to the United States. In an issue from January 30, 1943, one may read, "In spite of the decline of her glorious civilizations, Africa still has much to give the world" (Willis 1943: 11). The newspaper obviously saw no real civilization in Africa, but did underscore the "practically inexhaustible" copper mines of the Belgian Congo, the production of which was to be "given" to the United States (ibid). In the same vein, the newspaper focused on radium from the Congo because it was instrumental in the "treatment of disease" in the hospitals "of the world and principally in the United States and Great Britain" (Padmore 1943: 4).

All of these news reports based themselves strongly on colonial propaganda. Again and again, one finds in them private or public sources that were close to the colonial project. Lines such as these are not exceptional: "[A]ccording to the 1944 report of the Union Miniere [sic] du Haut Katanga" or "according to the Belgian Information Center in New York" (e.g. Padmore 1945: 5; 1845: 1). Many Defender articles thus easily reveal their reliance on imperial sources. Through the use of these texts from companies and information providers sponsored by the government or privately (such as the Union Minière or the Belgian Information Center), the threat of The Chicago Defender directly adopting the imperial agenda was real.

The incorporation of the colonial prism can also be seen in the gradual decrease in critique of the Belgian Congo vis-à-vis the treatment of the "natives". Lack of decent payment is criticized, but discussed in such a euphemistic fashion that these utterances could have been taken directly from the colonial authorities (which they likely were). The Chicago Defender noted, for instance, in a semi-critical fashion in article titled "Belgium to Enforce Congo 'Status Quo'" from September 23, 1944: "The exploitation of Belgian human and natural resources caused much unrest among the natives before the war" (1944: 18). It then proceeded to water down this already weak opinion by balancing reports of discontented natives with more obedient ones: "With the outbreak of the war, a native army was raised to defend the

country and has been praised for its part in the East African campaign" (ibid). Oppression in the Belgian Congo was thus downplayed, and the existence of obedient, successful Black professionals, such as the soldiers mentioned here, emphasized instead.

This focus on the soldiery was no surprise. Whole history books and chapters had been dedicated to the topic, as we have seen already in the previous chapter.[57] This focus on the military continued through the mid-20th century. An article by George Padmore in the 1944 Chicago Defender, "American, African Negroes Get Along Fine In Front Line Foxholes In Italy", discussed how Black troops were bringing down the Nazi regime, also known as the "citadel of racism" (1944: 3). Padmore reported: "From the West will march American Negro troops and famous Senegalese warriors serving with the French Army of Liberation, as well as Congolese forces from the Belgian Congo" (ibid). He continued: "These so-called inferior races are today helping the tear the guts out of the Herrenvolk 'super-men' of Nazi Germany. Such is the irony of history" (ibid). Via this alignment of African and Black American soldiers, a direct attack was launched against the hegemony of Social Darwinian thought, this time dressed up as Nazism. At the same time, an inter-African connection was fabricated through which the Congo could be aligned with a Pan-African professionalism. Above all, the fight by Black soldiers against "the citadel of racism" could and should also be read as a fight against racist America as well, given the ongoing tendency of Black American intellectuals to collapse the Central West African Congo into the American Congo.

In article after article, The Chicago Defender argued along colonial lines and drew upon imperial imagery in order to highlight the need for civilization through economic development. In the process, it downplayed the concrete oppression of Black colonized people and silently condoned the one-sided exploitation of mineral resources. As soon as the oppression of African Americans was addressed,[58] how-

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57 Of significance here is George Washington Williams's 1887 A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865 and Norwood Hallowell's 1899 The Negro as a Soldier in the War of the Rebellion. Booker T. Washington's 1900 collection A New Negro for a New century contained chapters on "Afro-American Volunteers and Regiments", both in the past and the present, ranging from soldiers in the Rebellion against Britain and those to the Philippines and Cuba. The same went for Carter Woodson's 1922 The Negro in Our History, which discussed "The Negro in the Civil War" and the "Negro in the World War", inscribing Black soldiers into the major military dramas of American history.

58 In the 1945 Chicago Defender article "Storm Signals at the Golden Gate" from March 10, the end of the world war was considered advantageous for white people only. "Black

ever, the Belgian Congo was turned into a system of intolerable colonial robbery, much in the same way as India and the South Seas were. In other words, as long as the Congo was referred to as a signifier for Central West Africa, oppression was downplayed; whenever the Congo was parochialized and turned into an American signifier, oppression became a real issue.

Were there alternatives to this hierarchy of misery? In the next section, Black anti-imperial thinking will be discussed, mainly as illustrated in the development of W.E.B. Du Bois's thought.

Colonial Epistemology and Anti-Imperialism

Few Black historians formulated a systematic critique of Euro-American imperialism. In fact, they hardly ever used the word imperialism (which implies critique), with the notable exceptions of Carter Woodson's critical chapter on "economic imperialism" in The African Background Outlined and William Ferris's offhanded reference to Kelly Miller's "brilliant pamphlet on Anti-Imperialism" (1913 a:143). Journalists expressed anti-imperial ideas more often, but did not deliver in-depth analysis. The Chicago Defender used the term imperialism primarily to condemn the colonial abuses against the "natives" and to question the appropriation of their territories. When Belgium took over the Congo Free State, the new rulers were described as "10,000 white agents of imperialism" who governed via "savage repression" and "extreme measures of terrorism in the effort to cow the natives and prevent the passing of Nordic power and influence" (1929a: A1). Italy's 1943 invasion of Ethiopia was also systematically referred to as "Italian imperialism" (e.g. Hall 1937: 24).

In all these articles, the term imperialism was used rather offhandedly. The contexts in which the term appears suggest that imperialism signified extremities of colonial rule. Despotic decision-making in the metropolis and foreign ruthlessness were labeled imperialism; economic and human exploitation were not. The United States was therefore generally excluded from the imperial label, since, as The Chicago Defender wrote towards the end of World War II, "we of the democratic na-

America and the colored peoples of the earth" had to prepare for the "outbreak of another war, a bloody racial conflict", the newspaper stated. As the "race problem of America has become part of a world problem […] the status and standing of Negro America is part and parcel of the color problem of the world, also known as the colonial question" (1945a: 10). This identification based on racial oppression culminated in the assertion that "the Negro is the colonial of America, exploited and robbed of the fruits of his labor just as men of color in the Congo or India or the South Seas" (ibid).

tions are fighting an anti-imperialistic war" (Willkie 1942: A5). As a democracy, the United States supposedly had no imperial ambitions. The Chicago Defender framed the American attitude towards imperialism in the following manner: "We covet no territory. We want no more power than is necessary to prevent a repetition of this slaughter and to maintain a world in which men can be free. We seek to liberate, not to enslave" (ibid).

If the U.S. was considered an imperial power at all, it was linked to an internal or benevolent version of imperialism. In 1923, The Chicago Defender emphasized the existence of an external American imperialism as a necessary evil: "As long as there is an increasing output of American products which are far beyond home consumption foreign markets must be sought; hence a country that enjoys the right of protectorate over another country naturally has a preference of exploiting the markets of that country" (1923b: 12). It went without saying that the "recent acquisitions" of the American empire (Haiti and the Virgin Islands, amongst others) were to be "helped" by America to "advance to a state where they can handle their own affairs with the thorough enlightenment of a modern, free and independent people" (ibid). By 1945, American imperialism was denied altogether (or framed as something that had been overcome).[59]

There were several discursive alternatives available for this particular reading of American foreign policy. The broader discursive field in the United States did contain anti-imperialist writing and activism throughout the period. The Anti-Imperialist League battled against the annexation of the Philippines at the turn of the century by widely circulating anti-imperial propaganda. In doing so, the League reached sizable Black and white audiences (Zinn 2003: 317). Parallel to the agitating activities of the League, numerous white English and American academics, activists, and writers published their critical analyses of imperialism. These books varied greatly in tone and political impetus, offering a wide range of perspectives

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59 "It has been a long while since the United States had any imperialistic designs toward the outside world", The Chicago Defender noted in 1942 (Willkie 1942: A5). Instead of being faulted for practicing external imperialism, The Chicago Defender accused the U.S. of creating a situation "within our own boundaries" which "amounts to race imperialism" (ibid). Thus, whereas the authors of The Chicago Defender relentlessly attacked the government of the United States for the internal oppression it perpetuated, it would remain largely mute on the topic of American and European expansion abroad, issuing only occasional condemnations of extreme abuse.

and resulting in a considerable output of analytic anti-imperial voices – ranging from conservative to leftist.[60]

Blacks intellectuals were reluctant critics of imperialism. Pauline Hopkins's The Colored American barely mentioned the existence of anti-imperialist thinking, although it reprinted articles by white authors who did. In the midst of the heated debate about the Philippines, for instance, Hopkins published excerpts of the Lewiston Journal article entitled "Negro and Filipino". In it, the authors critiqued anti-imperialist activism more than imperialism itself: "Anti-imperialists who sweat blood because [President] McKinley in obedience to the Senate assumes to place the flag in Manila and to defend it there, are silent over the fact that Louisiana and Mississippi pass laws that admit the vote to white men who cannot read or write and deny it to black men because they cannot read or write" (1900: 5). What one can derive from these comments is that Black intellectuals reluctantly went along with anti-imperial thinking because it was of no real consequence to them or their lives: It addressed oppressive situations abroad that were silently taken for granted at home.

A small number of Black intellectuals did take a more determined stance against imperialism, illustrated here by Kelly Miller's 1900 pamphlet "The Effect of Imperialism Upon the Negro Race" and W.E.B. Du Bois's works "The African Roots of War" (1915), Darkwater (1920), and "Prospect of a World Without Race Conflict" (1944). "The Effect of Imperialism upon the Negro Race", the author of which (Kelly Miller) was a mathematics professor at Howard University and a future editor of the NAACP's The Crisis, was republished in the Anti-Imperialist League's house organ, Anti-Imperialist Broadside, when the Philippine-American War started. Miller attempted to answer the question of why Blacks should care about imperialism. He began by opening his essay with a key idea: The connection between international and domestic issues. "The welfare of the negro race," Miller asserted about Black Americans, "is vitally involved in the impending policy of imperial-

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60 The 1912 lectures on imperialism and expansion at Johns Hopkins University by John Basset Moore (Four Phases of American Development) were published alongside John George Godard's collection of articles from the Westminster Review in his 1905 Racial Supremacy: Being Studies in Imperialism. From the American Left, in turn, came an outpouring of socialist and communist pamphlets that in 1923 termed American imperialism a "menace of the Greatest Capitalist World Power" (the title of a pamphlet published by the American Workers Party; Lovestone 1905) and discussed it as a major triggering factor for World War I (e.g. Labor and the Next War: A Study of American Imperialism and its Effects on the Workers, published by the Socialist Party of the United States, O' Neal 1922).

ism" (1900: n.p.). For Miller, oppression abroad would eventually lead to under-
mining what little liberty Black Americans had at home: "The United States is at-
tempting to force, vi et armis, an alien government upon a unanimously hostile and
violently unwilling people. Acquiescence on the part of the negro in the political
rape upon the Filipino would give ground of justification to the assaults upon his
rights at home" (ibid). According to the author, the African American "would not
only forfeit his own weapon of defense, but his friends would lose theirs also. For
how, with consistency, could the despoilers of the brown man's rights in Manila,
upbraid the nullifiers of the black man's rights in Mississippi?" (ibid).

Miller boiled imperialism down to a domestic racial issue, which he discussed
using Social Darwinian rhetoric. If "the Filipino" appeared as a subject at all, it was
to assert his or her ability to self-govern, which was at least equal to the "capacity
for self-government" possessed by Black Americans (ibid); thus the competence of
both groups to determine their own political conditions was highlighted. Linking
the Philippines to the United States, Miller considered "the whole trend of imperial
aggression" as "a revival of racial arrogance" towards the "feebler races" (ibid).
Although he condemned whites as "haughty" in their pretended superiority, Mil-
ler's outlook was equally supremacist. The author believed that "natural law" ruled
history, through which "the strong will rule the weak, the rich will control the poor,
and the wise man will dominate the fool" (ibid). As far as Miller was concerned, in-
ferior people had the ability to govern themselves – whenever they were ready, they
should do so, but only in accordance with the central ideas that made the U.S. a
democracy. "Any policy which strikes at the vital doctrine of the Declaration of In-
dependence would be [...] like blotting out the sun from the sky," he wrote. Living
up to the principles of the Republic meant, in turn, that the United States would not
tax the "untaxable[s]" within or without its borders (ibid).

Many anti-imperial texts of this period take up a similar line of argument. For
instance, the Anti-Imperialist League discussed American imperialism in its "Dec-
laration" as a test for the values of the republic, and included the statement that "all
its citizens are equal under the law; that a government derives its just powers from
the consent of the governed, and that there be no taxation without representation"
(Atkinson 1976: 23). The ideas of the League were as permeated by Social Darwin-
ian vocabulary and ideas as Miller's text, however, as the League spoke of the dan-
gers American soldiers faced from "physical degeneration, the corruption of the
blood" during an occupation of the Philippines (ibid: 24).

The differences between the League's "Declaration" and Miller's pamphlet,
however, are instructive as to why Black intellectuals could not have fostered a vig-
orous anti-imperialism. For one, the League did not understand American imperial-

ism in terms of race.[61] Secondly, the League saw nothing but deception in the "new imperialism" of the United States. It saw the ascendance of "a false philanthropy to set up the law of the might" (ibid). Miller, on the other hand, considered this "law of the might" (and all the suffering it caused to Blacks in the United States, which he described in detail) both a burden and a prerequisite for reaching the "high calling of American citizenship" (Miller 1900: n.p.). Suffering and inequality were just a "temporary obscuration of the light", Miller wrote, deploying the imperialist trope of pitting "light" against "darkness" (ibid). Whereas the League saw nothing but a scam in American imperialism, Miller saw some good in the force it applied. Through the lens of African American history – which he discussed as a progression from savagery to civilized citizenship through the tunnel of forced labor and grief – imperial suffering could, according to Miller, serve the broader good of the Philippine community.

A third reason why African American intellectuals did not wholeheartedly embrace anti-imperialism was that the League considered imperialism to be a primarily economic project of "commercial gain" that would "imperil and delay the settlement of pressing financial, labor, and administrative questions at home" (Atkinson 1976: 23). Miller, in contrast, refused to take up this argument for the Black community. Black people had an interest in politics that "has been moral and not economic [...] the great question of tax and tariff, expansion of trade and commerce, the relative coinage of the precious metals affect him very feebly" (1900: n.p.). The Black community, to Miller, had little stake in the economic ambitions of the "white man" (ibid). Miller contended that "[w]ith manhood rights eliminated" Blacks had no choice but to focus on local economic issues instead of national and international ones: "Local regulations exhaust the whole circle of economic interests in which they live and move and have their being" (ibid). Whereas the nation as a whole might profit from new markets, the Black community did not, and, as such, according to Miller, would not engage in a debate on imperialism.

Even among central Black activists such as labor activist Philip A. Randolph, whose white socialist compatriots were systematically agitating against imperialism, critique of the American empire was scattered and pertained mainly to domes-

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61 Du Bois's recounted experience affirms the reluctance on the part of white anti-imperialists to debate the issue racially. "'Should you not discuss racial prejudice as a prime cause of war?'", Du Bois asked at a meeting of the "peace societies in St. Louis", according to this own account in "The African Roots of War" (1915: 712). The secretary was sorry, Du Bois mentioned, "but was unwilling to introduce controversial matters!" (ibid). Again, one re-encounters a potentially important reason why Black intellectuals would not attach themselves to the activism of white anti-imperialists.

tic issues. Randolph published only a handful of anti-imperialist texts. One appeared in July 1921 in his own magazine The Messenger: Here Randolph attacked the racist foreign policy of the United States in an article titled "A Merited Rebuke of American Imperialism". In this text, Randolph demanded the U.S. president "clean house, change habits, make apologies and extend a fitting reparation for our misdeeds and our debauchery of Haiti" (1969: 209). Randolph called these misdeeds "more shameless and inexcusable than the German rape of the Belgian Congo" (ibid) – another instance of how the Congo served as an example of one misery among many.

W.E.B. Du Bois stood as an exception to the general Black intellectual reluctance to address imperialism. Going against the mainstream, Du Bois did take up anti-imperialist thinking, and re-construed it along racial lines. He truly struggled with imperialism – finding it both fruitful to the "natives" as well as detrimental for them – thus producing a range of contradictions in his own writing.

His seminal 1915 essay "The African Roots of War" centered the Congo as the key "to the riches of Central Africa" (1915: 708) and, as a consequence, where the direct cause of imperialism and World War I could be found – all of which Du Bois considered as connected (ibid).

It all began, singularly enough, like the present war, with Belgium. Many of us remember Stanley's great solution of the puzzle of Central Africa, when he traced the mighty Congo sixteen hundred miles from Nyangwe to the sea. Suddenly the world knew that here lay the key riches of Central Africa. It stirred uneasily, but Leopold of Belgium was first on his feet, and the result was the Congo Free State – God save the mark! But the Congo Free State, with all its maniloquent heralding of Peace, Christianity, and Commerce, degenerating into murder, mutilation, and downright robbery, differed only in degree and concentration from the tale of all Africa in this rape of the continent already furiously mangled by the slave trade. That sinister traffic, on which the British Empire and the American Republic were largely built, cost black Africa no less than 100,000,000 souls, the wreckage of its political and social life, and left the continent in precisely that state of helplessness which invites aggression and exploitation. 'Color' became in the world's thought synonymous with inferiority, 'Negro' lost its capitalization, and Africa was another name for bestiality and barbarism. Thus, the world began to invest in color prejudice. The 'Color Line' began to pay dividends. For indeed, while the exploration of the valley of the Congo was the occasion of the scramble for Africa, the cause lay deeper.

In this remarkable passage, Du Bois tapped into, as well as opposed, the mainstream rhetoric on colonialism in the Congo. He did this in a number of ways. To

begin, in his oppositional stance, Du Bois called the officially proclaimed aims of Belgian imperialism (i.e. "Peace, Christianity, and Commerce") what they were: "Magniloquent heralding", which collapsed soon enough into "murder, mutilation, and downright robbery". In contrast to other Black intellectuals (and white ones; see Morel and Conrad, for instance), Du Bois considered this robbery, at least in this text, as the imperialist standard rather than an aberration. This example also reveals, however, the more conformist Du Bois. Here, as elsewhere, the Congo is used as an illustration of how white people within the "British Empire and the American Republic" built their nations on the gains they had gotten from the slave trade, as well as on anti-Black racism. The latter manifested itself, according to Du Bois, in discourse on Africa and Blacks that cast them as inferior, bestial, and barbaric. Du Bois thus mobilized the Congoist strategy of the Congo-as-Example to meta-reflect on issues external to Central West Africa.

In the same vein, Congolese were used by Du Bois to illustrate this economically-driven colonial oppression of Africa, in which they played no significant role. In "Prospect of a World Without Race Conflict" Du Bois asserted, for instance, that "Belgium has held its Congo empire with rare profit during the war, and the home land will recoup its losses in Europe by more systematic rape of Africa" (1944: 455). Congolese opposition to this "rape" – a topic that will return in postcolonial Congo discourses (cf. next chapter) – was hardly acknowledged, apart from a vague warning to whites around the world that "colored people" are "going to endure this treatment just as long as they must and not a moment longer" (1915: 714). The fact that "Africa is being enslaved by the theft of her land and natural resources" (ibid: 713) was expressed without concrete acknowledgment of the substantial resistance in Du Bois's work. Congolese were reduced to "the 'dumb-driven-cattle' stage of labor activity" (ibid) – an ironic designation that is critiqued by Du Bois, but also reproduced in his own texts. Colonial perversion, Du Bois noted in Darkwater, "will have a voiceless continent to conceal it" (1920: 64).

The harsh condemnation of Congolese Blacks by Du Bois does not sit well with his more general unifying stance, and this becomes painfully apparent if one compares Du Bois's take on the Congolese with the following passage. A demand Du Bois repeated often was to "treat black men as human, sentient, responsible beings [...] and treat them as free and equal citizens in a world-democracy of all races and nations" (1915: 712). This quote is exemplary for Du Bois, particularly prior to his move to the Left from the 1930s onward, because of its focus on "a world-democracy". Democratic ideals are mobilized to dismiss imperialism in way that parallels the strategy of the Anti-imperial League and Miller's work: "We must extend the democratic ideal to the yellow, brown, and black peoples [...] we shall not

drive war from this world until we treat them as free and equal citizens in a world-democracy [sic] of all races and nations" (1915: 712). Du Bois suggested in Darkwater that this equal treatment entails respect towards the local customs, a continuous striving for a self-governing state, as well as a steady incorporation of the oppressed people into the efforts of "world philanthropy" (excluding, however, "religious conversion"; 1920: 62).

By 1944, when Du Bois published his essay "Prospect of a World without Race Conflict" in the American Journal of Sociology, his thoughts on democratic equality ended in an all-out condemnation of Social Darwinian thought. In the essay, Du Bois interrogated de Gobineau's devastating record of ill-founded "racial assumptions" (1944: 453). The "race philosophy" of the United States and Great Britain was identified, too, as a "philosophy [that] postulates a fundamental difference among the greater groups of people, which makes it necessary that the superior peoples hold the inferior in check and rule them in accordance with the best interests of these superiors" (ibid: 450). Western powers, according to Du Bois, mobilized an amalgam of knowledge in order to keep the "inferior people in check" (ibid: 455). Du Bois mentioned the "social sciences" that were deliberately used as instruments to "prove the inferiority of the majority of the people of the world" (ibid), which was an unusually critical indictment of science in a positivist age. Other academic fields enlisted to construct the inferiority of other races were identified by Du Bois as "history" (which "declared that the Negro had no history"), biology (which "exaggerated the physical differences among men"), and economics, which "even today cannot talk straight on colonial imperialism" as it is unwilling to take up the criticism of socialist thought (ibid).

Through a democratic lens, Du Bois thus advocated equal treatment of Blacks, including the Congolese. This mainly meant asserting their labor rights, installing trade unions in the Congo, and imposing factory legislation, which he called "all of the great body of legislation built up in modern days to protect mankind from sinking to the level of beasts of burden" (1920: 64). From this and other excerpts, however, it becomes clear that Du Bois focused on the colonial African as a "laborer" alone. This economic approach can be partly explained by Du Bois's increasing involvement in Marxist theory and the latter's emphasis on the agency of workers in the course of history. However, in light of Du Bois's rejection of Africa as a "voiceless country", one is prompted to ask how these laborers would achieve agency within the imperialist system?

Du Bois would have pointed to education and labor regulation. However, his deep-seated belief in the anti-Black, anti-worker "scheme of Europe" contradicted the possibility of progress by those means. Du Bois claimed in Darkwater, "The

scheme of Europe was no sudden invention, but a way out of long-pressing difficulties" (1920: 43). Colonialism was an economic necessity, since it was key to a "modern white civilization" in which the "white working classes cannot much longer be maintained" (ibid). As such, the history of oppression of the white working class inevitably moved into the direction of empowering workers. Blacks constituted "a loophole" for the ongoing "exploitation on an immense scale for inordinate profit" (ibid). This Black loophole was not just there for the advancement of the super-rich, but also for the middle class and the (white) laborers themselves. "The exploitation of darker peoples" was thus a foundational aspect of colonialism and, according to Du Bois, the real reason behind the World War: "It was this competition for the labor of yellow, brown, and black folks that was the cause of the World War" (ibid: 45). Although he did keep the dissent of Blacks in mind, powerful opposition could hardly develop in a context in which colonized people were assigned so little value.

Despite his open opposition to Social Darwinian thought, Du Bois's language and arguments do betray the deep inroads that it had made in his own writing. A systematic hierarchical division appeared throughout his work between the West and the rest. Just as his contemporaries did, Du Bois framed Africa as a "mysterious" region and a "Dark Continent" whose "dark forests of inmost Africa" were located in the Congo, thereby evoking Conrad's imagery of Central West Africa (e.g. 1915: 707; 1920: 38). There were challenges to this rhetoric, as Mark Twain's "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" (1901) showed.[62]

Du Bois referred to the Congolese as "natives", refusing the distinction that would paint them as citizens (although in theory he advocated for this), who were dominated by the Belgians under a "system of caste and color serfdom" (1920: 65). The Congolese were not agents in their own story, but a Conradian illustration of the "real soul of white culture" (ibid: 39) – a culture described as greedy, murder-

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62 Mark Twain's "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" (1901) asked ironically, for instance: "Shall we go on conferring our Civilization upon the peoples that sit in darkness, or shall we give those poor things a rest? Shall we bang right ahead in our old-time, loud, pious way, and commit the new century to the game; or shall we sober up and sit down and think it over first? Would it not be prudent to get over Civilization-tools together, and see how much stock is left on hands in the way of Glass Beads and Theology, and Maxim Guns and Hymn Books and Trade-Gin and Torches Progress and Enlightenment (patent adjustable ones, good to fire villages with, upon occasion), and balance the books, and arrive at the profit and loss, so that we may intelligently decide whether to continue the business or see out the property and start a new Civilization Scheme on the proceeds?" (1901: 164).

ous, and imperial (as opposed to Black culture, it is implied). Thus, Du Bois again reduced the Congo to an example.

Du Bois faulted imperialists for the "invasion" of pre-colonial Congolese "family life the ruthless destruction of every social barrier, as well as the shattering of every tribal law, the introduction of criminal practices" (ibid: 38).[63] Nevertheless, his perspective on Congolese was as inconsistent as that of many contemporary Black and white intellectuals. In much the same way as these contemporaries, Du Bois absorbs the Congolese into more abstract labels such as "Africa", "colonial peoples", "darker nations", "yellow, brown, and black men", or "colored races". Very often, therefore, a merging is enacted of the concrete situation of Congolese with the "coolies in China [...] starving peasants in India [...] black savages in Africa [...] dying South Sea Islanders [...] [and] Indians of the Amazon" (ibid: 47).

This push for the rhetorical unification of people of color had a progressive aim, no doubt. Du Bois's solutions to the colonial oppression of "primitive peoples of Africa and the world" nevertheless contained a vision that resuscitated old Social Darwinian distinctions. He emphasized, for instance, the need for education, thus adhering to the familiar Black bourgeois belief in progress through "uplift and prevention" and "assimilation and uplift" (ibid: 62). "We must train native races in modern civilization", Du Bois asserted in "The African Roots of War" (1915: 713), indicating with these words precisely where he saw their flaws. Within the context of education, Du Bois falls into a number of Congoist traps, condoning imperialism despite its proclaimed evils. Colonialism had its positive sides, according to Du Bois: "Missionaries and commerce have left some good with all their evil. In black Africa today there are more than a thousand government schools [...] all the children of Africa are beginning to learn", Du Bois noted in Darkwater (1920: 65). However, he urged colonial governments to avoid tampering too much in "the curiously efficient African institutions of local self-government through the family and the tribe" (ibid: 71). At the same time, he urged colonial administrations to abolish "deleterious customs and unsanitary usages" (ibid). Confronted with the "unsanitary customs" of the "natives", Du Bois suddenly did believe in the possibility of colonial best practice after all: "The best colonial administrators [...] build on recognized, established foundations" rather than designing colonies "from entirely new and theoretical plans" (ibid).

By 1944, however, Du Bois was voicing serious doubts as to whether this "policy of so educating the colored races" would lead them to "being able to take part in modern civilization", as their training hindered "real acquaintanceship with what

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63 He did this by quoting John Hobbis Harris, a Congo traveler and activist for the Congo Reform association.

the more advanced part of the world has done and is doing" (1944: 454). Du Bois thus harbored a deep skepticism about the learning capacities of "the lowest and the most exploited races in the world" (ibid), which had as much to do with their starting point at the bottom of the ladder of civilization as with the education provided by the authorities (the "Negro colleges of the southern United States" exempted, of course; ibid: 455). In the end, Du Bois openly labeled the Congo a "land of silence and ignorance", in which the "modern lifting of the veil of centuries" was hindered both by internal stasis and external incompetence and greed (1992: 392; 1915: 10).

Du Bois's anti-imperial thinking was deeply Congoist. Like Kelly Miller, Du Bois drew from the civilization dichotomy (inferior vs. superior civilizations) to construct a Congo that was an abstract human and mineral resource. Although he searched for a way to stop the anti-Black, anti-African racial prejudice, Du Bois implicitly contributed to it. He claimed that Africa would be self-governing one day and that Africans would become just as good as any white European worker. But until Africa became "the Land of the Twentieth century" (1915: 710), the natives had to be educated, civilized, organized, and politicized. In short, that day was far ahead, and it was unclear in his texts what would make them fight the "War of the Color Line" against whites when the former were considered superior and the latter discussed as backwards. This paradox is quintessentially Congoist, although it takes a subtler form than many of the Congoisms before it. The next chapter investigates to what extent the independence of the Congo contributed to a rhetorical shift surrounding it.

PICTURING CONGOISM: A CONCLUSION

To summarize and discuss the heterogeneous results of this chapter, a number of photos of the Congo used by Black intellectuals between 1885 and 1945 will be analyzed. There is good reason to take up images in this chapter: By the 1890s, photography had become affordable and portable enough that Black intellectuals often took cameras on their voyages to the Congo. Furthermore, halftone printing had come to be used widely in magazines and newspapers, allowing for the mass circulation of these inexpensive images (Rice 2011: 1). The rise of a "global image economy" (Tucker 2009: 2) also informed the imagery of the Euro-American civilizing mission and the introduction of capitalism through exploitation, modernization, and conversion. From 1904 onward, images of mutilated Congolese were used extensively, and re-energized the nearly obsolete Congo Reform Association and its activism against the "Congo atrocities" (Grant 2005: 66). These images allowed

viewers to question the (allegedly) anomalous imperial activity in the Congo Free State. At the same time, they actively promoted the Euro-American presence in the Congo by highlighting the humanitarian aid provided there by medical crews. Captions of pictures in newspapers such as The Chicago Defender highlighted how Westerners, for instance, "Fight Epidemic in Africa" (1928d: A12) or "Fight Plagues in Africa" (1928e: 22). These pictures and captions mostly showed the battle against diseases long conquered in Europe and the United States, such as leprosy, tuberculosis, and sleeping sickness, reinforcing the notion of the Congo as a backward region.

Missionaries such as Sheppard and mass newspapers like The Chicago Defender – the main source of the photos in what follows – actively used pictures to back up their written accounts of life in the Congo. If read critically, these photographs constitute powerful tools for debating the constructedness of the real-and-imagined Central West Africa to be found in texts. These pictures also legitimized the imperial drive for resources through anti-Black imagery, no matter how well-intended they might have been. Pictures will be used in what follows as illustrations of my findings from the written texts. Peter Burke finds this practice problematic, faulting historians for utilizing images to back up "conclusions that the author has already reached by other means" (Burke 2001: 10). Here, however, photographs can be used productively, as they form as much a part of Congoist discourse as the various written accounts of the Congo. Although they use different language codes, which must be acknowledged, visual and written accounts do produce similar tropes and topoi, as they resonate with, and draw from, the same socio-historical context (Bal 2006a: 290, 298; Bal 2006b: 159). From a semantic point of view, there is no essential difference between literary texts and pictures, as Mitchell accentuates (1994: 160-161), which makes both of them readable as "texts" and thus comparable as textual embodiments of Congoism.

While serving as illustrations of Congo discourse, visual material simultaneously provokes new answers to old questions. In contrast to other texts, they allow for a more overt and critical decoding of the "realistic" mode of storytelling than most of the sources applied up until this point. This "realism" provided readers with strong cues to look at the photographs and written texts as truthful eyewitness accounts (Mitchell 1994: 325-326; Bal 2006b: 216). Photographs allow for a more open deconstruction of this mode of storytelling than written accounts due to the unattended details that appear in them, which often escape the attention of their producers and readers. More so than written texts, these details reveal the "tricks, devices, and other lures" (Tagg 1988: 330) that summon up the "power of the real" (ibid: 99). Thus, through a detail-focused reading of these images, the naturalness and unity of

the realistic mode can be shown and subverted, as Mieke Bal has noted (2006b: 235; 309).

Congoism as traced in this chapter has been presented as a discourse that created both an unbridgeable distance and an objectifying closeness between Black Euro-Americans and Congolese. The closeness was produced by African American intellectuals' travels to the Congo – as missionaries, journalists, and travel writers in particular. The distance, in turn, was created by capturing the Congolese through the various metaphors of darkness, a darkness in which they wandered blindly and ignorantly, unable to find a way out on their own. Euro-American subjects, in contrast, were poised as the bearers of light whose benevolence allowed "natives" to reach a higher level of civilization, as long as they interacted, engaged, and, in the end, listened to the advice of these Euro-American subjects. The relativism and liberalism of many Black American intellectuals was not a sufficient tool for overcoming the Social Darwinian mainstream of their days, although it did cover up its harshest rhetoric.

Picture one illustrates how hierarchies were both produced and tempered. The image was published in Sheppard's missionary account Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo (1917: 146). It depicts a male dressed from head to toe in white, seated on the grass in what seems to be a rural environment (evoked by the hut-like construction on the left and the hint of a hedge in the background). From other photographs, we recognize this seated figure as Sheppard. He is being worked on with a pencil-like tool by a bare-chested Black male with braided hair, who is seated on his knees and faces Sheppard. In the background, a bare-chested, child-like figure wearing shorts gazes at the two main figures from a distance, covering his/her mouth with both hands. The caption of the picture reads "shaving with a chisel", a phrase with a certain anthropological and objective matter-of-factness, identifying the tool and the activity depicted.

Picture 1: "Shaving with a Chisel"

SHAVING WITH A CHISEL.

Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo, p. 146

The whole pictorial setup creates a contrast between Sheppard and the two other figures. Through visual focalization, Sheppard forms the center of this picture and stands out in many ways. He is fully dressed in white, for instance, and sits leisurely on the ground, his head confidently turned towards the camera. The other figures, in contrast, Black and "half-clad" people (as the parlance of those days went), are rather peripheral entities. Instead of facing the camera, they face Sheppard and are either working for him or observing the overall situation. Through this setup, the picture evokes a master-servant dynamic, deploying many binaries that are by now familiar – dark vs. light, dressed vs. naked, resting vs. working, gazing vs. gazed at, central vs. peripheral, and, ultimately, civilized vs. savage. There is also a tongue-in-cheekiness to the picture that is very much part and parcel of Congoism (see Conclusion, too). The humorous strain of Congoist discourse used irony to override, to some extent, its more overtly paternalistic base. For civilized subjects to allow themselves to be shaved with a chisel by a half-naked native is preposterous, the picture implies, which the "natives" themselves – embodied by the child in the back that covers its mouth out of laughter or embarrassment – confirm. That the Black missionary Sheppard went along with this slightly humorous or embarrassing spectacle shows the benevolence and good humor with which he bore the light of Christ into the "Dark Heart" of the African continent. What is obvious from this picture is that Sheppard mattered to the photographer, and Sheppard alone. This is the egocentric fabric of Congoism – "our" needs, interests, images, desires, and battles are projected on, and debated through, the example of the Congo.

Mastering the uncivilized was a win-win situation, or at least this is what the text corpus from the colonial era appears to espouse. The Congolese had a chance to make something of their "defunct" selves in their rich country; untutored, however, they would have remained ignorant slaves, savages, drunks, gender-benders, and cannibals. There were hardly any attempts to provide real, convincing evidence for these labels. Vague descriptions and suggestive visual material were enough to make audiences believe in the savagery and primitiveness of the Congolese. Most representations of the Congo emerged played straight into a catalog of publicly communicated fears and interests of the ambitious African American middle-class communities. The Central West African Congo turned into a discursive entity that was flexibly used to depict ethical, sexual, political, and behavioral abnormalities in a nexus of class, race, and gender.

The issue of Congolese drunkenness, for instance, was tied up with the large discussion surrounding alcoholism. Du Bois is a good example of how this topic sneaked into the texts of intellectuals. He wrote in The Philadelphia Negro, "One of the chief and most pernicious forms of bribery among the lowest classes is through

the establishment of political clubs" (1899: 378). Situating these clubs firmly in the lower strata of African American society, he then described them as "the centre of gambling, drunkenness, prostitution and crime[...] liquor is furnished to 'members' at all times and the restrictions on membership are slight" (ibid: 397). This focus on lower-class alcohol consumption and drunkenness was often combined with references to criminality or gender transgressions (tied to "prostitution" in this quote). Thus, drunkenness was very much at top of the list of undesirable traits among Black Americans who were striving to be accepted as honorable, upright moral citizens. Congolese drunkenness, in other words, was more reflective of the infatuation with alcohol by Black American intellectuals than of any rampaging addiction in Central West Africa.

Picture 2: "Cannibal Dance in the Congo"

CANNIBAL DANCE IN THE CONGO.

Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo, p. 146

Apart from hearsay and the occasional (unchecked and uncheckable) Congo anecdotes, there was little that actually depicted Congolese slavery, savagery, drunkenness, or gender transgressions. For instance, the topos of cannibalism was one of the most dehumanizing assertions made within the Congo discourse. But where was the proof? Picture two, from Sheppard's Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo (1917: 88) provides a visual example of the tension between what was shown and what was signified. The caption here reads "Cannibal Dance in the Congo". To some extent, the "dance" is imaginable: There are drums on the left and an "audience" that is watching the dancing men and women in the foreground of the picture. Some of the "dancers" are bare-chested; some seem to be carrying a baby on their back; most of them show signs of good humor (as do some of the onlookers, who also laugh). Where is the cannibalistic trait in this picture, however? Where are the bodies, the bones, the blood, the eating, or anything that might "prove" it? Or was the reader to believe that the Congolese were perverse enough to sacrifice humans with a smile, dancing happily and publicly before secretly devouring them (and if so, how would this all be known)?

Keeping in mind this lack of proof, some of Jean Jacques Rousseau's comments in his 1754 Discourse on the Origins of Inequality might be applied to African Americans in the colonial era (and to contemporary white writers and writers of color,[64] cf. Conclusion). "In the two or three centuries since the inhabitants of Europe have been flooding into other parts of the world, endlessly publishing new collections of voyages and travel," Rousseau asserted about contemporary travel accounts, "I am persuaded that we have come to know no other men except Europeans" (qtd. in Ellingson 2001: 85). Rousseau found "the ridiculous prejudices, which have not died out even among men of letters" quite significant, since they show "that every author produces under the pompous name of the study of man nothing much more than a study of the men of his own country" (ibid). The description of "characters and customs" by these travelers, according to Rousseau, were merely reflective of "what all of them knew already, and have only learned how to see at the other end of the world what they would have been able to see without leaving their own street" (ibid).

Congoism is a discourse of extremes, balancing the worst and the best of a distanced and not-so-distant Other. In contrast to the Congoism in earlier chapters, the "best" had by this time come to be located not just in the United States, but also in the Congo itself. Congolese no longer merely signified no-good savages and abject slaves, although they also still continued to signify this. They now also embodied unspoiled primitiveness, Black roots, spontaneous wildness, artistic sensuousness, and aesthetic ability. There was, in other words, something to learn from the Congo. This did not shift the frame of reference, which firmly remained the United States and, more specifically, with African American interests, but it did add affirmative qualities to the long lists of defamatory Congolese labels.

This embrace of Congolese ability led to images such as picture three, from The Chicago Defender of September 26, 1914 ("Africa, England, France", 1914b: 1), which showed three men who, as the explanation of the picture describes, "had distinguished themselves in battle". The text on the white person in the middle confirmed him as an English sailor, while the profession of the other two figures remains unspecified. Both the Black and white male have physical contact with the sailor, and are seemingly patting his shoulder. "Note the love the Frenchmen and the African have for their English pal [...] their arms are entwined around him", the accompanying text reads, exaggerating the contact between these men.

With pictures like these, The Chicago Defender could reference a number of abstract desirables, both explicitly and implicitly. The article turned these three men

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64 People of color designates non-white racial or ethnic minorities that are tied together through the experience or threat of racism (Ha, Lauré al-Samarei, Mysorekar 2007: 12).

into representatives of "Africa, England, France", as the caption has it. As the Black person on the left was discussed as the "son of a noted merchant of the Congo Free State", Africa was thus embodied by its "heart", the Congo, a strategy of absorption appearing and reappearing conspicuously often throughout this chapter. As such, the Congo continuously stood for something else, both at home and abroad. In the picture of the three men, it stood for the whole of Africa; elsewhere it stood for anti-Black atrocities in the United States, as was shown. At the same time, the image of the three men symbolically celebrated interracial cooperation and the advancement of the race through soldiery – two elements which were integral to the "New Negro" and uplift philosophy of the time.

Picture 3: "Africa, England, France"

The Chicago Defender September 26, 1914

Imperialism turned Congolese into changeable, improvable entities that could be used as examples for the whole "race". As such, they could be lauded as "Fine Specimens of Manhood", too, as the caption of picture four of The Chicago Defender from 1943 states. In this photo, lines of Black men wearing short sleeves and shorts are shown standing erect with their arms spread. The text beneath identifies these men as "soldiers from the Congo and they are really doing a fine job in going through their physical training". The Chicago Defender linked the Congo in "New Negro" fashion to soldiery and education, both of which could be obtained "in army schools in the Congo" where "most of them [the soldiers, that is] can read and write".

Picture 3: "Fine Specimens of Manhood"

The Chicago Defender September 11, 1943

Although recognized as intellectual beings of some sort ("most of them can read and write"), the Congolese were hardly more than a mass of able bodies. This was enough, however, for pro-imperial African Americans intellectuals to use them as emblems for the success of the civilizing missions; these intellectuals insisted on framing locals as human resources that had to be administrated, rather than discussing them as political subjects or colonial citizens bereaved of their rights. Even African American intellectuals who were critical of imperialism, such as Du Bois, thought along similar lines. His relative indifference to local knowledge and his outright contempt for the intellectual or political maturity of the intended beneficiaries of civilizing projects were standard in the colonial period. Through these colonial discursive attitudes, the emiseration of Congolese could be morally rejected, but not politically critiqued. In the end, Black Americans did not have any interest in the Congolese that went beyond using them for their own purposes. To what extent this changed after 1945 will be discussed in the next chapter.