Introduction

Shifting Perspectives on the Congo: Re-Reading Central West Africa

> Congo: 2 different countries are named congo [sic] […]; When u [sic] have dreadlocks, and they start to growtogether [sic] making a big fat dread then u [sic] call it congo […]; A term referred to a black mixed white individual who is stubborn, irrational, arrogant, bipolar, and confusing to many people because of his/her attitude […]; Congo can be best described as the unnecessary display of excessive aggression, severe lack of mannerly conduct or undeserved acts of enthusiasm […]; Person of African descent (from heart of africa [sic]) […]; A great nickname for any of your black friends […]; The stern look of disapproval […]; A racial slur targeting African Americans particularly those who have Portuguese and Angolian [sic] descent […].
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HISTORY IN "TRANS- MODE"

This is a work of history and a work about history. As a work of history, this book traces the historical trajectories of the word "Congo"[1] within the context of (Afri-

1 Hereafter the Congo will no longer be emphasized through quotation marks. Readers should bear in mind the embattled and fluid meaning and status of the Congo, though.

can) American intellectual texts and milieus. To be more specific: The Congo is not merely a "word", but also, as Reinhart Koselleck's thoughtful distinction has it, a "term" or a "concept". "Concepts" signify the socially entangled and historically loaded, malleable meanings of words (Koselleck 1972: XXI). In keeping with Koselleck's distinction, "terms" like the Congo are based on single events which define the Congo synchronically (at the time when they happen), but also diachronically. As the meaning of these events return systematically in the texts under scrutiny over longer periods of time, they begin to reveal broader socio-political and structural dimensions (cf. Koselleck 2006: 24). This Introduction will constantly come back to this process, highlighting the malleability of the Congo as term. For now, it suffices to state that, as a work of history, this work discusses the term Congo in order to make broader claims regarding the history of the United States in general and Black[2] American communities in particular.

As a work about history, it examines how historians have written about the Congo by relying on particular sources, narrative techniques, and theoretical approaches, as well as by mobilizing and advocating a set of traceable ideological assumptions. "Historian" is a notion that is interpreted widely here: Histories of the Congo have never been created by trained historians alone. The primary and secondary sources taken up here, therefore, are written by scholars and intellectuals – of varying degrees of professionalism as historians – who have indelibly marked the image of the Congo throughout the last two centuries. To examine how history is produced and to investigate its function within certain contexts indeed "reveals", as Ernst Breisach asserts in his Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern, "that human life is subject to the dictates of time" (1983: 2). Discussing works of history through a historiographical lens is another means, in other words, by which one may discuss socio-political history itself. Historiography echoes the paradigms and political battles of the times in which history was written. In this book, a work of and about history, the Congo is not only discussed as a historically contingent discursive entity, but also in terms of how historical works and sources fashioned it as such.

This work is a history in the "trans- mode", as it is called here, or a history that has been written along transnational, transtemporal, transdisciplinary, and transcultural[3] lines. History in a trans- mode has become quite fashionable in terms of

2 Black(s) with a capital B refers to people of the African diaspora. Lower-case black is simply a color. The terms "Black" and "Black American" or "African American" are used interchangeably here.

3 Transcultural history, as taken up here, is in line with Madeleine Herren's approach, i.e. a history that reflects critically on the way history is constructed, which refuses cultural es-

"space" (i.e. in the form of transnational history). Transnational history, or as Akira Iriye has defined it, "the study of movements and forces that have cut across national boundaries" (2014: 213), has been held an enduring attraction for many American scholars, even before the approach became fashionable. Theoretical reflections on transnational American history began appearing as early as 1916, with Randolph Bourne's "Trans-National America", and continued to appear throughout the following decades, for instance with Laurence Veysey's 1979 "The Autonomy of American History Reconsidered" and Ian Tyrrell's 2009 "Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History: Theory and Practice".

The trans- mode, however, is decidedly less popular when it comes to the temporal dimension: "Transnational history is all the rage. Transtemporal history has yet to come into vogue" (Guldi/Armitage 2014: 15). After its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s, long-term history has steadily declined and has only hesitantly returned in the last few years, as Guldi and Armitage argue (ibid: 7-15). In this book, history is executed from the perspective of the "longue durée", as Braudel famously described it in his seminal The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II. Departing slightly from Braudel, however, longue durée is understood here as the slow and partially cyclical change in "discourse" over time (cf. the discussion on "discourse" below), and not in the natural world, as Braudel originally intended it (1995: 19-21).

This book does take up Braudel's three-tiered temporality, however. The discursive longue durée occurs in dialogue with the gently paced story of states, societies, communities (lentement rythmée; ibid: 20), and the more traditional history of events (l'histoire événementielle; ibid: 21). If this work had limited itself to a history of "events" (see discussion below), it would not have been able to develop an explanation for the particular attention paid by U.S. historians to the Congo. I initially focused exclusively on the 1960s and 1970s of the 21st century, only to discover that the Congo discourse cannot be explained without a broad and deep historical investigation. Moreover, by writing a history in longue durée, this work situates itself in an approach to history written in order to influence public debate (Guldi/Armitage 2014: 8). This is a tradition worth preserving. My work is thus both descriptive and prescriptive: It attempts to describe American discourses on the Congo and, through an in-depth discussion of those agents opposing this dis-

sentialism and asks who has formed history in the past and succeeded in shaping what can be called "the master narrative" (Herren 2012.

course, contemplates ways out of participating in a certain "rhetoricaltiy"[4] on the Congo.

Instrumental in grasping the Congo in a historical and historiographical sense, as well as in a "trans- mode", was the lowering of the disciplinary drawbridge between the fields of history and cultural studies. This type of transdisciplinary approach itself has a long and fruitful history. Philology, economics, sociology, anthropology, and linguistics (among other fields) have entered historical investigations successfully in the past and with great gain, as Richard J. Evans points out (2000: 8-9, 195; cf. Iggers 2007: 101-110). In this spirit, a discourse analytic take will here complement rigorous and broad archival research, as well as critical discussions of a large corpus of primary sources. Bringing cultural studies and history together here is not merely a productive step, but also a necessary one. This has in part to do with the importance of works of "culture", in the sense of "art" (e.g. Joseph Conrad's novella Heart of Darkness), but also with the importance of "culture" in the broad sense of the term as a network of negotiations and power relations across U.S. society, as will be discussed at length below. More effectively than anything else, cultural studies brings useful tools to the table that enable one to interpret these negotiations.

Discussing the Congo requires a methodological approach that goes beyond hermeneutics or source-criticism. Discourse analysis allows seemingly unrelated texts and utterances to be brought together and discussed at eye level through the term that ties them together: The Congo. Henry Highland Garnet's 1843 "An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America" mentioned the "untutored African who roams in the wilds of Congo" (Garnet 2003: 117) to evoke a global, Black humanity. Why the Congo, and not the "Ethiopian" that "roams" the deserts, one may ask? In the same vein, of all the African places that witnessed colonial terror and bloodshed she might call upon, Ida B. Wells-Barnett compared the lynching of two colleagues in the American South in late 19th century to "a scene of shocking savagery which would have disgraced the Congo" (Wells-Barnett 1996: 112). Again, why the Congo? The same can be asked about the monkey brought to the U.S. by author Langston Hughes from his journey through Africa (Hughes 1988: 225), dubbed "Congo devil", as described in his 1940 autobiography The Big Sea. Finally, why did Martin Luther King reject the Congo in 1968 when he told his readers: "The American Negro is not in a Congo" (King 1968: 62). Through a discourse analysis, the details and precise methods of which will be explained extensively below, it is possible to approach the phenomenon of the Congo in an inter-

4 Or how language is bound to be pervasively figurative, and, more often than not, compulsory rhetorical (Richards 2007: 125-133).

textual, socio-political manner. Discourse analysis, focusing on the communication and negotiation that happens between people through language (cf. Iggers 106), has far more potential for ascertaining the "Congo's" significance in U.S. society than other approaches.

The trans- approach in this work has had an effect on how results are presented. Due to the attention to theory and theorization that cultural studies bring to this work, this book can be conceptualized as an empirically-led theorization and historicization of the Congo. Many concepts used to debate this theorization and historicization require extensive definition. These will be provided in the body of the text (not in footnotes), one at a time, and in a context that allows their background and necessity to be explained. At times, this means that the arrival of a clear-cut definition is delayed for some pages, and this is especially the case in the Introduction. This is done with the aim of allowing the reader to journey more informed through the maze of numerous concepts mobilized throughout this book. Another consequence of the trans- mode is enacted on the formal level: The style of reference here is that of American literary scholars. This style integrates references into the body of the text, which allows both for better readability and epistemic coherence. The "constructive and combative activity" usually found in the many footnotes in German works of history (through which these works subtly comment on the works of others; cf. Grafton 1997: 9), is thus transferred to the main narrative. The reason for this particular style of reference is that academics are no mere observers of the Congo: "Academics too have their biases and fads, their preferred topics, and their taboos", as Jan Vansina reminds us in his Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa (1990: 25). Contemporary academics, too, this work ultimately hypothesizes, are prone to be part of a particular discourse – i.e. the all-pervading existence of "Congoism". The place to discuss this issue is in the body of the text, not in footnotes.

The trans-mode of writing history points to the "normalized" and "authoritative" discourses produced in scientific, activist, journalistic, and other kinds of communities and institutions – predominantly in the United States, but also beyond it (given the intertwining of these communities on an international level). Attending in more detail to the socially regulated Congo judgments turns the work at hand into a Foucauldian endeavor, the apparatus of which is already echoed in the title of this work. At this point, it may already be useful to spell out how Foucault is used, and not used, in this work. First of all, the early and theoretical Foucault will be incorporated, in terms of his 1969 The Archaeology of Knowledge. It is here that Foucault comes closest to defining his particular take on "discourse" (Willaert 2012: 30), which renders the book useful for empirically-oriented histories like the one at

hand. “The purpose of The Archaeology of Knowledge is to suggest how rhetoric can be studied and understood in its relationship with power and knowledge” (n.p.), the cover text of Foucault’s seminal theory goes, and it embarks precisely on this enterprise. However, this book is, at the same time, not as Foucauldian as it seems at first. The idea that autonomous rules govern the production of knowledge, as well as that the subject has “died”, are rejected in this work, for instance. Empirical evidence in the course of this work shows that subjects have conscientiously operated against the discursive grain.

This Introduction will return to this important topic in due time. For now, however, it is time to move to the question of what this Congo, the subject of our inquiry, actually designates.

TOWARDS THE CONGO: CENTRAL WEST AFRICA AS A U.S. AMERICAN REAL-AND-IMAGINED GEOGRAPHY

The Real-and-Imagined Congo

What does the Congo actually refer to in the American historical record? There can only be a very contextualized answer to this question, which depends on whose Congo we ultimately decide to take up. In this work, the answer is the Congo generations of American intellectuals who published from 1800 onward and whose works found sizable public audiences. Intellectuals are particularly interesting because, on the one hand, they are singular as independent thinkers: They often self-consciously “transmit[ed], modif[ied], and create[d] ideas” (Banks 1996: xvi) about the Congo. On the other hand, they are exemplary as plural entities, too: They are model examples, in other words, of the many voices on the Congo in their respective cultures and times.

Let us dig deeper into this notion of intellectuals in the plural. As such, these thinkers constituted, as Gramsci famously put it, an organic part of their social locus (i.e. their “class”, which is broadened to “race” and “gender” in what follows). These “organic intellectuals” are distinguished less by their profession, which theoretically could be anything, than by their function in developing and expressing the ideas and aspirations of their class (Gramsci 1999: 134-135). Gramsci saw, in his own day, the rise of a “new intellectual” (ibid: 141), an intellectual who he opposed to “the traditional and vulgarised type of the intellectual [who] is given by the man of letters, the philosopher, the artist” (ibid). Gramsci suggested that “the mode of being of the new intellectual” lies in “active participation in practical life, as con-

structor, organiser, 'permanent persuader'" (ibid). Against the background of this "unprecedented expansion" of the role of the intellectual (ibid: 146), this thesis attempts to select wisely from, as well as understand and do justice to, the American intellectual scenes from the nineteenth century onward. As a consequence, intellectuals are examined through their various public roles: As, for instance, journalists, amateur and academic historians, artists, and political activists.

Through the paradigmatic lens of American intellectuals, a Congo will be unpacked that constitutes both a "real" and "imagined" entity, as Edward Soja terms it in his seminal Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places. The real and the imagined are produced and maintained by one another simultaneously through their interaction, as is shown in this work. Although Soja argues that the real and the imagined are inseparable, he does divide them in the end. This begs the question: What is this "real" Congo? And what is its "imagined" counterpart? Soja's answer might be that the "real" should be considered the "concrete materiality" of the Congo; the "imagined", in turn, would refer to the "thoughtful re-presentations" of those same material spaces and peoples (Soja 1996: 10). The question remains as to what is meant by this concretely.

The quote at the beginning of this Introduction provides a fruitful entry point for exploring this real-and-imagined Congo in more concrete terms – bringing the real and the imagined together "on equal terms, or at least not privileging one over the other a priori" (Soja 1996: 68). The quote is taken from urbandictionary.com (Hama/Kattiaa/mojo12 et. al), an online slang database that itself constantly straddles the fine line between the imagined and the real.[5] "2 different countries are named congo", claims the first definition – referring to today's The Democratic Republic of the Congo and The Republic of the Congo. These countries are made tangible in the form of government representatives, national soccer teams, armies, embassies, flags, hymns, and, last but not least, official names that appear on the letterheads of official documents. All of these material signs turn the Congo into a very "real" place. However, the history of both nations also reveals how constructed, fluid, and imaginary these material markers of nationhood truly are. This is a trait they share with all other states, as Benedict Anderson points out in his influential Imagined

5 Johnny Davis's 2015 article "In Praise of Urban dictionaries" in The Guardian shows how urbandictionary.com undeniably reflects and shapes the real, despite the fact that the database is characterized by very little "intellectual rigour" (ibid: n.p.), it has been used, for instance, by the U.S. American Royal Courts of Justice, by the Department of Motor Vehicles, and by Fox News to help a judge in a music copyright case, to decide whether to grant certain requests for license plates, and to help determine whether or not to air episodes of The Simpsons and Family Guy.

Communities. How did its status as imagined entity impact The Democratic Republic of the Congo, though, the country upon which this thesis focuses in order to discuss the Congo? And what does this imaginary Congo contribute to a discussion of the Congo as "real" entity?

The imagined Congo allows us to come to terms with The Democratic Republic of the Congo's slightly alienating history (at least from the perspective of those who live in relatively stable Euro-American countries). With the stroke of a pen, or by the barrel of a gun, The Democratic Republic of the Congo was re-named and reconstructed at will (which does not mean without opposition) by those who happened to be in power. The name Congo derives from the pre-colonial kingdom of the Kongo, which had a river flowing through it by the same name (Kisangani/Bobb 2010: Iv-Ixi). Over the decades, the region has expanded and contracted, including and then excluding parts of historical and contemporary Angola (which explains in part why Blacks from the Congo are sometimes called Angolans in slave records – see discussion later on). Through the existence of the Kongo kingdom, inhabitants from that region began to be known by outsiders and insiders alike as Congo or Kongo, Bakongo, or (in colonial times) "Bantu", just as their languages were called similar names, such as Kikongo (Turner 2013: xvi, 75).

In imperial times, the Belgian King Leopold II dubbed and marketed this vast region around the Congo estuary as the Congo Free State (1885-1908; Kisangani/Bobb 2010: Ixi-Ixii). This name promised free trade under the auspices of the king, but soon came to stand for a protectionist horror house of human rights abuse, described in Hochschild's bestselling King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa. The same region was then re-labeled the Belgian Congo (1908-1960), which reflected a power shift from the royal house to the Belgian state with regard to the Congo's governance, as well as a shift from a rationale of trade to one of colonial possession and "paternalism": The Congo became Belgian property and the Congolese its "children" (Gondola 2002: 18-19; Kisangani/Bobb 2010: Ixii).

On June 30th, 1960, the country became the Republic of Congo. Four years later, the Luluabourg constitution changed the name once again to the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kisangani/Bobb 2010: xv). Dictator Mobutu subsequently and unilaterally renamed the country Zaire (1971-1998), a change which was offered to internal and external backers as a means by which the country's authentic past and resources might be reclaimed, but which was discredited soon enough as a huge personal confiscation of the country's wealth (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2007: 171-213). After Mobutu's downfall, the country was re-dubbed The Democratic Republic of the Congo (1998-present), a name which evokes and promises democratic participa-

tion, but which can hardly camouflage that the regimes of Laurent and Joseph Kabila – given their track record of handpicked parliaments, unfair elections, and systematic repression of the opposition – constitute "democracy without democrats", as the Congolese scholar and activist Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja described to me in a lengthy interview for the online Belgian magazine rekto:verso (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2010; cf.: Nzongola-Ntalaja 2007: 240-248).

While the official naming of The Democratic Republic of the Congo is pervaded with the imaginary, many of the designations of today's The Democratic Republic of the Congo found in fiction are permeated with the "real", too. The metaphor of "heart of darkness" is a prominent example, deriving from Joseph Conrad's novella of the same title. Even without hinting at the Congo Free State explicitly, the novella was instantly linked to the well-documented "atrocities" committed by Leopold's state and played a substantial role in the international human rights movement against Leopold II's system of forced labor (Hawkins 2006: 373). Subsequently, the metaphor of "heart of darkness" embarked upon a remarkable career, entering the international lexicon as shorthand for crimes that went far beyond the Congo Free State. It came to stand, for instance, for the deplorable imperial appropriation of Africa as a whole (Achebe 2006), for claims of racial superiority (Hawkins), and for extreme human rights abuses in South Africa and South America, exemplified by book titles such as Jacques De Pauw's Into the Heart of Darkness: Confessions of Apartheid's Assassins and Shari Turitz's Confronting the Heart of Darkness: An International Symposium on Torture in Guatemala.

Conrad's text also imposed an enduring way of talking about the Congo itself that is still employed today. Journalists such as the African American veteran foreign correspondent of The New York Times Howard French (cf. Third Chapter, too) have criticized the tendency of many journalists to invoke "overworking clichés drawn from Heart of Darkness" (French 2005: 50). At the same time, French has admitted that he himself has struggled to escape from these same commonplaces in his well-researched A Continent for the Taking. On various occasions, French lapses into a language of blankness, randomness, and naturalness to debate Congolese disasters. Frequently, his rhetoric is reminiscent of Conrad's: "But like nature, politics tolerates no vacuums", French writes, "and politically speaking, Zaire was already becoming an empty pit in the heart of the continent – a pit waiting for someone, by yet another unforeseen process, to fit it up and make the earth level again" (ibid: 56).

An overview of The Democratic Republic of the Congo's recent past thus shows to what extent the Congo has always been thoroughly real-and-imagined, produced through a nexus of material, discursive, and power-filled knowledge. It is

through this shift of perspective on Central West Africa (as a real-and-imagined entity) that this book pursues its task.

The U.S. American Congo

The real-and-imagined Congo will be investigated here via a broad corpus of texts by U.S. American intellectuals. The United States was chosen for the following reasons. American intellectuals and political elites have "long insisted on the relevance of the Congo to the United States", as Ira Dworkin observes (2003: 6). These American elites have exerted substantial political and economic influence on Central West Africa, and the Congo's history, in turn, is indelibly marked by American involvement (cf. Turner 2013: 35-42). From the 16th to the late 19th century, with a peak from 1790 to 1803, today's The Democratic Republic of the Congo and its contemporary neighbors The Republic of the Congo and Angola constituted "the single most important source of African slaves" for the New World (Littlefield 2005: 154; Klein 1999: 66-69). Imports from the Congo, many histories argue, accounted for about 40 percent of the slaves shipped forcefully to the Americas and for more than 50 percent of those shipped to British North America specifically (J. Miller 1976: 76; Klein 1999: 66; Gomez 1998: 33). Although this "numbers game" itself must be carefully investigated (cf. First Chapter), the scholarly accounts point unmistakably to the fact that a lot of slaves were presumably imported from Central West Africa to the United States.

America's involvement cannot be underestimated in the colonial era either. Henry Morgan Stanley, for instance, was a Welsh-born U.S. American journalist who claimed territory for Leopold's Congo Free State and who established the first infrastructure of exploitation in that state (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2007: 15-17). Moreover, Stanley wrote bestselling travelogues for the Anglo-American market, such as In Darkest Africa and Through the Dark Continent, which decisively shaped the imagery and vocabulary of the Congo in the international arena (Edgerton 2002: 32). The colonial era also saw substantial lobbying by Leopold's proxies in the U.S., which caused a serious scandal and drew skeptical attention to the king's politics as a whole (cf. Second Chapter). Through this lobbying, the United States government was the first to recognize the king's claims to the Congo in 1884 (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2007: 266). The "plunder […] slave labor and the crimes of rape, torture, body mutilation and murder" that followed (ibid: 23) were forcefully addressed and communicated in the early 19th century by American activists of the international human rights organization Congo Reform Association (cf. Second Chapter). In the U.S, this organization was aptly represented by both African American intellectu-

als, such as Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, as well as popular white fiction writers such as Mark Twain (Dworkin 2003: 70, 112; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2007: 24).

The story of American intervention in the Congo continued after the Congo Free State was re-branded the "Belgian Congo". In the early 1940s, the Manhattan Project, the U.S. American research and development program that created the first atomic bomb, could not have been successfully executed without the vast quantities of uranium ore from Central West Africa (Hewlett/Anderson 1962: 85-86). On top of this, in order to secure ongoing access to mineral-rich Central West Africa, consecutive U.S. administrations have both actively undermined and consciously eliminated elected Congolese politicians (Patrice Lumumba, for instance), as well as supported American-oriented autocratic Congolese elites with no social base to hold them nationally accountable. The "America-sponsored coup by Mobutu" in 1965, who was eventually known as "America's Tyrant" and "Our Man in Kinshasa" (Turner 2013: 1, 38), ushered in a regime that lasted decades due to the ongoing financial support of the United States, which bordered on a patron-client relationship (ibid: 38; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2010; Kisangani/Bobb 2010: Ixvii-Ixxxvii). Finally, after the fall of the "Iron Curtain", America turned against the dictator and actively supported those overthrowing Mobutu (and their Congolese proxies, such as Laurent Kabila), through "long-standing and unconditional support" of the invading countries Rwanda and Uganda during the worst episodes of the Congo wars from 1998 onward (Trefon 2011:13). In the transition from war to pacification, the U.S. was the dominant force in guiding The Democratic Republic of the Congo to a "quasi-trusteeship" through international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Committee in Support of Transition (Turner 2013: 40-41).

The constant meddling by the U.S. in Central West Africa, from slave-catching to coltan-grabbing, has rendered the U.S. the most decisive external power in the region up until today (ibid: 44). This assertion of power from across the oceans has left its material and discursive traces in both places. In this book, the traces of the real-and-imagined Congo in the United States will be focused upon.[6] One striking example of how material, discursive, and transnational semanticizations go together is Congo Square in New Orleans, officially known as "Beauregard Square" until 2011 (Evans 2011: 1-30). This locale originally took its famous unofficial name "from the Congo Negroes who used to perform their dance on its sward every Sunday", to cite William Wells Brown (1880: 121; cf. Thompson 2005b: 285-286). Via

6 Although the transnational Congo will receive some attention – the Congo in Liberia and Haiti, for instance.

the well-known cultural practices performed in Beauregard Square, the Congo came to stand in the following decades for dance performances of various kinds. This real-and-imagined relationship kept reproducing itself in the decades and centuries to come. William Wells Brown's 19th century white contemporaries enjoyed minstrel shows labeled the "Congo Coconut Dance" (Emery 1988: 194). They also performed the "Congo Minuet" themselves (ibid). Choreographers in the mid-20th century, such as Katherine Dunham and Talley Beatty, named parts of their performances or their dancing techniques after the Congo, such as "Congo Tango Palace" and "Congo Paillette (ibid: 271). In Claude McKay's 1928 novel Home to Harlem, "Congo Rose" is a cabaret singer in the Harlem "Congo Club", which was said to be "a real throbbing little Africa in New York" (1928: 29). Clubs and musical groups named after the Congo actually existed, according to the African American newspaper The Chicago Defender, such as the "Congo Rhythm Band" and the "Congo Inn" (e.g. 1931c). The relationship between the Congo, dance, and music continued in the 21st century, as demonstrated by the release of albums by groups like Los Hombres Calientes (New Congo Square), jazz saxophonist Donald Harrison (Spirits of Congo Square), and Wynton Marsalis (Congo Square).

My point of access to the American intellectual archive is the relatively recent history of African American text production. The choice to discuss the real-and-imagined Congo via epistemologies other than the one I was socialized and indoctrinated into constitutes an attempt to pursue a "cross-epistemological" approach, as Obeyesekere terms it (2005: 225). To consciously step inside American and Black American discourses signifies a stepping outside of the "epistemological ethnocentrism" of mainstream Belgian discourse, or a stepping out of the belief that "scientifically there is nothing to be learned from 'them' unless it is already 'ours' or comes from us" (Mudimbe 1988: 15). "Them" in this book points to both African American intellectuals and Congolese. Being raised in The Democratic Republic of the Congo's former colonizer entailed being exposed to an ongoing racist discourse of anti-Black rejection in general and anti-Congolese rhetoric in particular. The reason for this was that the history of the Congo has been dominated by and taught through those personally involved in the "colonial adventure", such as journalists, civil servants, and family members of colonials. In the eyes of large parts of the Belgian public, books written by those closest to the colonial project tell the history of the Congo as it really was, and important advances and works by scholars and intellectuals such as N'Daywel, Stenger, Ceuppens, De Witte, and Hochschild are often neglected (Vanthemsche 2006: 98). Guy Vanthemsche's observations can only be seconded by adding that Belgian discourses have often been framed within an

apologetic "model colony discourse", as I labeled it in an online article within the context of the fiftieth anniversary of Congolese independence (Van Hove 2010).[7]

An awareness of Belgian discourses on the Congo, however, does not automatically enable one to fully depart from them. The fascinations of and solutions offered by this work are neither accidental nor incidental. The particular forays into the Black American archive made by this thesis are a reminder that writing hardly constitutes a neutral space and that geo-political, socio-historical, and institutional locatedness deeply mark even the most detached historical analysis (cf. Dirks 2001: 230). This work does not end by mere coincidence with an analysis of Congo: The Epic Story of a People by the Belgian author David Van Reybrouck. Telling as my Belgian infatuations may be, their self-conscious and limited presence also prove that a cross-epistemological approach is the right one: It promises a more detached take on the intellectuals in question. This work profits from the fact I am an "outsider", in the sense of living and working outside of Belgium and the U.S., and these circumstances have helped to at least partially overcome the difficulties involved in metareflecting on one's own "archive" (see discussion below on the term "archive").

To step into a tradition that lies outside the trajectory of hegemonic groups will contribute, as Charles Mills tell us in Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race, to a more adequate, more accurate, more complete, subtler, and more "veridical picture" (1998: 28) of the discursive dynamics surrounding the real-and-imagined Congo. Moreover, by looking at Black discourses, the likelihood is higher that "a counterpoint to the myths promoted by the powerful" may be established, as Poletta suggests (2006: 3). Poletta's assumption has proved to be only partly true, however. Accurate as it may be in the case of some intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s, over large stretches of their history, African Americans were deeply entangled in dominant discourses of and histories by white intellectuals. This led to a systematic "complicity and syncretic interdependency of black and white thinkers", as Gilroy asserts (1993: 31). The title of this work therefore specifies the "United States" instead of "African American", as the processes at work in Black Congo discourse are very much white America's. It will be shown, however, that the "entanglement" of Black and white thought tells more about white power, Black vul-

7 This story operates on the assumption of the innate backwards state of the Congo and focuses exclusively on the positive infrastructural and medical "progress" that the Belgians "brought". The popular model-colony story blatantly downplays anti-Black violence and abuse as "paternalism" and blames the Congolese in overtly behaviorist and deterministic terms for the instability and catastrophic political leadership in the post-independence era (Van Hove 2010).

nerability, and the centrality of categories of differentiation in the U.S. than it does about the motives or complicity of Black elites (cf. Gaines 1996: xv).

Allowing the categories of Black and white to bleed into one another in this way is to discuss "Black" and "white" as social processes that overlap and interact constantly with one another, both nationally and internationally. Recognizing the relational, "doubly conscious"[8] aspect of African American discourse matters greatly in trying to make sense of Congo discourses. Whose discourse are we actually witnessing in a context in which white Americans dominate both materially and discursively over their Black counterparts? Whose thirst for primitiveness is expressed through Congo discourses? These questions are relevant, as the white, transnational influence on African American intellectuals is readily apparent throughout the history of Black American intellectuals. In the 1830s, for instance, the abolitionist movement, dominated by white activists, provided a challenging new stage for African American political performance for a wider audience. While granting political agency, the abolitionist movement also curbed, directed, and restricted Black American intellectuals in what they could say (Banks 1996: 22-23). This Janus-faced situation of white gatekeeping repeated itself frequently in Black American intellectual history. The literary careers of major authors of the "Harlem Renaissance", such as Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston, show how dependent these authors were on rich white benefactors for long stretches of their careers, particularly those thirsty for depictions of "primitive" Black culture (ibid: 50-53, 83, 86). Black intellectuals have often acknowledged the effect of white American and European discourses and traditions on their own writing on Africa, and the Congo in particular. Alexander Crummell's 1862 The Future of Africa: Addresses, Sermons, etc., etc. draws from the travel accounts of white African explorers such as David Livingstone and Mungo Park; in The Story of the Negro, Booker T. Washington builds on German-American anthropologist Franz Boas to tell the tale of Africa's history from a diasporic perspective; Du Bois's The Negro cites Leopold critic Edmund Dean Morel, abolitionist Wendell Philips, and Congo explorer Henry Morgan Stanley; finally, Langston Hughes's 1940 autobiography and travelogue, The Big Sea, mentions Joseph Conrad as a significant literary influence.

Given this entangled history, why should one then privilege African American texts over white American ones? The reason is that African Americans have communicated openly how they have been structurally affected by and systematically responded to white American and European discourses. They have done so in ways

8 The often-cited "double consciousness" of many African American intellectuals signifies being both American and part of an African diaspora, as W.E.B. Du Bois famously explained in The Souls of Black Folk (1999: 11).

that non-Black intellectuals have hardly ever achieved, or have hardly ever admitted. As such, the African American archive constitutes a more complete, a more self-reflective, and an overall richer access point than that of white intellectuals. These aspects make a systematic investigation of the much-ignored term "the Congo" easier.

The African American intellectuals I investigate are not only deeply entangled with their white counterparts; they are also deeply engaged with one another. It is in this personal and epistemic sense that they constitute a "community", and by no means in the sense of a homogeneous, unitary group of Black intellectuals. If anything, this book shows the internal divisions within Black American communities along class, gender, and racial lines. Despite this obvious heterogeneity, however, Black Americans do also constitute a community understood more traditionally. Their writings and activities form a network; they exist as a tightly connected group of intellectuals who knew each other personally and professionally. This community created a "vernacular" culture that was marked by continuously appreciating, critiquing, and building upon the texts of one's contemporaries (Gates/Jarrett 2007: xi). A case in point is William Henry Sheppard (cf. Second Chapter), whose travelogues and speeches on Central West Africa, materialized most famously in his 1917 book Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo, exerted considerable influence on African American intellectual circles. For instance, Booker T. Washington's 1904 article "Cruelty in the Congo Country" quoted Sheppard extensively (who was a former student of Washington's Hampton Institute; cf. Second Chapter). Novelist Pauline Hopkins, in turn, drew heavily on William Henry and Lucy Sheppard's story in her serialized 1902-1903 novel Of One Blood (Dworkin 2003: 174). Finally, The Chicago Defender reported numerous times on Sheppard's speeches on Central West Africa (cf. Third Chapter).[9]

Building on Gramsci's idea of the "organic intellectual", African American intellectuals cannot be reduced to a particular list of occupations. Certain professions were more likely to allow for intellectual work than others, of course, depending on the de jure and de facto freedom these jobs provided. The available resources, incentives, and opportunities these occupations promised played a role, too. In times

9 In 1918, for instance, Sheppard was said to have been the principal speaker on the thirtieth anniversary of the Grace Presbyterian Church, as discussed in The Chicago Defender, where he was celebrated as "one of the first men to launch Presbyterianism amongst the cannibals" (1918a: 10). In 1923, Sheppard talked to the students of the all-Black Hampton Institute, The Chicago Defender reported, where he "vividly described some of his experiences with African wild animals and strange peoples, including the cannibalistic Zappa Zaps", and where he showed a valuable collection of "African curios" (1923a).

of slavery, for instance, the abolitionist movement and Black churches provided a secure intellectual working environment for activists and ministers (Banks 1996: 13-14). The rise of individual intellectuals like Henry Highland Garnet, Alexander Crummell, and Frederick Douglass can be explained in this way (ibid: 24). After the Civil War, general and specialized newspapers and magazines began to provide the infrastructure for the systematic development of a viable Black intellectual group. Thus, the African American intellectual landscape not only grew bigger, but also more diverse, because of the increasing influx of educators, scholars, Civil Rights activists, journalists, and authors (Hall 2009: 33-47). Despite the ongoing attempt to integrate marginalized works into this thesis, it undeniably reflects some of the dominance of certain professions, social circles, as well as class and gender biases throughout much of African American intellectual history.

Moving back and forth between widely discussed and "marginalized" texts (in the sense of being ignored by the intellectual gatekeepers of the time), this work discusses a real-and-imagined Congo that has long been a part of the African American intellectual tradition, albeit an overlooked one. This neglect is not due to a lack of traces. On the contrary: Traces are plentiful. As soon as slaves from the Congo entered the "New World", they left their marks on the United States, particularly in regions with high numbers of them, such as South Carolina and Louisiana (Gomez 1998: 136). In these states, a variety of Congo naming practices emerged. Slaves and servants, for instance, were often identified through names that pinpointed their assumed ethnic roots, which they then passed on to their children (Hodges 1999: 53-54). In Louisiana, this practice led to names as "Louis Congo" or "François dit Congo", the latter designating a second generation, "three quarters white", four-year-old slave up for sale (qtd. in Hodges 1999: 53).

Some traces can be detected in the Northeast, as well. Among the first to arrive in New Amsterdam in 1626 were Black men and boys with names such as "Simon Congo" or "Manuel Congo", who appear in the historical record because they were granted land (Hodge 1999: 9) or were punished (ibid: 17). On a slightly different, rather more symbolic note, Joseph Cinque, the prolific leader of the Amistad ship revolt in 1839, was dubbed the "Congolese chief" in Black American publications such as the article titled "Schooner Amistad" in The Colored American, despite Cinque's well-known Sierra Leonine origins (1837). The issue of Congolese captains will return in a discussion of postmodern Congo novels in the final chapter of this work.

Traces of Congo naming practices continued even after the abolition of slavery, as early 20th century obituaries in The Chicago Defender show. In this newspaper, deceased African Americans were mentioned named "C.H. Congo", "Charles Con-

go", and "Mrs. wn. Congo, wife of Edward Congo" (1931a; 1931 b; 1920a: 1). Many articles in The Chicago Defender show that the Congo was also a name that African Americans would give to themselves or to places in their immediate environment. The boxer Clarence Moulden dubbed himself "Congo Kid" at the turn of the 20th century. Imported gorillas were, moreover, called "Mr. Congo" (1914a; 1925c). These naming practices have continued until today: About 90 Americans are still listed under the surname Congo in the American telephone and address directory White Pages.

Congo naming frequently expanded into the public and geographical arena, too, both nationally and internationally. Near Liberia's capital of Monrovia, a city decidedly shaped by (African) American elites with a self-declared civilizing mission (Beyan 2005: 49-106; Cf. Second Chapter), lies a township called "Congo Town", a place that early 20th century American cruise ships visited on numerous occasions, as The Chicago Defender mentioned (1931: 13). Additionally, in the U.S. national arena, forty-five locations, both geographical and cultural, include the Congo in their official name, according to the Geographic Names Information System, the official repository of U.S. geographic names data (GNIS hereafter; cf. United States Board of Geographic Names). West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina, Alabama, and Arizona all contain at least one locale called Congo; there is a Congo creek in Alabama, a Congo Lake Dam in Arizona, and a Congo Island in Louisiana, to name but a few entries. Educational, cultural, and political institutions have also taken on the name Congo. According to the GNIS, there is a Congo school in Missouri, a Congo church in North Carolina, and a Congo Incline Mine in Wyoming. Other institutions that carried the name Congo included the Congo National Emigration Company, headed by the Black Baptist preacher Reverend Benjamin Gaston, which sponsored forty-two people's emigration to Liberia (Finkelman 2006a: 317). In contrast, no locale is named after other important African geographies such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Gambia, Angola or Niger, and only two villages are called Liberia (in North and South Carolina). Which begs the question that drives much of this book, as well as this Introduction: Why the Congo?

TOWARDS CONGOISM: THE CONGO AS AN IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHY

To begin to answer the last question requires looking first at the only African geography mentioned more frequently than the Congo in the African American intellectual text archive: "Egypt". The latter has been a central real-and-imagined geogra-

phy in the United States, according to Scott Trafton's important work Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-century American Egyptomania. In contrast to Egypt, however, hardly any scholarly discussion has revolved around the Congo. This neglect is conspicuous, especially because most of the (African) American intellectuals considered in Egypt Land, to name but one work, are intellectuals who do mention the Congo at some point in their texts. Linda Heywood has a point when she states that the "general interest of the history and cultural impact of Central Africa in the Atlantic Diaspora lag far behind" that of other parts of Africa, especially the Western part (2002: 8). Neglecting the real-and-imagined Congo distorts the overall geography of the Black American intellectual arena. This is because the use of the Congo very often entailed a decision: A decision in favor of the Congo was also a decision against another geography. Thus, it is hypothesized here that whenever the Congo was invoked, a meaningful choice was made. The Congo possessed a set of traits with a particular logic, which may be scrutinized, but also demand specification: Why the Congo, and not another geography?

The Congo term was already recognizable in times of slavery, which is this work's point of departure. The presence of Congo slaves and their descendants led to a vast array of dismissive stories. Narratives about rebellious "Congoes" or "Angolas" – which were ethnic labels employed interchangeably[10] by slave owners to identify their "chattel" from the coasts of contemporary's Angola, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, and The Republic of the Congo (Gomez 1998: 135; Hall 2005: 153) – are numerous in the American historical slave record (Gomez 1998: 137-141). This happened most famously in the 1739 "Stono Rebellion" in South Carolina, one of the largest and costliest slave uprisings in the history of the United States, said to have been started by twenty "Angolan"[11] soldiers (Kolchin 2003: 455-456). One consequence of this violent and rapidly suppressed revolt was that the slaveocracy of South Carolina became even more hesitant in purchasing Angolans and "Kongoes" (Gomez 1998: 136). According to the historical record, these had already been ranked low on the scale of preferred slaves (Kolchin 2003: 19, 67). Slave owners in South Carolina depicted Central West Africans as docile and weak, and agreed that they were best used as house servants (ibid: 19; Littlefield 2005: 13). Others framed them as quite the opposite: rebellious, prone to abscond-

10 Slaves from Central West Africa in particular were called "Kongo" in colonies that were originally French or Spanish – in Louisiana, for instance. British colonies, such as South Carolina, called the same slaves "Angola" (Hall 2005: 153; Gomez 1998: 135, 160).

11 Who, however, were most likely from the Kingdom of the Congo, as Thornton argues in his essay "The African Dimension of the Stono Rebellion" (1991).

ing, and preferably used as "field negroes" for heavy gang labor (Hall 2005: 160; Gomez 1998: 137-141).

These evaluations of Congo slaves from the historical slave record, a deeply biased corpus, cannot be taken at face value, of course, although it frequently is (cf. my discussion of Herskovits and my hypothesis of the existence of an "academic Congoism" in the First and Second Chapters). Ultimately, the supposed disposition of those called Congo is hardly decisive for the overall argument of this book. What matters is that Americans constantly constructed discursive mechanisms that reproduced a group of slaves who possessed negative characteristics. Oscillating between too docile and too rebellious, "Congoes" were caught from slave times onward between a series of binaries which rendered them somehow suspect. If they were perceived as too docile, it meant they could not properly participate in the abolitionist struggle; "too rebellious", in turn, made them undesirable to their masters. Here too, Black and white potentially merged in the formation of a mutual discourse. As the assumptions of slave owners circulated widely amongst slaves and freedmen alike, Gomez reminds us, Black Americans frequently internalized "bits and pieces" of what the slave owners said (Gomez 1998: 215). The result was that no one had a thought to spare for the Congo slave, as is shown in the First Chapter.

The polarizing logic in which the Congo (its people, customs, and geography) was caught returns systematically in the texts of African American intellectuals. The rich corpus of derogatory and stigmatizing Congo utterances contains work by intellectuals as the back-to-Africa advocate Henry McNeal Turner, who stated offhandedly in his 1893 African Letters that the "Congo negro" should stay out of Liberia, since they belong to "the lowest of the African races" (1893: 52). Turner was staunchly opposed to the "Congo negro" – designating, at that point in time, in contrast to the honorable Blacks who should emigrate to Liberia, those slaves that were either freed or "degenerated" (i.e. lower class), or both. "Persons coming here ought to have a little money to start with, and a good-deal of self-reliance, a decent amount of race pride, and considerable common sense", Turner asserted, clearly demonstrating a preference for Blacks with money (the Black "bourgeois", as is shown and discussed in subsequent chapters) over those who have little or none (the majority). Turner continues: "Those who are here from the Congo are ignored by the native heathen, much more by the regular Liberians. They sustain the same relation to the higher African tribes that they do to us in the United States" (1893: 52). The "normative conclusion" (Poletta 2006: 9) of this passage, namely that Congolese (whatever was meant by that at that point in time) are worth less than nothing, will return constantly in the course of this book.

Polarization requires both dismissive claims (which have been plenty), and affirmative ones (which have been few). Within the context of affirmative Congo claims, Pauline Hopkins can be mentioned, who, against the Social Darwinian mainstream of her times, asserted in her 1902-1903 novel Of One Blood: Or, the Hidden Self that the interior of Africa (i.e. the Congo) is a space "at variance with the European idea [of a] howling wildernesses or an uninhabitable country" (1988: 556). During the Harlem Renaissance and in the 1960s and 1970s, the number of affirmative Congo claims increased considerably, as is shown in the Second and Third Chapters. Again, it is crucial to understand that these positive Congo claims are part of a larger landscape of utterances. They are one side of a very tarnished coin. Malediction and canonization, to paraphrase David Spurr (1993: 134), are merely opposing principles of the same, systematic rejection of the Congo.

The Congo can be considered the Central West African equivalent of Edward Said's Orient (an idea suggested hesitantly in Derricourt 2011: vi, for instance). To bring up Said here is also to struggle with the many theoretical problems of his work Orientalism. They need not be rehearsed at length here, as many others have discussed them so aptly (cf. Willaert 2012: 30-31 for a summary); mentioning those issues that are especially relevant to the work at hand should suffice. One problematic aspect in Said's work, for instance, is the tension between the idea of a (mis)representation and the concept of an object-creating discourse. If orientalist discourse created the Orient, how can it misrepresent it unless one reintroduces some kind of "real" Orient (which Said decidedly rejected, cf. Said 2003: 33). Another problem is Said's occasional ahistoricism, or the idea of a stable discourse that spans the entire West and that is present in various forms from Aeschylus until the present. Does the latter not homogenize the West and the Orient alike, it should be asked?

Despite these inadequacies, Said's work does provide plenty of suggestions for approaching the Congo anew. Through Said's concept of an "imaginative geography", a concept which will be defined in the subsequent paragraphs, the Congo can be considered a discursive entity that has historically played the role of the "Other" in the overall "economy of objects and identities" in the United States (Said 2003: 55). Like Said's Orient, the Congo of this book orders knowledge about "us" and "them" via a repertoire of tropes and topoi (cf. below and cf. Said 2003: 55). The Congo thus has constituted the "Other" of African American intellectuals (cf. definition of the Other by Fabian below). The challenge is, of course, that African Americans themselves constituted the "Other" for many white Americans. As such, the Congo would become the Other's Other, via which African American intellectuals could derive a "flexible positional superiority" (Said 2003: 7) in their competi-

tion with Black and white intellectuals for the recognition of subjectivity, a "civilized" status, or a political voice.

The idea of the Other's Other denotes a cultural operation that excludes the Congo through stigmatization and metaphorization from any substantial debate about itself. This device is used by African American intellectuals to differentiate themselves from a Congo that is too repulsive, too primitive, too objectionable, in short, too abject, to be discussed at eye level (cf. Berressem 2007: 22, 29 for a discussion on "the abject"). Central West Africa thus turns into a thoroughly reflexive topos, deeply "ego-reinforcing", to quote the African American author Toni Morrison in Playing in the Dark (1992: 8), as well as madly imaginative. The underlying figures of speech hardly aim for accuracy; they are mainly for, and revealing of, "us". This is "Othering" in its purest form. The process of "Othering" highlights that the Congo is never simply given, never just found or encountered, but made. And it is made for a purpose, as Johannes Fabian reminds us (1990: 209):

> [O]ur ways of making the Other are ways of making ourselves. The need to go there (to exotic places, be they far away or around the corner) is really our desire to be here (to find or defend our position in the world). The urge to write ethnography is about making the then into a now. In this move from then to now the making of knowledge out of experience occurs. Both movements, from here to there and from then to now, converge in what I called presence. This is the way I would define the process of Othering.

According to this definition, the Congo provides a means by which African Americans defended their "position in the world" and elevated themselves. Through the Congo, Black American intellectuals knew themselves to be free, not enslaved; civilized and progressing, not savage and backwards; beautiful and desirable, not ugly and repulsive; and historical, not without history. It is this process that is "Congoism", which may be defined here as the amalgam of truth-producing "Otherings" through the interplay of historically contingent discourse and material semanticizations of and through the Congo. Thus, the "Congo's" meaning changes over time (of the Congo), and with it the way in which it is employed (through the Congo).

Congoism has neither, academically or otherwise, been identified properly nor described systematically, although some of its elements have been articulated (cf. Third Chapter and the Conclusion). This should, however, come as no surprise. Whether one looks at primary or secondary texts, the Congo has rarely been considered a clearly separable, distinguishable geography worthy of an empirical or theoretical inquiry through the lens of African American intellectuals. Notable exceptions in secondary texts, mainly in the form of book chapters, predominantly focus

on the Congo Free State period or on the 1960s. More elaborate discussions of the former period appear in Füllberg-Stolberg's publication, Amerika in Afrika: die Rolle der Afroamerikaner in den Beziehungen zwischen den USA und Afrika, 1880 – 1910 (2003),[12] as well as Zimmermann's Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South (2010). These monographs provide valuable insight into the engagement of African American missionaries and educators with the Congo, and the Second Chapter will draw on both.

These works, not to mention others, will be used with caution, however, in terms of how they explain the focus of African American intellectuals on the Congo. Neither Füllberg-Stolberg nor Zimmerman explicitly relate the time period they investigate to the long history of African American Congo discourse, thus providing findings that remain quite limited in their explanatory scope. Amerika in Afrika, for one, misinterprets the response of African Americans to the Congo Free State. The critical Black American norm at the time was not to critique imperialism, as it is suggested by Füllberg-Stolberg (2003: 13-15; cf. Dworkin 2017). The First and Second Chapters, in fact, contradict this claim of African American political anti-imperialism. One of the few long-term investigations, Kevin Dunn's Imagining the Congo: the International Relations of Identity (2003), has equally little to say about African Americans, apart from their alleged feelings of homecoming when they discussed the Congo in the 60s of the previous century. "Images of Zaïre and other African countries became idealized. Muhammad Ali, for example, cried out 'I'm home' upon landing in Kinshasa and told Zaïrians that they, not he, were truly free" (Dunn 2003: 125).

A number of historical works do recognize the importance of the Congo in African American contexts, but they uncritically incorporate the metaphors of the past. Nan Elizabeth Woodruff's American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta (2012) identifies the "American Congo" as a central metaphor for the African American oppression in the Mississippi River Valley at the turn of the century (cf. Second Chapter). But she neither deconstructs nor follows up on this metaphorical practice, thus legitimizing this Congoist figure of speech and reproducing its dismissiveness.

Representative of post-Congo Free State works on the Congo, on the other hand, is James Tyner's research (2006), as well as James Meriwether's (2002), Gerald Horn's (2009), Alvin Tillery's (2011), and Penny von Eschen's (2006) transnational work on the broader influence of African anti-colonial movements

12 America in Africa: The Role of African Americans in Foreign Relations Between the U.S. and Africa, 1880-1910 (translation mine).

within the Black Freedom Struggle – in particular their The Geography of Malcolm X: Black Radicalism and the Remaking of American Space (Tyner), Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961 (Meriwether), Mau Mau in Harlem. The U.S. and the Liberation of Kenya (Horne), Between Homeland and Motherland: Africa, U.S. Foreign Policy, and Black Leadership in America (Tillery), and Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War (von Eschen). Meriwether, amongst others, proposes that the assassination of Lumumba caused a long-term schism within the African American community between the reformist Civil Rights advocates and the Black Power militants. He suggests that the internationalism of many Civil Rights and Black Power advocates was both inward- and outward-oriented – an idea that will be addressed and developed in what follows. Further investigations of the 60s mostly acknowledge the significance of the Congo without going into detail. Exemplary among these are Thomas Borstelmann's and Peniel E. Joseph's historical works, especially The Cold War and the Color Line (Borstelmann 2001) and Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative of Black Power in America (Joseph 2006).

Three case studies are devoted to the Congo through an African American text corpus. This is Ira Dworkin's unpublished dissertation, "American Hearts: African American Writing on the Congo, 1890-1915" (2003), as well as his book chapter "On the Borders of Race, Mission, and State: African Americans and the American Presbyterian Congo Mission" in Borderlands and Frontiers in Africa (2012) and his monograph Congo Love Song: African American Culture and the Crisis of the Colonial State (2017). These studies document and contextualize the engagement of African American intellectuals (educators, activists, novelists, missionaries) with the Congo in the late 19th until the mid-20th century. Despite the differences between our approaches, Dworkin deserves all the credit for recognizing the link between African America and the Congo. "Expressions of love for the Congo", as Dworkin writes (2017: 2), do indeed "take a range of forms within African American culture." But so does the (highly ignored) amount of dismissive utterances. In contrast to Dworkin, this work executes a longue durée reading of both dismissive and affirmative Congo utterances which, in the end, will give us an in-depth analysis of the discursive phenomenon Congo that explicitly spells out the specific epistemic function of Central West Africa in (African) American intellectual circles.

A further distinction between the work at hand and the few others that discuss Central West Africa through an African American lens is the way the Congo is positioned and discussed vis-à-vis "Africa". Although "American Hearts", for instance, attempts to separate the former from the latter, the Congo does occasionally and problematically stand for the whole continent (e.g. Dworkin 2003: 180). This

interchangeable use of Africa and the Congo is visible in many studies, both in primary and secondary sources. Historical actors allegedly did not differentiate between, or attached varying meanings to, clearly distinguishable African areas. This is what James Meriwether, for instance, writes in the introduction of Proudly We Can Be Africans (2002: 4-5):

> Twentieth-century African Americans generally did not dissegregate areas of Africa in their transatlantic thinking. The 'imagined' Africa was just that: Africa as a whole. This meant that African Americans responded to events ranging across the entire continent[...] [T]his approach resulted in minimal consideration of the vast ethnic and cultural differences at work on the continent.

Meriwether's statement is particularly striking, and contradictory at that, since he shows throughout his own book to what extent African Americans did indeed differentiate between African geographies. Meriwether's own chapter titles attest to this, including many names of 20th-century political hotspots on the African continent, such as Ethiopia, Ghana, and the Congo.

The interchangeable use of the Congo and Africa might be understood by discussing the Congo as a part of Africanisms in American Culture. This is also the title of a collection of essays in which Farris Thompson's essay, "Kongo Influences on African American Artistic Culture", discusses Central West Africa in a typical Congoist manner. The Second Chapter of this book will refer to this phenomenon as "Congo-as-Culture", which focuses on folklorist leftovers from the Congo in the U.S. through the examination of pottery, languages, music, and baskets, among other artifacts. This is also the focus of Part II of the 2014 collection by Cooksey, Poynor, and Vanhee entitled Kongo Across the Waters (2014), "Kongo in the Americas", which deals in a similarly "culturalist" manner (cf. the discussion below of this term) with Congolese traits in the U.S.A. Overall, in secondary texts, the Congo is often integrated into the signifier "Africa", an operation repeated in the primary texts as well, thus highlighting how Congoism remains an issue even today, not least in scholarly works. The result of this is that the Congo is considered to be just another African ethnicity, or geographical notion – indistinguishable from the others, and as if one "African" geography may substitute neatly for any other. If anything, this book attempts to break with this suggestion and thus critically engages with much of the empirical, historical work done on the Congo.

The Congo has received limited attention in many theory-oriented works. Two cases in point are David Miller's Blank Darkness and David Spurr's Rhetoric of Empire. Building upon Edward Said (who, in fact, takes up Miller's central con-

cepts in Culture and Imperialism, Said 1994: 43-44), Miller suggests that, historically, "Africa" has constituted the blank spot between Europe and it reverse image, the Orient. Because these two interlocking profiles leave no slot open in "our intellectual apparatus" for a third element with a positive shape of its own (Miller 1985: 14), Africa "appears to mean whatever one wants, in the language one wants" (ibid: 11). Miller dubs these imaginations "Africanist", a discourse reproduced via "hints rather than statements, hearsay rather than direct evidence, allegory rather than realism" (ibid: 6). Dual, polarized evaluations of "monstrousness" or "nobility" pervade Africanist discourses (ibid: 5), as well as evolutionary truisms (ibid: 169) and image projection: "as in the clouds[...]you can see anything you wish. The blank slate of Africa, with no past or future, can be made to fulfill the desires of your own present. From there it is only one step to the fulfillment of your nightmares at well" (ibid: 248).

In a manner similar to David Spurr, whose seminal Rhetoric of Empire also uses Heart of Darkness as a "continual point of reference" to debate U.S. American ways of writing about non-Western peoples (Spurr 1993: 3), Miller constructs his theory around Joseph Conrad's novella, which he considers "the strongest of all Africanist texts" that "makes the initial perception of a discourse as 'Africanist' possible" (Miller 1985: 170). Both Miller and Spurr, however, predominantly discuss the rhetoric employed in Heart of Darkness as an allegory for Africa in general (e.g. ibid), not the Congo Free State specifically. As such, both Miller and Spurr use Congo rhetoric as a synonym for Africa and the other way around. Scholars who focus on Joseph Conrad, such as Peter Firchow and others,[13] make precisely the same move.

The work at hand disentangles the real-and-imagined Congo from the real-and-imagined Africa. It avoids using these two signifiers interchangeably and synonymously, although they can and will feed into one another. When this happens, it will be mentioned explicitly. However, Congoism cannot be identified and understood properly if one adheres to the "unanimist mythologies", as Appiah has it (1992: 217), of an epistemic or historical homogeneity of Africa. There is, as Appiah reminds us, no such thing as a unified "African cultural or political or intellectual life" (ibid: 127). As soon as a unified Africa is claimed, writes Appiah, it is the "product, often unintended and unanticipated, of theories" (ibid: 290). When the

13 According to Firchow's though-provoking Envisioning Africa, Conrad intended to write a parable in Heart of Darkness about Africa in general, not the Congo Free State in particular (2000: 22-25). Russell West, in turn, links Heart of Darkness to abjection, but he does so in terms of the whole continent: "the journey into Africa itself is a journey into abjection" (2007: 238).

whole of Africa is monolithically depicted as an "absolute otherness", as one "vast dark cave", "primordial chaos", or "nothingness", as Mbembe suggests (2004: 2-4), the specificity of the Congo (and the discourses, interests, and power relations that go along with it) goes unnoticed. This work attempts to break through this phalanx of "Africa" in order to get to the Congo.

Separating "Africa" and the Congo is especially important since Congoism thrives on internal differentiations within the former. Often it is the Congo, not the whole of "Africa", that is a metaphor for Otherness (ibid: 2) or a "paradigm" of difference (Mudimbe 1994: xii). It is plain wrong to assert that African American intellectuals did not distinguish between African regions and did not transcend the idea, as in current Vice President Joe Biden's famous gaffe at the 2014 United States-Africa Business Forum, that Africa is a "nation" (Chasmar 2015). Congoism turns the Congo into the real-and-imagined underbelly of Africa. It plays Central West Africa out against Ethiopia, Egypt, West Africa, and other regions. It divides Africa into "good" and "bad" parts, of which the former frequently is post-apartheid South Africa and the latter is The Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, especially in contemporary discourse.

How does one get through to the Congo without reference to Conradian undergrowth? The focus of the next section is how the Congo might be approached in a manner that is empirically sound.

DISSECTING CONGOISM: METHODOLOGY, METHODS, SOURCES

Congoism is a complex discourse, the subtleties, perseverance, and adaptability of which can be understood by keeping its three C's in mind: culture, capitalism, and (social) class.[14] The pervasive presence and force of Congoism can thus be tackled

14 Together with the three C's, the analytic categories of race, gender, and ethnicity will play a role in establishing an understanding of the signifier Congo. It is important to bear in mind that the notions belonging to these categories – "white" and "Black", as well as "male" and "female" and "African" and "American" – will be considered historically contingent cultural constructions rather than biological determinants. Discussing skin color, sex, and nationality as historically contingent emphasizes the dynamic, fleeting, and changeable quality of these notions. This book suggests that power – and the political, social, economic privileges going with it – plays an important role in the transformation of these notions. The term "white", for instance, is more a marker of a certain set

best, first of all, if one focuses on "American culture" as a whole. This does not mean that one can claim to have actually taken into account the whole field of American culture. The best one can do is to attempt to discuss American culture in the manner proposed by Stuart Hall: as the representational field of shared meanings and values that U.S. Americans exchange and negotiate with each other (2003a: 2). Within this cultural field, common meanings, as Hall explains, are produced by binding two systems of representation together: the conceptual and the language systems. Whereas the former enables one to make sense of the world through concepts that classify and categorize, the latter makes use of language signs (words and written texts, as in this book) to communicate these conceptual ideas. To find the regulatory "codes" between concepts and language is part and parcel of this project (Hall 2003c: 29). Otherness is one of these codes, which, like other codes, is "the result of social conventions", as Hall asserts, and therefore "a crucial part of our culture – our shared 'maps of meaning' – which we learn and unconsciously internalize as we become members of our culture" (Hall 2003b: 29). This work maintains that the code of Otherness is produced and reasserted through the Congo, amongst others.

How can one decode the meaning and negotiations that are produced via the Congo? Stuart Hall, building on de Saussure and his structuralist and postmodernist heirs, suggests doing as much by looking at the Congo as a "sign", or as a part of the English language that is used to communicate ideas (ibid: 31). The Congo as sign can be split into a signifier and signified. The signifier is the form (the word itself); the signified, in turn, is the idea, the concept behind this form. As we will see, the signified concepts in this book vary widely – from slavery to notions of Social Darwinian race (e.g. "pureblooded" blackness) to horrendous atrocities (e.g. American lynching, Congo Free State).

Hall reminds us that the relation between signifier and signified is the result of negotiations and agreed meanings "specific to each society and to specific historical moments" (ibid: 32). In this book, this has translated into, on the one hand, clearly distinguishable "text trajectories" (Blommaert 2005: 255), or how the Congo signi-

of power relations than a skin color, although these are intertwined: Economic and social privileges are unequally distributed to those people with the "right" skin color (white). As a power-filled and historically contingent concept, many people can fall into the category of whiteness or blackness under the appropriate circumstances. Building on Charles Mills, it is suggested that these malleable "blacknesses" and "whitenesses" exist by virtue of the establishment of their internal distinctions (Mills: 1997: 80) – some whites are decidedly whiter than others and the same goes for Blacks. In this field of internal distinctions, the Congo will play a central role.

fier moves constantly through American contexts and genres. On the other hand, the historical contingency of the Congo discourse has resulted in a process of "continuous interpretation and re-interpretation" (Said 2003: 332). Thus, phases of signification can be detected, fashions can be traced, and new alliances with major schools of thought can be identified. The sign of the Congo varies and changes depending on the epistemic mainstream to which intellectuals attach themselves at their time of writing.

For instance, in 19th-century American culture, intellectuals drew from various schools of thought – sometimes, but not necessarily, simultaneously – including the sacred and the secular, the academic and the popular, classicist and orientalist thought, and Aryanist and Afrocentrist discourses (Hall 2009: 1-16). The real-and-imagined Congo has thus been produced using different intellectual toolboxes, as will be shown. Despite all of these changes on the surface, the Congo nevertheless remained bound to its underlying code of Otherness. New rhetoric, novel developments in the field of history, and fresh knowledge of Central West Africa have never changed the basic assumptions underlying Congoism. Changes merely highlighted or challenged some traits, suppressed others, and adjusted the rationale behind the "Othering" according to the needs and paradigms of the time.

Capitalist interests have also kept a tight grip on the discursive production of the real-and-imagined Congo. Economic focus on the Congo has taken many forms – from anything as big as colonialism to something as small as decent sales figures for one's own travelogue. Capitalism has risen since the Renaissance as the "single decisive principle" in Euro-American social environments, as Samir Amin has termed it (2009: 152), and yet it has remained largely off the radar in academic and popular Congo investigations. Popular accounts such as Stearns's Dancing in the Glory of Monsters (2011), for instance, avoid mentioning capitalism. In Stearns's work, the international markets (e.g. ibid: xxiii), the black markets (e.g ibid: 39, 117, 157), and the local food markets (e.g. ibid: 35) are treated as derivatives of the principle of supply and demand.

This book asks why particular phrasings are used and not others, especially since some kind of focus on capitalism has been shown in this book to be a an important aspect for coming to terms with Central West Africa. Commercial discourse and capitalist logic provide both the rationale and the discursive justification for, amongst others, colonial conquest (discussed in the First and Second Chapters in particular). "Normalized" capitalist rationale enables conquest executed in the name of "opening" the economies of resource-rich countries. The constantly returning set of thematic fascinations within Congoism has included, amongst others, the necessity of free trade, cheap labor, private and public enterprise, as well as the abun-

dance of resources and a complete lack of economic vision from the Congolese. This is capitalist logic and could be labeled as such. Writing about "the market" in lieu of capitalism runs the risk of regarding local and external markets as equivalent. This strengthens a substantial discursive trait within Congoism: The Congo-as-a-resource (i.e. the Congo as a provider of human and natural resources for the good of, allegedly, all those involved), a topos that is discussed at length in the Second Chapter.

Capitalist commerce is explicitly addressed and spelled out in the following chapters, as it draws attention to issues of power and oppression – through which Othering is enabled – in the name of profit that go beyond the mere buying and selling for the sake of "making a living". As an analytic term, capitalism enables us to critically highlight the far-reaching national and international effects of structuring a society around private ownership, free wage-earning, the expanding accumulation of commodities for profit, and the division of labor (Weinberg 2003: 1). Capitalism is particularly important to highlight because the crystallization of capitalist society went hand in hand with the conquest of the world. Amin asserts, "[T]hese are two dimensions of the same development" (Amin 2009: 151). My book proves this to be correct, both in colonial and postcolonial times. Moreover, capitalism highlights internal social consequences, such as the emergence of social classes, migratory movements, and institutional, legal, and political arrangements implemented to insure a dependable supply of resources and labor (Weinberg 2003: 1). In addition, the term capitalism, as an oppositional term (Kocka 2013: 6), has political dimensions which need to be addressed in the following chapters in order to come to terms with Congoism.

Capitalism comes with a value system, and Eurocentrism is one manifestation of this system. This book wholeheartedly seconds Amin's conviction that capitalism has been a major factor in the development of Eurocentric discourses. These have willingly produced a useless "counterpart", or an equally "artificial conception of the Other" (ibid: 165), in order to legitimize exploitation. Eurocentrism, in the words of Shohat and Stam, "sanitizes Western history while patronizing and even demonizing the non-West" (1994: 3). Furthermore, Stam and Shohat continue, Eurocentric discourse "thinks of itself as its noblest achievements – science, progress, humanism – but of the non-West in terms of its deficiencies, real or imagined" (ibid: 3). This book illustrates how Eurocentrism works in concrete terms, how it gathers or loses steam according to the capitalist needs of the time. To be sure, the Eurocentric rationale has been altered in its most explicit forms over the last decades. Social Darwinism, for instance, is now largely discredited as racist (ibid: 23).

But diluted forms of that same logic do persist, it is demonstrated, albeit wrapped now in a relativist, postmodern vocabulary.

This work also suggests that the reasons for the ongoing persistence of Eurocentrism, albeit in altered forms, are to be sought in the development of capitalism. This is a connection seldom made within the theoretical field of "postcolonial theory", as designated by the theory-producing interpretations, readings, and critiquing of the cultural and material practices of colonialism (cf. Loomba 2005: 1-82). Although postcolonial theories have provided fruitful perspectives from which to tackle the Congo in this work (Edward Said and, to a lesser extent, Gayatri Spivak are used here), they decidedly could not carry the book all the way. Dirlik has a point when he states that many "postcolonial critics have [repudiated] a foundational role to capitalism in history" (1994: 331; cf. Chibber's more recent Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital). Indeed, much can be said in favor of Dirlik's assertion that "the denial of capitalism's foundational status also reveals a culturalism in the postcolonialist argument" (1994: 331). This assertion is quoted and supported here in full recognition, of course, that this book is written with a strong focus on American culture and through the lens of a decidedly Euro-American cultural studies. Investigating "culture", however, is not the same as "culturalism", which, contrary to what is attempted here, largely excludes capitalism from its rationale and replaces it through culture as "the main driving force of inevitably quite different historical trajectories" (Amin 2009: 7). Without capitalism "as the foundation for European power and the motive force of its globalization, Eurocentrism would have been just another ethnocentrism", Dirlik provocatively claims (1994: 331). With this in mind, this book incorporates capitalism as a substantial engine driving many of the findings, and it will be constantly tested and questioned through the primary sources at hand.

Besides culture and capitalism, social class has also emerged as a decisive element in uncovering and understanding Congoism. It is maintained here that through the Congo signifier, Black American intellectuals have outed and constructed themselves as a "class". The term "bourgeois" is used in this book more often than "middle class" when discussing Black intellectuals. The former concept is applied in the sense, defined by Raymond Williams, of "a ruling class" (1983: 48). As such, intellectuals attempted to be spokespeople, as well as organizers and instructors of and for "their" people – on a local scale, but also on a national and international plane. As self-proclaimed mouthpieces of their communities, intellectuals critiqued racist America and did much to strengthen their communities. The heroism of this, as well as the difficulties that were encountered, cannot be underestimated or stressed enough. Amidst this advocating for "their" people, however, processes of

self-interest were simultaneously at work. They involved thrusting certain values upon "other" Blacks, through which the latter were kept in their place or forced in a direction that would not serve them best. These processes often drew from white bourgeois thinking and threatened to even out the gains obtain by the activism in which these intellectuals engaged.

Class is understood here in the sense articulated by E.P. Thompson, that is, as an active, historical process that "happens[...]in human relationships" (1995b: 131). Thompson's suggestion is that class is not a given structure, but happens as "a result of common experiences (inherited or shared)" through which "the identity of their interests as between themselves" are negotiated, "and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs" (ibid). Although this definition does not fully encompass the Black American intellectual experience, it does provide a point of departure from which this book may position itself with regard to the category. Black intellectuals did not necessarily share similar experiences, either socially, economically, or otherwise. Although some of them were wealthy and successful, with well-paid positions at academic institutions (e.g. Booker T. Washington), many more could barely make ends meet. "Middle classness", as David Graeber suggests, has never been "an economic category at all", but rather a social and political one (2014: 76). Thus, economic realities, like education, varied immensely among these intellectuals. As a group, however, intellectuals did articulate their own identity vis-à-vis that of others, such as lower-class Americans, Congolese Blacks, and all those who went against their understanding of "normality". Although this struggle (prior to the 1860s) was hardly an open one, many intellectual texts bear its traces.

To investigate how the Congo signifier came into being, U.S. "discourses" on the Congo are examined and interrogated. Due to the amazing proliferation of "discourse babble" in contemporary academia (Henriques et al. 1984: 105), the term 'discourse' has become both omnipresent and maddeningly vague. Sara Mills goes as far as to suggest that the concept "has perhaps the widest range of possible significations of any term in literary and cultural theory, and yet it is often the term within theoretical texts which is least defined" (Mills 1997: 1). As a discourse analytic apparatus is applied throughout this book – including the use of terms such as archive, archaeology, and discourse itself, of course – it is necessary to try to define in as precise and detailed a manner as possible what is understood by these concepts.

The first concept that should be investigated is "discourse" itself. It will not be automatically associated with Foucault alone in this work, although his seminal The Archaeology of Knowledge, as mentioned above, will play a role (more implicitly

than explicitly, however). In Sawyer's archaeology of the concept of "discourse", the author concludes that "if one is to attribute the broad usage of the term 'discourse,' it should either be attributed to British cultural studies collectively, to Lacan, or to the French Marxist discourse analysts working in the 1960s and 1970s" (2002: 450). As Foucault's body of work itself does not present a consistent definition of discourse (Willaert 2012: 28), and probably very willfully avoided working out a consistent toolbox of methods, the works of Foucauldian-inspired discourse analysts such as Siegfried Jäger and Jan Blommaert will be mined in what follows in order to arrive at a workable definition and method of "discourse" analysis. The role of Foucault in this work is thus as epistemic provider of important keywords (and the ideas connected to them) – most prominently archive, archaeology, discourse, and power – but he does not serve as an inspiration for the concrete methods necessary to grasp these terms empirically.

Discourse is considered in this work as "language-in-action" (Blommaert 2005: 2). Investigating discourse requires that one attends critically both to language and to action, and recognize discourse as containing myriad forms of meaningful "'flagging' performed by means of objects, attributes, or activities" (ibid: 3). The signifier Congo is a model example of language in action, triggering various historically contingent semanticizations. As shown above, these range from widespread material naming practices to a heterogeneous corpus of metaphors. Given the broadness of these Congo semanticizations, Congo discourse will be narrowed down in this work as an ongoing attention to "language" in the traditional textual sense. Thus, discourse is understood here as the reappearing and socially conventionalized utterances on Central West Africa which provide a normalized language for "talking" about the Congo, its geography, history, and inhabitants (Jäger 2004: 127, 130). The talking in the work at hand is textual, in the sense that Congo utterances are investigated which appear in fictional and non-fictional texts (as well as those falling in between) published for a broader audience. Unpublished work, such as manuscripts and personal letters, is excluded. To ensure comparability between the various time periods and to reduce a large number of sources to manageable proportions, this work refrains from engaging in a systematic investigation of (audio)visuals (e.g. music, images, and film), although they will be alluded to in the Second Chapter to sum up some of the results.

Critics might argue that a discourse analytic approach potentially runs the danger of reducing extremely violent events (such as the ones under scrutiny in this work) and their victims to mere "discourse", thereby reducing these crimes to nothing more than language, invention, and imagination. This is patently not the case because discourse (as language-in-action) is deeply social and contextual in nature.

In other words, if one investigates discourse, one investigates more than just language. "There is no such thing as a 'non-social' use of discourse", Blommaert asserts (2005: 4). From this perspective, discourse analysis enables one to examine meaningful social differences, conflicts, and struggles. This book follows Blommaert in his assertion that "discourse is what transforms our environment into a socially and culturally meaningful one" (ibid). This kind of meaning-construction "does not develop in vacuo", as Blommaert states, "it does so under rather strict conditions that are both linguistic (never call a mountain a 'bird' or a 'car') and sociocultural (there are criteria for calling something 'beautiful' or 'problematic')" (ibid). The social aspect of discourse often requires the discussion of the circumstance that give rise to and perpetuate it, hence the necessity of discussing the Congo via the way it is applied by its language users in various contexts (see below).

This approach to discourse analysis emphasizes the connection between discourse and society writ large. Here, central sociopolitical structures and events in the lives of African Americans – ranging from transatlantic slavery and the missionary movement to Jim Crow apartheid – are taken into account in order to understand the Congo discourse. The analysis of discourse is thus always and necessarily the examination of situated, contextualized language. And vice versa – context itself also becomes a crucial methodological and theoretical issue in the development of a critical study of language. Evans states that "language and grammar" have evolved "through contact with the real world in an attempt to name real things" (Evans 2000: 112). As a consequence, much of this book is dedicated to the scrutiny of context.

And the context, overwhelmingly, has been far from obvious. Wherever possible, the political, social, and cultural surroundings of African American intellectuals is gleaned through their own texts or those of white American or European intellectuals politically sympathetic to their plight (most famously Myrdal in the Second Chapter). Whenever a consistent contextualization through the lens of Black American texts has proved limited or impossible (as is the case in the First Chapter), contemporary academic voices have been added to the discussion. Again, these voices have not simply been taken up wholesale. Their discourse has also been critically scrutinized vis-à-vis my hypothesis of the existence of "academic Congoism".

Building on the contextualization of the Congo discourse, it is essential to understand that the Congo discourse is not a matter of free choice alone: History influences how one talks about Central West Africa. To show the regularities, constraints, possibilities, and rules within this discourse, a large corpus of texts has been assembled, which, in sum, constitutes the "archive" of American intellectual discourse on the Congo. This "archive" should be understood both materially and

epistemically. In its material shape, the American archive comprises the entire corpus of texts by American intellectuals on the Congo in any given period, which, theoretically at least, can be bundled and stored (cf. Baßler 2005: 178, 196). In this work, a segment, or a corpus, of the overall Congo archive has been selected, and the criteria according to which this has been done will be described in the course of this Introduction.

In its epistemic meaning, the archive is a highly self-referential system of "intertextual" processes, or processes via which texts constitute the contextual reality of other texts (ibid: 13). Intertextuality thus refers to the fact that, whenever African Americans wrote about the Congo, they drew upon the words of others, constantly citing and re-citing expressions of both colleagues and opponents, as well as continuously recycling meanings that were already available (Blommaert 2005: 46). As Foucault had it in The Archaeology of Knowledge, "All manifest discourse is secretly based on an 'already said'" (2010: 25). As a whole, the archive is the regulator of what can and cannot be said about the Congo in any given time period. It is thus the key to describing the discontinuities and continuities between and within ideas, discourses, and rhetoric.

A Foucauldian "archaeology" will be performed on the Black American Congo archive. Foucault defined this term rather descriptively, writing that "archaeology tries not to define the thoughts, representations, images, themes, preoccupations that are concealed or revealed in discourses" (2010: 138). Instead, Foucault asserted that archaeologists should focus on "those discourses themselves, those discourses as practices obeying certain rules" (ibid). In contrast to Foucault, this work studies both the rules of discourse and the attendant representations. They often cannot, in fact, be disentangled from one another. Topoi such as the Congo-as-Savage, -Slave, -Culture, and -Resource reveal how discourse is regulated through certain figures of speech. They are also indicative of what lies behind the "rhetoric" – a term that signifies the study of tropes, topoi, and figures of style. The study of how these tropes, figures of speech, and topoi are given their internal and external logic (which places them within a larger epistemic framework; cf. Spurr 1993: 8) should shed some light on the "rules for discursive practices" (Foucault 2010: 139) that create a "common sense" about the Congo through "narratives", "stories", "representations", and other practices constituting topoi and tropes. "Narratives" are understood here as texts in which an intratextual agent conveys stories to an addressee (Bal 2009: 5). "Stories", in turn, provide the content of the overall narrative (ibid). Stories and narratives, written down in material "texts", are forms of "representations", which in turn signifies any use of language to represent the world to others (Hall 2003b: 15). All of these processes of narrativization, textualization, and repre-

sentation combined are mobilized whenever the "discursive" comes into play (Hall 2003a: 6).

A key element in analyzing how common sense about the Congo is produced is what Francesca Poletta has termed the "canonized stories". Canonized stories are stories that masquerade as fact by suggesting coherence, familiarity, and credibility by repeating figures of style, plot lines, normative frameworks, and intertextual references. In other words, Congo stories make sense when one takes into account other similar stories. "We believe a story because it is familiar" (2006: 10), Poletta suggests. This does not mean that these stories are identical. On the contrary: One of their central traits is that they leave room for unpredictability, new interpretations, ambiguity, and alteration (ibid). Thus, far from reproducing a never-ending repetition of identical stories, the Congo discourses in the United States have produced malleable stories that adjust themselves to the parlance and needs of their time.

My archaeology discusses the Congo representations "in their specificity", as Foucault suggests (2010: 139). This is accomplished by attempting to understand the "specificity of its occurrence and to determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected with it, and show what other forms of statement it excludes" (ibid: 28). But how does one execute such a challenging program of archaeological aims? Methodically, this entails capturing the real-and-imagined Congo, first of all, in a longue durée manner, as discussed above. Investigating the evolution of discourse over longer periods of time has involved, to paraphrase Obeyesekere, an ongoing dialectic of reconstruction and deconstruction of the text corpus in this work (2005: 205).

On the level of reconstruction, an attempt has been made to select a representative corpus of texts from the African American archive, comprised of both so-called "truthful" texts and more overtly "imaginative" ones. Factual and fictional accounts occasionally slip into one another, but both groups of texts are, in the end, treated differently. Although both are approached through discourse analysis (thus aligning them with each other methodically and epistemically), this work is not radically postmodernist in that it considers texts as "essentially the same", as Richard J. Evans has phrased it (2000: 114). Fiction is written with its own set of intentions, readerships, and goals in mind. Moreover, "there is a very real difference between what somebody writes and the account someone else gives of it." Hence the split between primary and secondary literature in this work (cf. the list of References), no matter how fluid the borders between the two may actually be. It is through this lens that multiple Congoisms can be identified: The defaming discourse of the primary sources, as well as that of its academic handling (cf. the First Chapter), and

the Congoism of fiction and non-fiction. All of them, as will be shown, play into one another.

In the ongoing reconstruction of an African American Congo archive that has been ignored or neglected for so long, this work provides a new reading of a wide variety of texts. Many of them were available in scanned form in large electronic and microfilm databases. Thus, the focus has been less on unearthing "new" texts than on re-interpreting known ones. The archives that were consulted include the online and microfilm archives at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York) and the John F. Kennedy Institute (Berlin). Both of these provided insight into the extent to which Black American intellectuals engaged with the Congo in their monographs, theater performances, and the news media, particularly of the 1960s and 1970s. To access material from the decades and centuries before, electronic databases from the Internet Archive, JSTOR, The New York Times, Accessible Archives, and The Chicago Defender archive were mined.

The method and ambition of this work required an electronic archival approach; time and geography would not have allowed for a systematic analysis of archives other than electronic ones. In the cases where "new" materials, such as John Henrik Clarke's unpublished biography of Patrice Lumumba, were "discovered" in the Schomburg ("The Life and Death of Patrice Lumumba"), more of the same rhetoric marking Clarke's other publicly discussed works was sought out, thus underscoring the similarities between "known" and "new" materials. The publicly discussed texts under scrutiny range from pamphlets to poems and from activist speeches and sermons to novels and travelogues. Transparency is one of the advantages of this electronic archival approach: Anyone who wishes to may consult the databases.

Deconstructing a heterogeneous text corpus has often meant focusing on certain texts and not others in order to create a manageable approach to the overall archive. This has led here to a prioritization of historical accounts about Africa, or, in the parlance of large stretches of the past, accounts of one's own "race". These accounts include works that define themselves explicitly as "history" (e.g. by George Washington Williams, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Lisa Amos Pendleton in the Second Chapter), as well as texts that refrain from claiming a historical status, but do narrate history, such as pamphlets, novels, poems, and plays. Discourse as a language-in-action thus leads to an ongoing broadening of the idea of what constitutes history.

One reason to prioritize historical accounts is their wide circulation among African American intellectuals due to their centrality and "primacy" as a mode of understanding the world and one's place in it (Anderson/Stewart 2007: 43). Another reason is the genre's frequent and openly communicated self-reflectiveness. When-

ever African Americans constructed histories of Africa, particularly at times when neither Africans nor African Americans were considered to possess any, they were also writing commentaries on their own times and history, often with a direct political impulse to act against the conditions they were facing – namely, "race prejudice", to quote W.E.B. Du Bois in The World and Africa (1962: x). More so than their white counterparts, who could and would more easily assume a universal and objective historical perspective, African Americans have reflected upon themselves and others as knowledge producers, especially, but not exclusively from the mid-20th century onward.

Examples of this interest-led political self-reflectiveness are legion. "Let me be your guide," the African American veteran Washington Post correspondent Keith Richburg says to his readers in his polemic reflection on his three-year stint in Africa, "and try to follow along as I lay out for you here why I feel the way I do – about Africa, about America, and mainly about myself and where it is I now know I belong" (1996: xvii). Richburg makes it very clear from the start that his interest is in countering the rhetoric of "our supposedly enlightened, so-called black leaders" who hold Africa "as some kind of black Valhalla […] where black men and women walk in true dignity. Sorry, but I've been there. [T]hank God that I am an American" (ibid: xvii-xviii). The Congo/Zaire figures prominently in Richburg's book as the country where his alienation from Africa's "debilitating effects of corruption" (ibid: 175) and from his fellow African Americans' "near religious pilgrimage" (ibid: 161) to the continent reached an all-time low.

Self-reflectiveness does not mean that these Black intellectuals considered their stories as fundamentally limited, subjective, or flawed. On the contrary, African American historians had no doubts that they were reconstructing a "truthful" Congo representation, no matter how different and personal their stories may have been. Their language, however, betrays the discourse and archive in which they were operating. Geographically, for instance, Congo's landscape ranged from an all-out "swamp" to a "jungle" or a "valley" (as used in, respectively, George Schuyler 1992: 62; Franklin 1952:21; Du Bois 2001:42); Congolese, in turn, designated anything from "Pygmies", "red dwarfs", and "Bantu" to "Negrillos" (Du Bois 2001: 42, 64-65; Washington 1909: 18; Du Bois 1972: 165). Against the backdrop of so many designations, it is the task of the archaeologist to discuss how these constituted and conveyed highly purposeful, and deeply historical and normative meanings. At stake in an archaeology of Congo discourse is uncovering the "unconscious activity that took place [within the author], despite himself, in what he said or in the almost imperceptible fracture of his actual words" (Foucault 2010: 27).

The ebb and flow of African American intellectual discourse on Central West Africa is here followed by investigations of the "discursive events" that drive the Congo narratives. Events become discursive by virtue of receiving broad attention over a short, medial, or long period of time, as Jäger writes (2004: 132-162). The (f)actuality of these events is not what is at stake here, at least not primarily. Foucault writes in The Archaeology of Knowledge: "The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?" (2010: 27). Thus, the concept of discursive events is used to underline the fact that the Congo, exemplified by today's The Democratic Republic of the Congo, has become in many ways a "heart of darkness" through the cumulative highlighting and repetition of certain events and not others, that is, by discursive selection and self-perpetuating rhetorical strategies and attitudes, and not by the "given" awfulness of things that quite naturally require our attention.

This selective discursive focus has not only created a surplus of dismissive, negative events and statements (cf. Van Hove 2009). It is also a matter of choice and repetition that the Congo Free State, and not the many Congolese abused in the transatlantic slave trade over a span of four centuries (Miller 1976: 101; Klein 1999: 66), has become a primary discursive event. The choices and reiterations involved in transmitting the "atrocities" of the Congo Free State from one generation to the next can be traced step by step in the African American archive, starting with the famous 1890 "[An] Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo" by George Washington Williams, who, after visiting the Congo Free State, accused Leopold II of being guilty of "deceit, fraud, robberies, arson, murder, slave-raiding and general policy of cruelty […] on the natives" (Williams 2006: 130). Decades of allusions to the Congo Free State followed, either in a direct fashion, such as in Malcolm X's 1964 "[An] Exchange on Casualties" (X 1970b), or offhandedly, as in George Schuyler's satirical 1938 Black Empire, in which the "natives" of the Belgian Congo turn genocidal against the white colonials, a circumstance that had to "be expected in view of the long series of Belgian atrocities" (1991: 129).

What matters for this work is that all of these direct and indirect references contributed to the Congo's strong association with certain "atrocities" (the Congo Free State, that is) and not to others (the slave trade). This one-sided mountain of negative discursive events has produced the Congo's remarkable discursive trajectory – matched perhaps only by its affirmative discursive counterparts "Ethiopia"/"Ethiopianism" (Gruesser 2000: 3-12) and "Egypt"/"Egyptomania" (Trafton). This trajectory made it possible for the Congo signifier to also function independently from discursive events: It remained on the African American discursive

radar, often as a metaphor, even when there was nothing new to report about Central West Africa.

The chapters in this book have been organized around the various topoi that underlie the rhetoric used to narrate the discursive Congo events. Topoi designate the fixed combination of various story aspects in Congo texts (e.g. the Congo-as-Slave, Congo-as-Savage, Congo-as-Darkness). These topoi build upon various tropes, taking up literary and rhetorical devices such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, which all consist of the use of a non-literal use of language (e.g. "Darkness" in the topos of the Congo-as-Darkness). These tropes and topoi will be looked at in order to explain their emergence in epistemological terms. The discussion will revolve around which socio-political circumstances, as well as which trends in knowledge production, have triggered particular representations of the Congo.

Congoism is discussed in all main chapters via three points of analysis: the perceived landscape of the Congo (point one), its people (point two), and its history (point three). Concretely, this analysis is executed based on the building blocks of Congoism: the language of repetition, as hinted at above, but also, and equally importantly, the rhetoric of silence. Repetition can be understood and analyzed in a relatively straightforward manner. It may be recognized through regularly recurring figures of speech, narrative schemes, discursive strategies, and persuasion through rhetoricality. Silence, however, is a more complex matter. It deals with what Allan Sekula has called the "shadow archive" of U.S. American culture (1989: 347), describing the hushed social and moral hierarchy within the U.S. American visual archive (which I will extend to African American texts). Muteness, however, can be investigated because it has a rationale (i.e. silence exists for a reason) and a language of its own: Silence thus leaves systematic traces in the archive, allowing a decision to be made as to whether a "silentium" should be read as an "argumentum". In other words: whether silence is merely coincidental or discursively organized (cf. Ernst 2002: 25; Bührmann/Schneider 2008: 98).

Silences on the Congo will be uncovered via a series of simultaneously executed readings. I read Central West Africa both "widely" and "closely" (Hallet 2010: 294), moving gradually from a broad intertextual reading of the respective context ("wide reading") to a more detailed, text-immanent one ("close reading"). A "contrapuntal" reading, as Said has termed it (1994: 51), is also executed. This entails, to paraphrase Jan Vansina's own methodical considerations in Paths in the Rainforests, "confronting" (1990: 24) Black and white primary texts, as well as marginal

and canonized texts, with one another.[15] This confrontation is illuminating in terms of the manner in which it allows for the tracing of gaps in the texts: It allows us to ask whether their claims of knowledge or ignorance were credible vis-à-vis what their sources or what others knew, and what they selectively omitted or underlined. A contrapuntal reading is also enlightening in terms of class. As mentioned before, class positions are hardly ever communicated openly by Black bourgeois American intellectuals (until intellectuals of other classes or with other class aspirations became more prominent; cf. the Third Chapter). How can this allegiance to class be decoded, then, if it is not openly reflected?

For one, class can be recognized because bourgeois intellectuals shared common values which they did communicate frequently. "Bourgeois thought", to paraphrase Amin, makes people responsible for their own conditions, highlighting internal factors along the way and disregarding the external ones that have (co)produced these conditions (2009: 182). Much of this can be detected in Congo discourse. To decode class positions, the "undersides" of African American intellectual discourse are focused upon, to quote E.P. Thompson (1995a: 137). These comprise "petites histoires", such as anecdotes and instances in the text where these intellectuals may be caught off guard. If this had not been done, the current analysis, as E.P. Thompson asserts, would have been in danger of "becoming prisoner of the assumptions and self-image" of those intellectuals under scrutiny, and therefore would have silently accepted and reproduced their class position (ibid).

Silence raises many questions. How is it justified? How does it arise? Are some intellectual circles more silent (or ignorant) than others? To what does silence, as a broader phenomenon, point: the Congo's peripheral meaning or quite the opposite? And how can silence and ignorance be traced and discussed convincingly? As is shown, silence often derived from the Congo's supposed unknowability, no matter how much is actually known about it. To Alexander Crummell in 1862, for instance, the African interior is as unknown in his own time as it had been "two thousand years ago, in the time of Herodotus and Ptolemy" (1869: 288). According to Du Bois in 1910, the Belgian Congo was "a land of silence and ignorance" (1992: 390). Forty years later, he still reckoned that "no coherent account of the millions of human beings who have lived here for thousands of years" can be made (1962: 164). Booker T. Washington discussed the "Kongo Free State" at the start of the 20th century as a region that cannot be known, since it has "never been touched by the influence of either European or Mohammedan civilizations" (1909: 48). John

15 Vansina's full quote goes: "[Texts] can be quite partisan, and as a result quite misleading. This often becomes clear when independent texts are confronted with each other" (1990: 24).

Hope Franklin repeated this argument half a century later in his seminal From Slavery to Freedom: It would be "impossible to trace with any degree of accuracy the political development" of Central West Africa "before Europeanization", as there is "remarkably little available information" (1952: 21). My confrontational readings will discuss what could have given rise to these beliefs and the contradictions inherent within them. Du Bois, for instance, maintained his position up until the early 60s. The Third Chapter investigates what made him change his mind.

Silence turns into ignorance whenever it is unevenly distributed, to paraphrase Robert Proctor – a scholar who advocates the study of ignorance, which he calls "agnotology" (cf. Proctor 2008). Ignorance is by no means understood as a willful act alone. "Ignorance has many interesting surrogates", Proctor reminds us, "and overlaps in myriad ways with – as it is generated by – secrecy, stupidity, apathy, censorship, disinformation, faith, and forgetfulness" (ibid: 2). Proctor subsequently distinguishes three kinds of ignorance: Ignorance as a "native state", ignorance as a "lost realm", and ignorance as a deliberately engineered and "strategic ploy" (ibid: 3). The former implies a kind of deficit, caused by naïveté, improper education or the simple unavailability of knowledge (ibid: 4), while ignorance as a lost realm is based on the idea that inquiries are always selective – "we look here rather than there [...] to focus on this is therefore invariably a choice to ignore that" (ibid: 7). The third kind of ignorance, ignorance as a strategic ploy (or active construct), in turn, focuses on all those instances of ignorance that are made, maintained, and manipulated through active human planning. While tackling why some aspects of the Congo are registered while others are thoroughly neglected (Smithson 2008: 210), an attempt is made in this book to explain ignorance, especially in its first two meanings.

Omission and ignorance are by no means signs of Central West Africa's marginality with regard to geopolitics (as Stearns 2011: xxii-xxiii maintains). On the contrary, deletion and 'unknowledge' are discussed in what follows as discursive strategies employed in order to justify or cover up the constant meddling in the region. If anything, the "alternation between extreme noise or violence and relative silence" (Turner 2013: 3) are indications of the Congo's centrality as a material and epistemic geography in the global history of capitalism. As a prominent supplier of minerals (e.g. coltan, diamonds, copper, and rubber), the Congo has enabled technological advances that accelerated global capitalism over the course of the last two centuries. This has proven as true in contemporary postcolonial times as it did in the colonial period. Until the late 19th century, slaves provided "the capital which financed the Industrial Revolution in England and of mature industrial capitalism", as

the 1944 study Slavery and Capitalism by Eric Williams, which remains relevant, maintained (Williams 1944: vii; cf. Inikori 2000).

Each of the three main chapters of this book approaches Congo discourse from a different perspective. Broadly speaking, the "poetics" (Hall 1993a: 6) of Congo representation are examined in the First Chapter, which explains how language produces the Congo signifier step by step, one text at a time. The Second Chapter, in turn, explicitly investigates the epistemic and intertextual aspects involved in Congo signification. By drawing from various epistemic fields, the Congo meanings multiplied and diversified, as is shown, but remained constant in signifying Otherness. In the last major chapter, the near-hegemonic power of historically specific dismissive Congo rhetoric is shown through the failure of many intellectuals to go beyond Congoism, despite striving to do so. The Conclusion confirms this point with a discussion of contemporary white authors. From the point of view of periodization, the three chapters constitute a discussion of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial discourse. This periodization reflects the major rupture points in the Congo discourse: Colonialism and postcolonialism dramatically affected what was and was not said.

More concretely, the chapters cover the following ground: The First Chapter ("From Slave to Savage") discusses the creation of the Congo topos between 1800-1885 by illustrating how representations of Central West Africa moved from the motif of the Congo-as-Slave (in antebellum America) to the near-monolithic topos of the Congo-as-Savage at the brink of colonialism. With a step-by-step analysis of the repetition and silencing of these topoi, this chapter shows how the Congo reflects African American discursive attitudes towards enslaved and oppressed Others, both of the internal and external variety. Discussing two works of history against the backdrop of their broader discursive context, R.B. Lewis's Light and Truth (1844) and George Washington Williams's History of the Negro (1885), this chapter demonstrates how Congo utterances shift in quantity and quality. These utterances transform from the silenced topos of enslaved abjection to a constantly communicated topos of imperial savageness. The fluidity of the Congo signifier is a leitmotiv, a golden thread throughout the chapter. Its meaning was produced in a complex, supra-individual relationship between contemporary historians and their broader socio-political cultures and social locatedness in terms of class, race, and gender. Through a "close reading" and "wide reading" of some of the African American texts produced in that period, this chapter investigates how African Americans created a Black, bourgeois subject whose textual template of rejection was constituted by the Congo.

The Second Chapter ("Between Art and Atrocity") dedicates itself to the colonial era until 1945 – the time period that saw the internal apartheid of "Jim Crow" and the external colonization and racial segregation of the Congo Free State and the Belgian Congo. Due to the increasing production, variation, importance, circulation, and availability of African American texts (works of history, as well as poetic, activist, and journalistic texts), several competing, simultaneously active Congo topoi emerged, ranging from the Congo-as-Darkness to the Congo-as-the-Vital and the Congo-as-Resource. In contrast to the previous chapter, less focus is put on the "making" of these topoi. Rather, the manner in which these motifs constructed their content and authority from a range of specific epistemologies ("parochial" and "eyewitness" epistemologies, for instance) is discussed. This chapter shows, first, how the canon of American Congo texts is styled by colonialism, and thus preserves a discursive status quo by navigating through familiar cultural oppositions (male/female, Black/white, middle class/lower class, man of action/man of books). Second, the chapter discusses how canonized Congo narratives incited opposition, which began emerging hesitantly (and rather ineffectively) in the 1920s.

"Revolution, Reform, Reproduction", the Third Chapter, deals with the time between 1945 and 2013. This period is marked by the rise and decline of the Black Freedom Movement in the U.S., with which the chapter begins. Examining the stance of select Black American intellectuals at length, the strategies developed by them to de-Other the Congo are discussed. Malcolm X and Pulitzer-prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage figure prominently in this chapter, along with Black journalists and African-Americanized Congolese. The inherent limitations of modernist and postcolonial strategies become apparent in this chapter.

This work concludes with "Doing Damage, or Re-Writing Central West Africa", a discussion of contemporary Amazon.com bestsellers by Euro-American authors, specifically that by David Van Reybrouck. The broader and continued relevance of the work at hand is shown here, particularly against the background of Van Reybrouck's rather poor reflection of U.S. American sources and discourses. The discussion of Van Reybrouck shows to what extent Congoism is a phenomenon that cuts through national borders due to the increasingly global book markets, of which Amazon.com is both cause and effect. The Conclusion addresses the hope of a postmodern way out of the Congo discourse, which constitutes the latest episode in the long history of Congoism.