5. Congo reform and the crisis of racist societalisation

> "And no wonder! Such things are an ineffaceable blot upon the white race in Africa; and every white man who has a soul, whether brought into contact with them on the spot, or acquainted with them from a distance, cannot but 'cringe with shame' for his race".[1]
> Edmund D. Morel

From a sociological perspective, racism has been approached as a distinctively negative form of societalisation. Based on the exclusion of those people stigmatised as 'savage' or 'coloured', for instance, racist identities such as 'civilised' or 'white' can integrate both (economically, culturally, politically) dominant and deprived spheres of a hierarchised society in the same imagined community. Since the "racist symbolic capital" or "ethnic honour" accumulated by those considered superior human beings is ascribed regardless of the social status of an individual, racism can create a negative form of cohesion in societies defined by, inter alia, class conflicts and political disparity.[2]

As *chapter 5.1* shows, the peculiar social formation of the Congo colony makes it a prime object to research this process of negative racist societalisation. Initially, the colonial frontier situation and an 'egalitarian' policy allowed the inclusion of the exceptionally diverse Congolese colonial master class into the community of 'colonial whiteness', which was rewarded with various symbolic and material benefits. Moreover, as an 'empire for the masses', the Congo lured imperial middle and working classes with promises of economic growth, new fields of consumption and the 'ethnic honour' allocated through the commodified spectacle of exploration and conquest.

However, as the quoted words of Edmund D. Morel, the honorary secretary of the British Congo Reform Association, reveal, the process of racist societalisation was in a state of severe state of crisis, as *chapter 5.2* discusses. Preferential access for Belgians and

1 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 243.

2 See Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 64; Wulf D. Hund, *Negative Vergesellschaftung* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2006). The idea of a 'purely negative' societalisation and an 'ethnic honour' builds upon notions of Max Weber in Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 303, 309. The concept of a 'racist symbolic capital', relying on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of multiple social inequalities, is developed in Weiß, "Racist Symbolic Capital", 46–49. Also see chapter 1.

Catholics to the administration, economy and church sector; a repressive stance of the state; and inner conflicts among the colonisers led to corroding cohesion in the allegedly universal community of colonial 'whiteness'. Moreover, agents of the state and trading companies complained about miserable living conditions and the disgrace of their allegedly 'heroic' endeavour. The crisis of racist societalisation affected the metropole, where Free State opponents decried the degradation of once-admired imperialists and came to conceptualise the Congo, as Morel's words indicate, as an 'empire of shame'. Finally, under the economic policy implemented by Léopold since the 1890s, all the benefits promised to the British and American economy vanished.

Finally, *chapter 5.3* analyses the reaction of the reform movement to this crisis and investigates the remedies they proposed. Although a return to the 'open door' guaranteed by the Berlin Conference from 1885 would allow merchants and missionaries to regain their promised access, most internationals chose to withdraw from the Congo. This allowed the reformers to blame Belgian and lower-class recruits for the Congolese atrocities and maintain the idea of morally sound and politically legitimate British or Anglo-Saxon imperialism. Finally, through the racist spectacle of a commodified humanitarianism, the Congo once more became a resource of 'ethnic honour' for the British and American public.

5.1 'To combine all elements of the civilised world': The formation of colonial 'whiteness' and its promised benefits

In the summer of 1884, Henry M. Stanley returned to Europe after almost five years of supervising the foundation of the International Association of the Congo. In articles, interviews and lectures, the admired 'explorer' praised – and greatly exaggerated – the accomplishments of his mission in Central Africa and advertised the potential of Léopold's colony, which still lacked diplomatic recognition and a solid material base. On one of these occasions, Stanley not only emphasised the economic liberties guaranteed by the Association but presented the emerging colonial state as a quasi-utopian social-political project of egalitarian character, at least for the colonisers. "The spirit of this proposed government", the assembled audience at the Manchester Town Hall was told by the iconic 'explorer', was not merely "free trade, free commerce, unrestricted enterprise". Its spirit was also impartiality towards its future subjects "irrespective of colour, creed, or nationality, […] rank or social status".[3]

In the Congo, Stanley promised, fundamental categories of social inequality and personal identities like 'race' and class, national belonging and faith would be suspended for those willing to join the new colonial ruling class as military officers, civil administrators, artisans, missionaries or merchants. Thus, Stanley discursively connected his colonial mission in Africa to the capability of colonial frontier communities to superimpose the social fragmentation of the imperial metropoles through an inclusion of

3 Speech of Henry M. Stanley at the Manchester Town Hall, 21 October 1884, quoted in Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 8.

the colonisers into imagined communities (like 'civilisation', 'Christianity' or 'whiteness') defined in absolute opposition to the colonised (stigmatised as 'savage', 'heathen' or 'coloured'). This social phenomenon was elaborately described for European settler colonies established beyond the Atlantic Ocean and later in the Pacific. In the Australian case, the capability of 'whiteness' to outshine social antagonisms has, in this context, been compared to the physical effect of "white noise", the broadband signal that covers all audible frequencies and results in all-embracing homogeneity. [4] As Stanley's speech in Manchester hints at and the following chapter shows, a particularly raucous 'white noise' was promised to be generated in 'Darkest Africa'.

First, it is discussed how Léopold promised 'to combine all elements of the civilised world' in the Congo. Political strategy as much as practical necessity led to a uniquely diverse national, confessional, social and 'racial' composition of the state agents, missionaries and merchants pouring into the Congo Basin starting in 1879. Second, through the violent confrontation with and absolute delimitation to the colonised and alienated Congolese population, all colonisers were offered inclusion in an imagined community of colonial 'whiteness'. The 'white noise' indeed predominated over any social stratification among the colonisers in the Congo. As a cultural category and social relation, colonial 'whiteness' was even allocated to those members of the colonial master class who were most likely considered not fully, or not yet 'white' in the colonial metropole. Moreover, all colonisers were promised multidimensional benefits. This included a racist symbolic capital expressed as the right to humiliate and despise the colonised, high material wages and an increase in prestige and public reputation through their participation in the prestigious endeavour of conquering and 'civilising' 'Darkest Africa'.

Moreover, the Congo was also deliberately created as an 'empire for the masses'. Materially, the macroeconomic effects of integrating Central Africa into the capitalist world economy were promised to stimulate industrial growth and the labour market, while colonial commodities based on the tropical richness of the Congo could sweeten and comfort the life of the metropolitan consumers. Symbolically, the 'commodification of racism' allowed those who stayed behind to incorporate the racist hierarchies established in the colonies, as well. Tremendously successful travel literature and imperial exhibitions brought the Congo home to the metropole and assured millions of readers and visitors of their belonging to the communities of civilisation and whiteness, and they allowed vast parts of the imperial societies to accumulate a 'racist symbolic capital' through the colonial exploitation of the Congo.

A 'cosmopolitan colony': the colonial master class in the Congo

From the outset, the International Association of the Congo attempted to make the egalitarian spirit Stanley evoked a fundamental pillar of the emerging colonial order in Central Africa. As has been discussed above, Léopold successfully disguised his poorly legitimated personal grasp over the vast Congo Basin as an 'international' colonisation

4 See Aziz Rana, *The Two Faces of American Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 12; Stefanie Affeldt: Consuming Whiteness, 36 ('white noise'). Affeldt borrowed the concept from Taylor, *Buying Whiteness*, 352.

scheme. This political manoeuvre involved promises of open and indiscriminate access to the resources and markets of the Congo, and it resulted in a departure from the particular alignments dominating the 19th century imperial narratives. In general, these had been closely associated with national grandeur, 'racial' destiny or a denominational sense of mission. In contrast, the colonisation of the Congo was presented as a collective endeavour devoted to "the combination of all civilised nations" on a "common ground" and universally appealing to all imperial 'races' and Christian confessions.[5]

Every keen 'civilised' person could participate in and benefit from the colonisation of 'Darkest Africa', it was promised. The right "to enter, travel and reside" was explicitly conferred to British and American citizens in bilateral agreements, for instance, and the General Acts of the Congo Conference 1885 and the Anti-Slavery Conference 1890 guaranteed merchants and missionaries "free access" and special protection "without distinction of creed" or nationality.[6]

Moreover, the administration of the International Association (and later the Congo Free State) not only recruited around the globe but also specifically attempted to attract candidates from the social margins of the imperial societies for the various civil and military positions in the new colony.[7] That it was a "Welsh workhouse boy who has just plucked the heart out of the mystery of the Dark Continent", as W. T. Stead noted, was perhaps the best advertisement in this regard. The remarkable biography of Stanley, who grew up in poverty and became the most celebrated imperial 'hero' of the 19th century, strengthened the conviction that even the ordinary and common "country yokel, or child of the slums, is the seed of Empire", as Stead argued.[8]

Furthermore, "well-educated" Black Americans and West Indians were explicitly invited to serve as "educators of their backward and uncivilised brethren" in the Congo, as an English newspaper reported from Brussels.[9] Previous chapters have approached Léopold's promises of creating a 'Black Republic' in Central Africa as an attempt to enmesh American milieus that promoted African-American repatriation. At the same time, the Belgian king and his associate Albert Thys had a genuine interest in skilled African-American but also West African labour. To these, Stanley generously promised the "paternal care" of the new colonial state for "each of its subjects' rights, whether black or white".[10]

In this context, it is worthwhile to remember that, in Stanley's early Congo narrative and Léopold's version of the 'civilising movement', cultural or historicist patterns of racism had predominated over 'racial' categories. In his first two travelogues, Stanley,

5 Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 139 ('combination'); see Murray, "Building Congo", 11–12 and chapter 4.1.

6 "Treaty of Amity U.S.–Congo", Art. I ('enter'); *General Act of Berlin 1885*, Art. II ('free access'); *General Act of Brussels 1890*, Art. II Sec. 3 ('distinction'). Also see "Convention Her Britannic Majesty–Congo 1884".

7 On international recruitment, see "'King Leopold's Promises'", 465 and chapter 4.

8 William T. Stead, "To All English-Speaking Folk," *Review of Reviews* 1, no. 1 (1890): 16 ('yokel').

9 'The Congo', *Nottingham Evening Post*, 14 January 1890, 4 ('well-educated', 'educators').

10 See chapter 4.1; Speech of Stanley at the Manchester Town Hall, 21 October 1884, quoted in Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 8 ('paternal', 'each'). On the interest in Black labour, see S[ylvanus] J. S. Cookey, "West African Immigrants in the Congo 1885–1896," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 2 (1965): 261–70; McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 204.

who was, in a formulation similar to the common excuses of white racists until today, "proud to call" some Black men in the United States "friends", explicitly rejected "colour" or "physiognomy" as the foundation of the hierarchy of humanity. [11] Likewise, the Belgian diplomat Émile Banning, who promoted the movement inaugurated at the 1876 Brussels Geographic Conference in England, called "old prejudices" about the peculiar and inferior "physical type" of Africans out-dated. Dissociating themselves from the increasingly popular 'race' concept allowed the pioneers of Congo colonialism to promote the desired participation of 'civilised' Blacks in the new colonial state.[12]

This wide-ranging promotion of colonial service in the Congo and the pledges of free access, unrestricted commerce, and equal treatment proved to be successful. When hundreds of Americans and Europeans poured into the Congo Basin starting in 1879 to 'open the region to civilisation and trade', their personal background was of a diversity that was unique among the neighbouring imperial formations. As has been argued before, cosmopolitanism and multi-confessionalism were a defining aspect of the church and economy sector of the young colony. Missionary organisations from Great Britain, America, Germany, Sweden and France, including various Anglican, Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations, soon established themselves, together with European merchants from at least eight nations.[13]

In a later sketch of Léopold's character, Robert Park stressed that there were "few men more cosmopolitan", and he pointed out that the Belgian king employed "men of all nationalities in the Congo State". The European officers (or "whites") of Stanley's early expeditions included a large company of Belgians but also significant numbers of Swedes, Germans and Britons; smaller French, Danish, Dutch, Italian and Portuguese groups and one Swiss and one 'Arab' recruit – including the Irishman Roger Casement and the English Herbert Ward and Edward J. Glave, some of the most prominent Congo critics in later years.[14]

The international character of its civil and military body initially prevailed after the proclamation of the Free State in May 1885. Most foreigners were by then recruited in Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark. Moreover, while the majority of officers in the newly established Force Publique were recruited from the Belgian army, a considerable amount were military men from Great Britain and the United States, Italy and Scandinavian countries.[15] In 1891, it was with William Stairs, a Canadian-British soldier and former participant of the Emin Pasha expedition, who led the military mission that attempted to bring Katanga under Free State control, for instance.[16] Moreover, after the sudden escalation of conflicts with the 'Arab' slave em-

11 Stanley, *Livingstone*, 10 ('proud', 'friends', 'colour', 'physiognomy'); see Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1. 48; Tyler D. Parry, "A Brief History of the 'Black Friend'," Black Perspectives. Blog of the African American Intellectual History Society 2018, https://www.aaihs.org/a-brief-history-of-the-black-friend/.

12 Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 69 ('old', 'physical'). On the rising prominence of 'race' in racist discourse, see chapter 1.

13 On missionaries, see Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 274; on merchants, see Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism*, 91.

14 Park, "King in Business", 626 ('cosmopolitan'); Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 306 ('whites'). For the exact numbers, see the table reproduced on the same page.

15 See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 59–60, 82, 100–07.

16 See Gondola, *History of Congo*, 61–64; chapter 2.1.

pires in the early 1890s, the state sent commissioners to Britain and the United States to recruit militaries for the Force Publique; among them were Edgar Canisius and Guy Burrows, who would later make headlines with their devastating account of their employers.[17]

Thus, the prospect of an opportunity to partake in the 'heroic' task of 'civilising' the heart of the 'Dark Continent' lured not only men from well-established imperial nations (such as France, Great Britain and Portugal) but particularly citizens of nations that, by 1879, had not (such as the United States, Austria or Switzerland), were no longer (such as Denmark, the Netherlands or Sweden) or had not yet (such as Belgium, Germany or Italy) been involved in the colonisation of West and Central Africa. Not without symbolic significance, as has been maintained, the systematic recruitment of Italian military personal culminated immediately after Italy's defeat at the Battle of Adwa in 1896, which marked the end of Italy's first attempt to invade the Ethiopian Empire.[18]

Furthermore, many contemporary sources indicate that the Free State service indeed became a particularly attractive destination for young men from the margins of imperial societies. Stanley repeatedly referred to the lower social and educational status of some of the Europeans he engaged with in the formation of the Free State. The proportion of middle-, lower-middle- and working-class backgrounds among the Force Publique officers, for instance, excelled the already high rate in German or British colonial armies. Moreover, many British colonists emerged from the so-called 'Celtic Fringe', and the involvement of Irish and Scottish in the Congo was particularly high.[19]

Finally, the prospect of participating in the Congolese 'civilising mission' particularly appealed to Black Baptists. As early as February 1886, a European newspaper announced that "Dr. Theo. E.S. Scholes and Rev. J. E. Ricketts – both black men – had sailed for the Congo" in the name of the 'African Mission', an organisation of Black Baptists in Britain.[20] In the same year, the 'United States and Congo National Emigration Steamship Company' was established and was to "run and operate a line of steam vessels" between Baltimore and the Free State "for the purpose of emigration and commerce". It was founded by white businessmen but was soon exclusively run by Benjamin Gaston, a Black Baptist from Georgia. By 1889, the company already had more than 2,000 subscribers, mainly poor people from the South hoping to escape poverty and racial discrimination; although not a single ship had yet sailed towards the Congo.[21]

17 The recruiting efforts are mentioned in Henry M. Stanley, introduction to *The Land of the Pigmies*, by Guy Burrows (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1898), viii; Leigh, *Introduction*, viii.

18 See Elena, "Overseas Europeans", here particularly 76; chapter 1.

19 See Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 84; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 69–70.

20 The Belfast Witness, 3 February 1886, quoted in Thomas. L. Johnson, *Born Three Times* (Chester: Anza Publishing, 2005), 126. The two Jamaicans were pioneers of cooperation between Black Baptists and the American Baptist Missionary Union, and the first African-American missionaries working in the Congo. In September 1886, the General Association of the Western States and Territories, one of the major organisations of Black Baptists in the United States, unanimously resolved that it would cooperate with the American Baptist Missionary Union in the Congo: see ibid., 127.

21 'Emigration to the Congo Country', *The Washington Post*, 24 June 1886, 3 ('run'); see 'Emigrants to Africa', *The Washington Post*, 19 September 1889, 6; see 'To Return to Africa', *The Washington Post*, 21 December 1889, 9.

"A tide of Negro Emigration" may soon set strongly "to Liberia or the Congo", the *Southern Workman* nonetheless predicted in December 1889. In the same month, the emigration activist Williams, who had returned from a trip to Brussels, where he had personally met Léopold during the Anti-Slavery Conference, caused a stir among the students of the Hampton Institute when he revealed that he had been authorised by the Belgian 'Companies of the Congo' to recruit 24 men as citizens and workers of the Free State. Full of hope, Williams embarked on a six-month personal inquiry towards the Congo in 1890.[22]

As the following chapter reveals, this idea ultimately collapsed after Williams composed his two devastating reports about his experience in the Congo. Nonetheless, the Congo remained a prominent theme in the Black imagination in the American South, particularly due to the prominence of the evangelical work of William Sheppard, the Hampton graduate missionary who had arrived in 1890 to establish a station for the American Presbyterian Congo Mission in the Kasai region with his 'white' colleague (and supervisor) Samuel Lapsley. When Sheppard returned for a visit to the United States in 1893, soon celebrated as the 'Black Livingstone', as has been mentioned, his lectures and articles aroused great enthusiasm in the Black community. In Virginia, Black Baptists established the 'Congo Missionary Society' to support Sheppard's work, and he secured four new Black volunteers, one man and three women. By 1900, 20 African-American missionaries worked for Baptist and Presbyterian societies in the Congo. Moreover, several hundred West Africans, recruited as soldiers or workers, had reached the Free State by the early 1890s.[23]

Hence, in regard to the personal background of the colonists entering the Congo Basin, the universal utopia evoked by Stanley, Léopold and others in texts, lectures and conferences in Europe and the United States found some expression on African soil. Concerning the direct actors, the colonisation of the Congo was indeed not the project of a particular nation, class, confession or 'race', but the collective endeavour of colonisers from many the parts of the globe considered 'civilised' and 'progressive'.[24]

'White noise' in 'Darkest Africa': the social construction of 'colonial whiteness'

That this universalism became more than a statistical phenomenon an indeed a social experience was, on the other hand, far from self-evident. The members of the new colonial elite were predominantly (but not exclusively) male and all comparatively young; however, in addition, it is reasonable to assume that the lives of the state agents, missionaries or traders had little in common at the time they embarked towards Africa. They did not share one language or denomination, they came from countries or regions that had only recently encountered violent conflicts and wars, and they emerged from social strata that were strictly separated or even segregated in their home countries.[25]

22 The *Southern Workman*, quoted in Dworkin, *Congo Love Song*, 22 ('tide'); also see ibid., 21.

23 See Kennedy, *Black Livingstone*, 159–60; David Killingray, "The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s–1920s," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 1 (2003): 22. The exact numbers are unknown, see Cookey, "West African Immigrants", 263.

24 Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 139 ('combination').

25 See Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 60.

Nonetheless, once they disembarked at the Congo River mouth, all new European and American arrivals experienced the association and integration into the newly formed colonial master class. What bound the pioneering Europeans and Americans in the Congo together was not primarily age and gender (and probably a shared fascination for distant countries and lust for adventure and glory), but the radical opposition between colonisers and colonised. National rivalries, religious conflicts, class- and 'race' prejudices did not simply disappear.[26] Nonetheless, at the colonial frontier, there was simply little room for personal animosities and status consciousness. "[A]s if by a mutual understanding, no personal questions were ever asked" about the "past lives" of fellow colonisers, Ward recalled from his early engagement in the Congo. Surrounded by a hostile environment and millions of increasingly rebellious original inhabitants, the few hundred missionaries, traders and state agents were inevitably dependent on the mutual support and solidarity of all colonisers.[27]

Politically, the International Association and the Free State attempted to promote this egalitarian frontier spirit and to implement its promises of a colonial order in which national belonging, confession, and the social and 'racial' background of the colonisers had little relevance. For instance, although higher functionaries tended to be drawn from a higher social class and were rather well educated, salaries and career opportunities were structured in a much more egalitarian way than in neighbouring colonies.[28] Moreover, the segregated legal system of the Free State did initially not rely on 'racial' distinctions to define, for instance, whose land titles would be recognised by the State or who had a right to appeal against judgments of a court-martial, but between 'natives' and 'non-natives'.[29] "As non-native should be considered", a Royal Decree of 7 January 1886 explicitly defines, "[e]very person born outside the territory of the State, regardless of the race to which he belongs".[30]

Hence, by survivalist necessities and political regulation, the universal character of Congo colonisation transformed from a statistic value into a social experience. "Leopold II has knit adventurers, traders and missionaries of many races into one band of men under the most illustrious of modern travellers to carry to the interior of Africa new ideas of law, order, humanity and protection of the natives", the *Daily Telegraph* wrote

26 Stanley, for instance, repeatedly complained about the unhealthy lifestyle and fondness for liquor among the "sailors, engineers, and the illiterate class of men" working for him: Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 84. Sidney L. Hinde, a British officer of the Force Publique referred with little sympathy to the "American nigger from Liberia" he fought with: Hinde, *Congo Arabs*, 152.

27 Ward, *Voice from the Congo*, 249.

28 In the early years of the colony, the sharp line of social distinction between higher and lower functionaries that would later emerge among the Free State officials, comparable to the division between commissioned and non-commissioned officers in European armies, was still largely non-existent; see Mountmorres, *Congo Independent State*, 78; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 67.

29 See Art. 1 of "Régime Foncier (Royal Decree, 22 August 1885)," in *Bulletin Officiel*, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: P. Weissenbruch, 1886), 31–5, here 31–2 (land rights); Art. 27 of "Conseils de Guerre (Royal Decree, 22 December 1888)", in *Bulletin Officiel*, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: F. Hayez, 1889), 14–21, here 20 (court-martial).

30 Art. 25 of "Justice (Royal Decree, 7 January 1886)," in *Bulletin Officiel*, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: P. Weissenbruch, 1886), 1–18, here 7 (translation F.L.).

in praising words. However, what truly 'knit together this band of men' was the differentiation from the 'natives', the exclusion of the alienated other whose fully developed humanity was contested. The Congo revealed the power of racism to create a negative form of cohesion in a socially differentiated group, hence an 'inclusion through exclusion', and the capability of the 'white noise' in the colonies to be superimposed on the social stratifications defining the imperial metropoles.[31]

As has been discussed in chapter 3.1, Stanley's Congo literature discursively incorporated Europe's alleged progressiveness and superiority into the ideal type of a heroic 'white' and 'civilised' imperialist conquering and civilising 'Darkest Africa'. The formation of the Congo Free State attempted to institutionalise this narrative and promised to turn this racist phantasm into a social relation. Thus, all members of the colonial master class were prima facie not only considered "pioneers of progress" and "forerunners of civilisation", but 'white' in the colonial nomenclature – in official statistics such as Stanley's muster roll, personal communication and publications. "The Congo pioneers were, as I have already stated, men representing many different European nationalities", Herbert Ward remembered, for instance: "The natives, who gathered in groups by the wayside to take their first view of white men, gazed in utter bewilderment upon the passing caravans, under the command of flaxen-haired Northerners and swarthy Southerners".[32]

With the latter description, Ward very likely referred to Portuguese or Italian colonial agents. Their aggregation with blond Scandinavians under the notion of 'white men' was apparently neither visually conclusive nor was it actually culturally self-evident. After all, late 19th-century immigration discourse and policy in the United States, for instance, still treated immigrants from Southern (and Eastern) Europe as 'not yet' 'white'. Like the Irish had been before, they were relegated to a status of "[r]acial [i]nbetweenness" and still had to prove their equality with early immigrants of Northern and Western European descent.[33]

Moreover, the 'racial' status of the many working-class agents that had poured into the Congo since 1879 had been probably similarly contested before they embarked for their service in the Free State. Within the imagined community of the 'white race', the position of the British working-class, for instance, remained marginal throughout the 19th century. The upper classes were reluctant to admit full membership to aristocratic and bourgeoisie notions of 'whiteness' for those lower strata of society who seemed socially and culturally like "a race wholly apart".[34] That Italians, like British (and American) workers in the later 19th century, developed a 'white consciousness' and would eventually become accepted as 'white' was the outcome of complex structural transformations and racist group agency; however, the departure to 'Darkest Africa' allowed what could

31 'As We Come Nearer', *Daily Telegraph & Courier*, 22 October 1884, 5. For an analytical discussion of an 'inclusion through racist exclusion', see Hund, "Negative Societalisation", particularly 84–88 and chapter 1.

32 "'Letter from the King of the Belgians'", 285 ('progress'); Ward, *Voice from the Congo*, 250 ('forerunners'), 249 ('Congo pioneers', etc.).

33 David Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 57 ('[i]nbetweenness').

34 Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (New York: John W. Lovell Co, 1887), 83.

be called a 'whitening' merely "by sea change". In the Congo, 'dark' Southerners or workers who were part of the new colonial master class defined in contradistinction to and 'in command' of the Congolese 'natives' were prima facie considered 'white men'.[35]

In this context, 'whiteness' fully revealed that it was a social and cultural concept, not a colour but rather a relation of power.[36] As such, it even allowed the integration of African-Americans. At his mission station in the Kasai, William Sheppard was always more concerned with exploration, ethnography and big-game hunting than with converting the local population. Photographs reveal his desire to stage himself with the insignias of colonial power such as white clothes, superior weapons, and mastery of African wildlife and nature. In the Congo, he successfully reshaped his identity to the dominant stereotype of imperial masculinity, including a similar sense of moral and cultural superiority towards the African 'heathens', like his 'white' colleagues. He was thus received by other colonisers and the colonised Africans as part of the 'white' colonial masterclass. Lapsley, Sheppard's 'white' colleague and supervisor, repeatedly referred to his African-American companion as "white" in his diary and letters, for instance. Moreover, the Congolese called Sheppard "'Mundéle Ndombe' the black white man", as Lapsley noted.[37]

The alleged use of 'whiteness' as a foreign appellation is a common motive in colonial discourse. Stanley's travelogues, for instance, used the notion 'white man' almost exclusively in the direct or indirect speech of Africans. However, colour symbolism and phenotypical features of course had little significance in a region like the Congo Basin, where the European 'race' dogma had been largely unknown at the time of colonisation. It is not surprising, then, that Africans perceived the foreign invaders not as 'white'. Indeed, the Bobangio term '*mondele*' or '*mundéle*', which became a common term to refer to colonisers in the Congo and French colonies and was generally translated as 'white man', like similar terms in Zulu or Hausa, had no linguistic relation to the colour 'white', which was called '*exengo*'. Linguistically, '*mundele*' instead referred to moral and social characteristics such as insincerity, and practically it referred to a certain style of Western clothes that distinguished the foreign invaders from the original inhabitants.[38]

The example of the Congo Free State proves the value of the notion that colonial 'whiteness' was less a biological property than "a state of being, desirable habits and customs, projected patterns of thinking and living, governance and self-governance". Indeed, in the Congo, everyone in the tropical suits worn by traders, missionaries and

35 Allen, *Invention of the White Race*, Vol. 1, 27 ('sea-change'). For the role of anti-black racism in the constitution of the 'white' American working class, see Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*; on the relevance of reformations of British capitalism and a popular imperialism for the emergence of a 'white' identity among British workers, see Bonnett, "British Working Class".

36 See Mills, *Racial Contract*, 127.

37 James W. Lapsley, ed., *Life and Letters of Samuel Norvell Lapsley, Missionary to the Congo Valley, West Africa* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1893), 192 ('white'), 83 ('Mundéle'). Also see Kennedy, *Black Livingstone*, 72; Turner, "'Black-White' Missionary", n.p.

38 See Mervyn C. Alleyne, *The Construction and Representation of Race and Ethnicity in the Caribbean and the World* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), 77; Turner, "'Black-White' Missionary", n.p.

state agents alike was defined as part of the group of the colonisers and was considered 'white'. Due to the attempt to create an imperial formation of universal character and the resulting exceptional diversity of the colonial elite in the Free State, the experience of colonial mastery and its benefits were offered to a larger part of American and European societies than through any other previous African colonial project; including aspiring colonists from smaller or non-imperial countries. The incorporation into the community of colonial 'whiteness' offered a 'whitening' even to those stigmatised as 'black', or social and 'ethnic' strata considered only recently (like the Irish) or not fully (like the working class or southern Italians) 'white' in the imperial metropoles.[39]

'Racist symbolic capital' and 'wages of colonial whiteness' in the Congo

The inclusion in the imagined community of colonial 'whiteness' was rewarded with a radical increase in status and power and multi-layered symbolic and material benefits. Travellers in the Congo were astonished by the social standing that even an "ordinary white man" could achieve in colonial society, where "the smallest insect of a pale face earns the title of '*bwana mkubwa*' (big master)". A common European could experience remarkable social breakthroughs and achieve an almost royal status among the colonised population, as the case of former Irish missionary Charles Stokes reveals; he became one of the most influential ivory traders in the Eastern Congo Basin. "According to the people, the country belonged to Stokes: Stokes was their Sultan", a personal acquaintance remembered, "he was regarded as the real and paramount chief.[40]

While Stokes' social standing was perhaps exceptional, minor agents of the state or trading firms in the region shared his habitus. Indeed, at the colonial frontier in Central Africa, some of the former European 'country yokels' or 'children of the slums' Stead had in mind could find themselves suddenly reigning over thousands of Africans. As Canisius reported, "every low-born and illiterate person who was placed in charge of one of the [...] posts soon imagined himself a despot on a smaller scale". Where the colonial order was consolidated, its representatives in remote stations experienced an almost unrestricted mastery based on the protection of the state and the access to its superior military means. After the defeat of the Muslim realms in Eastern Congo, a young Belgian junior officer of the Force Publique called Émile J. G. Lémery, for instance, was suddenly catapulted to a position of power that was barely lesser than that of the old potentates. Assigned as Chef de Zone at the town of Nyangwe in 1894, he became ruler, judge, military commander and economic director in "the grand old slave capital" of Eastern Congo, once the seat of powerful Sultans and visited by all pioneering Central African explorers. Lémery experienced his new colonial mastery as a personal liberation. "Vive le Congo", he wrote to his family "there is nothing like it! We have liberty, independence and life with wide horizons. Here you are free and no more a slave of society".[41]

39 Goldberg, *The Racial State*, 171 ('state of being').

40 Glave, "New Conditions", 913 ('ordinary'); Decle, "Murder in Africa", 588 ('paramount'), 589 ('Sultan').

41 Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 120 ('low-born'); Hinde, *Congo Arabs*, 183 ('capital'); Letter of Lémery, January 1894, quoted in Slade, *King Leopold's Congo*, 116 ('Vive'). On Lémery's colonial service, see Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 61–62; M[arthe] Coosemans, "Lemery," in *Biographie Coloniale Belge*, ed. Insitut Royal Colonial Belge, (Bruxelles: 1952), Vol. 3, cc. 539–51.

The resolution of the restraints of society that had restricted his 'horizon' and 'liberty' in the metropolis that Lémery celebrated suggests that the 'white noise' generated in 'Darkest Africa' had indeed become capable of superimposing the social fragmentation of the new colonial ruling class. Of course, for an African-American like the Presbyterian Sheppard, born a month before the end of the Civil War in Virginia, no longer being 'a slave of society' would have had a much more literal connotation than for the young Belgian officer born in Brussels. For Black Americans, the 'white noise' of the Congo lured with the prospect of overcoming restrictions of class or nationality and of overcoming the racist hysteria of the segregated Jim Crow South.[42]

In 1891, full of racist contempt, an American newspaper reported how the circulars of the 'United States and Congo National Emigration Company' advertised their emigration scheme to African-Americans as a chance to escape the narrow 'racial' boundaries in America. In their ancestral lands, they were promised to "be kings among dogs". There, "they could make Rome howl by virtue of their civilisation and superiority. There they could be all that the white man was in Africa". For Williams and other advocates of African-American participation in the colonisation of the Congo, this opportunity to reach a social status and power similar to that of a 'white' man was, indeed, a pivotal incentive. In the Congo, Black Americans could "stand on equal footing with European white colonists as pioneers of civilization", Williams hoped.[43]

At least for some years, African-American missionaries in the Congo experienced a grade of equality, autonomy and power in their posts they could have hardly achieved at home. Between 1894 and 1897, Sheppard's missionary station in the Kasai was almost entirely run by Black Americans, for instance. Here, as argued above, Black missionaries such as Sheppard were received as representatives of the Western and Christian culture that they had been prohibited from fully enrolling into in their home society.[44]

In the colonies, "any white man" was able to "reinvent himself as belonging to a higher class and treated those he colonized as inferior to himself regardless his own status at home", as has been held.[45] Additionally, in the colonial situation in general, and in the Congo in particular, everyone could 'fall into whiteness'.[46] Merely through their recognition as members of the colonial master class, all colonisers in the Congo were rewarded with what can be conceptualised as a racist symbolic capital. It was expressed as a certain prestige, as the right to despise and humiliate, control, physically or culturally annihilate those belonging to the group of the colonised. This racist symbolic capital, which described a social relation of subordination, subjugation and exploita-

42 Sheppard's mother was a free-born woman; however, historical records cannot preclude that his father was a slave, see Kennedy, *Black Livingstone*, 8; Phipps, *William Sheppard*, 2. On reconstruction and segregation in the New South, see also chapter 4.1.

43 'Striking Business Talent', *The Idaho Daily Statesman*, 21 February 1891, 7 ('kings among dogs'); Williams, quoted in Dworkin, *Congo Love Song*, 21 ('equal footing').

44 See Dworkin, "Borders of Race", 197; Turner, "'Black-White' Missionary", n.p.; Shaloff, *Reform in Leopold's Congo*, 47–52.

45 Lentin, *Racism and Ethnic Discrimination*, 16.

46 A formulation Charles Mills has used in rejection of what he called the "essentialist illusion" about the existence of "anyone's intrinsic 'racial' virtue": Mills, *Racial Contract*, 128–29.

tion, was assigned equally among the colonisers, notwithstanding their social, 'racial' or economic status.[47]

Although racist symbolic capital does not necessarily translate into economic or cultural capital, the material 'wages' of colonial 'whiteness' for the colonial masters were manifold, as well.[48] The Free State promised to pay its agents comparatively well and to ration them generously. While supplies varied with the rank of the recipient, even the lowest-ranking inferior functionary who, often alone, equipped a remote station, was lavished with luxurious rations, as is conveyed by the Viscount Mountmorres. The supplies assured to a Chef de Post quarterly included "a bottle of red wine a day", "pates […] from Fischer's of Strasburg, […] marmalade from England, […] jams and preserved fruits from St. James, Paris, […] table butter from the Danish Creamery Co., […] milk [from] 'Bear' brand unsweetened, […] vegetables […] from Malines, and finally, […] British cane sugar". For a minor colonial administrator, these goods were "certainly […] far superior to anything they are used to in Europe", Mountmorres reported. Hence, colonial 'whiteness' was rewarded even to colonists of a working-class or lower-middle-class background with the admission to luxurious spheres of consumption from which they were largely excluded in their home countries. At the same time, eating and consumption defined a strict cultural boundary between the colonisers and the colonised.[49]

For luxuries that were not provided by the colonial administration, the 'white' masters searched in their direct surroundings. Drunk with power, many colonists used prestige and coercion to accumulate what they considered an appropriate material accoutrement of their newly found lordship. Proudly, Lémery wrote, for instance, that he was in possession of a leopard, a monkey, 24 parrots – and plentiful 'Arab' women. "Whatever they say, I am here for the good of the State", he continued, "and all the means are permissible if they are honest". What was 'honest' was broadly interpreted by the colonists, whose standard of morality was particularly flexible when it came to their power over the bodies of the colonised women. While some colonists developed intimate relationships and even married African women, (forced) prostitution and sexual exploitation was more common. Lémery, one can read, was provided with about two dozen concubines for his pleasure.[50]

Moreover, all colonists could partake in the ruthless economic exploitation of the legendary natural richness of this "African El Dorado", Stanley assured. The highly profitable trade in ivory, for instance, lured merchants and missionaries such as Stokes.

47 See Weiß, "Racist Symbolic Capital", 46–49; chapter 1.

48 For an analytical development of the concept 'wages of whiteness', see Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*; also see chapter 1.

49 Mountmorres, *Congo Independent State*, 73 ('red wine', etc.). On the 'edible' identity of the colonisers, see Diana M. Natermann, *Pursuing Whiteness in the Colonies* (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2018), 196–216. Similar observations have been made for 19th-century Australia, see Stefanie Affeldt, *Consuming Whiteness* (Wien: Lit, 2014), 117.

50 Letter of Lémery, January 1894, quoted in Slade, *King Leopold's Congo*, 116 ('good of the State'). On Lémery's luxuries and concubines, see Wayne Morrison, *Criminology, Civilisation and the New World Order* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 182; Robert Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 105. On the relation between sexuality and empire in the Congo, see Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 67–68; Amandine Lauro, *Coloniaux, Ménagères et Prostituées* (Bruxelles: Éd. Labor, 2005); on sexual violence in colonial Congo, see Hunt, *A Nervous State*.

State agents such as Lémery could earn high commissions for the 'white gold' they collected for the state. "Here one is everything! Warrior, diplomat, trader!!", as the Belgian officer celebrated. "Why not!"[51]

Above all direct financial benefits, colonial service in the Congo offered even subalterns social prestige, public recognition and military distinction. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad hints at the "humbug", as he called it, of the early days of Congo colonialism that declared any common colonial agent to "[s]omething like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle". Indeed, the "heroic Belgians" or "exceptionally bold" Scandinavian officers of the Force Publique were internationally praised for their "brilliant victories" over the 'Arab' slave traders which appeared "like episodes in an impossible Rider Haggard romance", as the veteran explorer Harry Johnston noted. Distinguished Force Publique veterans were highly decorated with medals and titles by Léopold and became, at least in Belgium, national legends that were together with the "héros coloniaux morts pour la civilization" blessed by the church for their divine service and were celebrated in memorials, schoolbooks and songs for their 'bravery' in Central Africa.[52]

In addition, civil administrators, trading agents or missionaries were able to capitalise upon their Congolese experience. For their contribution to the 'exploration', mapping, conquest, pacification and 'civilising' of 'Darkest Africa', they were bestowed with fellowships and awards by national geographic associations and imperial institutions. In the name of science or personal acquisitiveness, many colonisers 'collected' (sometimes bought, often confiscated or simply stole) uncountable religious and cultural artefacts, pieces of art, handcrafts and weaponry. After their return, these items were presented in lectures, generously donated to museums of natural and colonial history or decorated, often together with hunting trophies, the houses of the veterans as a reminder of their Congolese adventures and their master status. On speaking tours, they entertained with dramatic tales about their adventures in the Congo, and in long travel books, they attempted to interweave their biography into the grand narrative of imperial Congo literature established by their idol, Stanley. Some American and British Congo colonists of the second generation reached national, at times international, recognition and even stardom, and they built successful careers upon the social and cultural capital accumulated through their participation in the colonial subjugation of the Congo.[53]

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51 Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 372 ('El Dorado'); Letter of Lémery, January 1894, quoted in Slade, *King Leopold's Congo*, 116 ('everything'); see McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 211–12.

52 Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 12 ('humbug', 'emissary'); Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 429 ('heroic', 'bold', 'brilliant', 'romance'); Ligue du Souvenir Congolais, *À Nos Héros Coloniaux Morts pour la Civilisation* (Brussels: La Ligue du Souvenir Congolais, 1931), title. On chances of upward social mobility and prestige, see Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 61–63; Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 62.

53 See Ward, *Five Years*; Glave, *In Savage Africa*. Besides lecturing and writing about their experiences, Ward, for instance, became a famous sculptor celebrated for his statues of Africans, while Glave, the highly admired "pin-up boy" among the romantic heroes of Victorian imperialism, continued to conduct expeditions in Alaska and the Congo financed by American newspapers: Joanna Lewis, *Empire of Sentiment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 107. Casement eventually continued his career in the British Colonial service.

Hence, the considerable risks of colonial service in the Congo were compensated not only with a racist symbolic capital for those included in the group of the colonisers, but also with the multi-layered wages of colonial 'whiteness'. Quite in contrast to the lofty commitments to care for the improvement of the "moral and material conditions" of the 'native tribes' of Central Africa, the representatives of the new colonial master class were those who accumulated tremendous economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital from the exploitation of the Congolese population and resources.[54]

The Congo as an 'empire for the masses'

Nevertheless, only a few thousand Americans and Europeans saw the Congo with their own eyes. About one decade after its formation, statistics concerning the Free State stated a 'European' population (meaning all colonisers) of merely 1,325 – state officials, missionaries, independent merchants, trading agents and their families combined.[55] Even if one takes into account that most men and women spent only a couple of years or even months in Africa, and considering that a growing amount of non-residents – scientists, travellers or tourists – passed through the region, only small numbers were able to experience the symbolic and material benefits of colonial mastery in the Congo in person, both in total and in comparison to other European overseas dependencies. The colonial authorities in Brussels never pursued more substantial settlement programmes for Europeans were in particular due to high mortality rates that were generally believed to be the impact of an unhealthy climate.[56] Although Stanley had attempted "to eradicate this silly fear of the climate", as he called it, others such as the missionary-explorer Grenfell became convinced that the "Congo can never be" effectively colonised by significant numbers of 'white' settlers.[57]

That the colonisation of the Congo nonetheless had a significant impact on Western culture and society was the result of its unique political configuration and its outstanding discursive representation, which was facilitated by broader cultural-historical transformations. While previously mostly articulated in scientific, philosophical or political texts written for an upper-class audience, the latter half of the 19th century turned the narration of racist hierarchies and imperial power "into mass-produced consumer spectacles". There was probably no more paradigmatic historical example of the emergence of a "commodity racism" and "popular imperialism" or the creation of an "empire

54 *General Act of Berlin 1885*, Art. 6.

55 See J. Scott Keltie, ed., *The Statesman's Year-Book* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1897), 439–40. It grew slowly to 2,943 in 1908, the year that the colony would be transformed to Belgian Congo (1,713 Belgians, 145 English, 129 Portuguese, 200 Swedish, 54 Norwegian, 58 French, 47 American, 197 Italian, 36 Danish, 124 Dutch, 57 German, one Spanish, seven Austrian, 88 Swiss, 55 Russian, 25 from Luxemburg, six 'others'; see J. Scott Keltie, ed., *The Statesman's Year-Book* (London: Macmillan, 1909), 642.

56 See Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 60–61.

57 Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 330 ('eradicate'); private letter of George Grenfell, 1903, quoted in Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 482–4, here 482 ('never').

for the masses" that have been identified in this historical period than the formation of the Congo Free State.[58]

Racism and imperialism in the Congolese context were marketed exhibited on an unprecedented scale. As a previous chapter has shown, the popularisation of his colonial enterprise was pivotal in the political strategy of Léopold and his advisers. To acquire diplomatic recognition and a pretence of legitimacy for his private colony, Léopold propagated the Congo as an 'international colony' and its colonisation as a 'popular movement'. Since the inauguration of his African colonial enterprise at the Brussels geographic conference in 1876, Léopold and his associates canvassed leading actors of the European and American civil societies.[59]

Pledges to provide freedom of trade and a safe environment for investments soon aroused the interest of European commercial milieus. Among economic elites, it was a common understanding that access to the Congolese markets under conditions of free trade would not only generate extraordinary profits for those involved in West and Central African trade but that the macroeconomic effects would eventually benefit the metropolitan-based business and industries, as well. After all, the imperial expansion to non-capitalist regions of the planet was considered inevitable for European and North American capitalism. According to Rosa Luxemburg, a contemporary analyst and Marxist critic of the economic foundation of imperialism, producing on a universal scale and creating a world market was an essential condition of capitalism. The incorporation of non-capitalist regions such as the Congo Basin in a global capitalist economy was, first, needed as a market for surplus value; second, it provided supply means of production; and finally, it was needed as a reservoir of labour-power.[60]

In all three dimensions, Stanley enthusiastically praised the Congo as unique in its economic potential on speaking tours through Europe and the United States.[61] The "great explorer's appeal was heard", at least by British capitalists such as the circles represented by William Mackinnon and James Hutton, who were willing to invest in trading and railway companies in the Free State, or operators of shipping lines to West Africa such as the Liverpool-based Alfred Jones. In Belgium, Stanley's economic promises also attracted adventurous medium- and small-scale entrepreneurs.[62] Even Free State critics such as the free trade eulogist Morel, who had worked for Jones' Elder Dempster shipping company and once been an enthusiastic advocate of Congo colonialism, admitted, "the African gives employment to tens of thousands of European workmen and artisans". Thus, the African "provided thousands of European families with the wherewithal to obtain the necessaries of life, in the shape of wages arising from the labour

58 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 33 ('spectacles'), 34 ('commodity'); Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 77 ('popular'); William H. Schneider, *An Empire for the Masses* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), title. Also see Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 72; chapter 1.

59 See chapter 4.1.

60 See George Lee, "Rosa Luxemburg and the Impact of Imperialism," *The Economic Journal* 81, no. 324 (1971): 848.

61 See Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 130; chapter 3.1.

62 Compagnie du Congo pour le commerce et l'industrie, *The Congo-Railway from Matadi to the Stanley-Pool* (Brussels: P. Weissenbruch, 1889), 25 ('appeal').

of the African thousands of miles away". In this way, the 'wages of colonial whiteness' would eventually reach the middle and working classes as well, it was expected.[63]

Additionally, growing parts of urban societies were included as customers in the imperial economy. The drinking of coffee, tea and cocoa, and the consumption of cane sugar, for instance, played a major role in the formation of a metropolitan consumer culture, a new bourgeoisie habitus and middle-class comfort during the 19th century. The newly opened Congo Basin bore "within itself nearly all the products required by the necessities of Europe", Stanley had promised the assembled plenipotentiaries at the Berlin Conference, once it could be integrated into global commodity chains. Between 1891 and 1898, "1,500,000 coffee and 200,000 cocoa plants" were planted in the Upper Congo, Léopold's mission leader proudly announced, and with the consolidation of imperial power, more and more of the abundant precious Congolese gifts, in particular ivory and rubber, were made purchasable in the form of a variety of colonial commodities.[64]

The export of ivory exploded soon after the formation of the Free State. In the United States and Europe, Congolese ivory fuelled the mechanised production of combs, cutlery handles, fans, knobs of canes, buttons, piano keys, billiard balls and other highly valued products that had a lasting influence on Victorian commodity culture in the late 19th century. Even more significant was the impact of Congolese rubber exports. With the development of the vulcanisation process in 1839, rubber had become suitable for the mass production of shoes, shoe soles, rain jackets and other household products. Moreover, in the second half of the 19th century, rubber became an important part of many new machines and engines that allowed the industrialisation of key production processes. Finally, the invention of pneumatic tires for bicycles in 1886 by Dunlop and, nine years later, for automobiles by the Michelin brothers, two central consumer products of the Second Industrial Revolution, led to a rubber boom that was to a substantial extent served by the Congo.[65]

Stanley's preaching of the "gospel of enterprise" eventually secured the sympathy of entrepreneurs organised in the British chambers of commerce, for instance. For the associated traders and manufacturers in Liverpool or Manchester, it was easy to imagine the benefits of free trade imperialism.[66] Together with well-calculated self-staging as a generous guardian of exploration, abolitionism and the 'civilising' movement, these economic promises successfully secured Léopold's colonial movement the support of influential (evangelical, philanthropic, abolitionist and commercial) middle- and upper-classes organisations in Great Britain and the United States.[67]

However, as much as (imperial) philanthropy was primarily the realm of a bourgeois 'gentlemen policy', the material benefits of the collective and universal imperial subju-

63 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 203 ('employment'); see Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 36.

64 See Dale Southerton, ed., *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture*, 3 vols. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2011), Vol. 1, 143; "'The Commercial Basin of the Congo': Henry M. Stanley at the Berlin Conference," 1884?, reproduced in the appendix of Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 409–414, here 412 ('within'); Stanley, *Introduction*, xvi.

65 See Chaiklin, "Ivory in World History", 540; Harp, *History of Rubber*, 13–16; chapter 2.1.

66 Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 377 ('gospel');

67 See chapter 4.1.

gation of the Congo were of course not distributed equally in the metropolitan societies. Under the conditions of a capitalist mode of production, the direct and indirect surplus generated by the exploitation of the Congolese resources and people was primarily absorbed by capitalists. Similarly, the field of consumption was regulated by spending capacity. Although, towards the late 19thcentury, mass-produced (colonial) commodities became increasingly available for lower social strata, as well, ivory products based on Congolese resources, for instance, remained luxury items and status symbols reserved for bourgeoisie or aristocratic milieus.[68] As a result, the key to broader public support that the Belgian king desired in order to disguise his personal colonial enterprise as a popular colonial movement was the esteem of the masses for the admired 'heroes' of Central African 'exploration' such as Livingstone, Cameron and, in particular, Stanley.[69]

Indeed, as has been broached before, the textualisation of Stanley's Congolese 'adventures' had (regarding actors, style of narration and the approach to the audience) closely tied 'New Imperialism', 'New Journalism' and modern fictions of the empire to an extraordinary commercial and popular success story.[70] Sponsored by the *New York Herald* and the British *Daily Telegraph*, two media companies that pioneered the establishment of a "press for the masses" through their production of penny-papers 'for the millions', Stanley's first two Central African expeditions became outstanding media events of the late 19th century, and the readership of Stanley's articles reached deep into middle- and working-class realms – after all, by the 1870s, the *Telegraph* was considered the most broadly circulating newspaper in the world.[71]

The stir caused by Stanley's Emin Pasha Relief Expedition was without precedent, however. The monumental rescue operation for the beleaguered governor of Southern Soudan that set out from the Congo River mouth in March of 1887 ultimately turned Stanley from an international celebrity into a "charismatic hero" worshipped throughout the Western world.[72] Once more, the press carefully reported on every piece of progress and setback in the three years of the mission. A "Stanley telegram during those three years caused more excitement than the threat of a European war", the Scottish geographer J. Scott Keltie remembered. When Stanley returned to Europe after successfully escorting Emin to East Africa, his first stop was a personal audience with Léopold in Belgium. When he arrived in England, the welcome at Dover and London's Victoria Station was extraordinary: "Probably no hero fresh from victory, certainly no traveller,

68 See Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), 166. The nonetheless increasing inclusion in new fields of consumption did much to increase the imperial fervour of parts of the working-classes, however, and turned a Labour leader like Ramsay MacDonald into a convinced imperialist: "the Temperate lands have a right to ask from the Tropics" some of the products that keep the former "in comfort and sweeten life for them", the Congo reformer argued: MacDonald, *Labour and the Empire*, 98.

69 See chapter 4.1.

70 See Griffiths, *New Journalism*, 14–15.

71 Fellow, *American Media History*, 85 ('masses'); Joel H. Wiener, ed., *Papers for the Millions* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), title ('millions'). For the circulation of the Telegraph, see Griffiths, *New Journalism*, 130.

72 See Berenson, *Heroes of Empire*, 122.

has ever been received with more intense and more widespread enthusiasm", Keltie remembered.[73]

Huge crowds received the "popular hero" after what the *Times* celebrated as "a journey unparalleled [...] in all the long and heroic annals of African exploration".[74] For an academic such as Keltie, this public lionisation was baffling: "What are the causes which have led to this excitement, unparalleled in the case of any previous explorer?" he asked. With some resignation, the librarian of the Royal Geographic Society admitted that it was not geographic 'discoveries' but "the dangers and adventures connected therewith that rouse the popular excitement". Eventually, even the fierce controversy about the high death toll of the expedition could hardly damage Stanley's popularity.[75]

The public loved the 'romance' of Stanley's African exploits, and they admired his power. Even many of those who became active opponents of the Free State in later years had fallen for the 'chivalry' of the 'civiliser and conqueror. "On the shelves of Don Quixote's library there were no tomes more full of romantic fascination and enthralling interest than the volumes which tell of how Mr. Stanley found Livingstone, converted King Mtesa, opened up the Congo, and rescued Emin", as William Stead, himself a pioneer of New Journalism, noted.[76] Published within weeks of his return to Europe, Stanley's dramatic two-volume travelogue about the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition and his adventures in the Congolese forest reached bookshelves simultaneously in England, America, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Bohemia and Hungary. The success even excelled that of Stanley's earlier bestsellers, and *In Darkest Africa* sold a breath-taking 150,000 thousand copies in the first three months in the English language alone.[77]

Although the first editions of imperial travel literature were comparatively high-priced, their societal impact was even larger than these sales-figures reveal. In the later 19th century, African travel-books became an essential part of the holdings in the growing number of lending libraries, public or commercial, in factories, churches and schools, for instance. Moreover, the adventures of Livingstone and Stanley became part of the geography syllabus and were reprinted, condensed or retold in countless cheaper editions and boyhood anthologies all over the world. [78]

In this way, the charismatic imperial 'hero' Stanley and the Congo became a fixed point in the Victorian imperial imagination, a fascinating passion that affected the traditional, well-educated reading-classes and also reached the modern mass readership. However, devouring these imperial adventure stories was no innocent form an entertainment; it always involved the consumption of its cultural and racial hierarchies. As

73 J. Scott Keltie, "Mr. Stanley's Expedition," *Fortnightly Reviews* 48, no. 180 (1890): 66.

74 'Mr. Stanley's Return', *The Times*, 28 April 1890, 10. ('popular'); 'London, Monday, April 28, 1890', *The Times*, 28 April 1890, 9 ('journey').

75 Keltie, "Mr. Stanley's Expedition", 66 ('causes'), 67 ('dangers'); see chapter 2.1.

76 Stead, "Mr. H. M. Stanley", 20 ('shelves'). For the admiration of other Congo reformers, see chapter 3.1

77 See Edward Marston, *How Stanley Wrote 'In Darkest Africa'* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1890), 71.

78 See Leila Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 115–20.

chapter 3.1 has described in detail, Stanley's Congo narrative confronted the reader with a highly stereotypical counter-world described as a 'prehistorical', 'natural' and 'evil' space of darkness inhabited by the most 'savage', 'monstrous', 'devilish' and 'darkest' people on earth. Stanley's Congo literature and titles such as *Five Years with the Congo cannibals*, *In savage Africa*, *The land of the Pigmies* or *In Dwarf Land and Cannibal Country*[79] which were produced in the aftermath of his success by some of his officers, were instrumental in the popularisation of racist stereotypes that defined the Western representation of the Congo throughout the late 19th century. At the same time, the myth of 'Darkest Africa' created a pseudo-identity for an imagined community of the 'civilised', 'human', 'elected' and 'white' Europeans in differentiation to this Congo, but in particular through the narration of its confrontation and submission by the 'heroic' imperial pioneers. However, the textual representation of colonisation was not merely a linguistic but a social practice, as well. As a discursive operation, it interpellated the Western reading subjects "by incorporating them in a system of representation".[80]

Travel writing was particularly open to an active and participative form of reading. "Whoever reads the book in spirit", the *New York Evening Post* praised in a review of Vachel Cameron's *Across Africa*, for instance, "accompanies the traveller, sees what he sees, feels the perplexities that he feels, and, in a certain sense, shares the journey with him". Likewise, in the process of reading Stanley's travelogues full of sensory detail, hundreds of thousands of fascinated Europeans and Americans not only followed each step of their imperial idols but became 'one' with them, participated in their adventures, which became the experiences of the readers as well.[81] "One forgets, in reading [*Darkest Africa*], everything but the eagle eye and the inflexible will of the leader, the steady tramp of armed men, the down-pour of the tropical rain, the glowing furnace of equatorial heat, the hurtling spears and whistling arrows of naked savages, the sullen roar of the wild beasts", the *Literary World* wrote. In sharing the excitement and fears of the protagonists in their confrontation with the Congolese darkness, the readers associated themselves with the imperial adventure until the inevitable "joy of safety, the satisfaction of the triumphant doing of a duty" at the victorious end. Through their emotional association with the heroic protagonists, the readers of imperial travel literature experienced their inclusion in the imagined community of 'Brightest Europe', as well.[82]

A similar effect was probably desired by the curators of a spectacular 'Stanley and African exhibition', patronised by Queen Victoria and King Léopold, which opened in March of 1890 in London. It dealt with the zoology, geography and ('savage') culture of Central and West Africa; the history of its exploration; and the achievements of the

79 See Ward, *Five Years*; Glave, *In Savage Africa*; Burrows, *Land of the Pigmies*; Albert B. Lloyd, *In Dwarf Land and Cannibal Country* (New York: Scribner, 1899).

80 Tiffin and Lawson, *Introduction*, 3 ('incorporating').

81 *The New York Evening Post* quoted in 'Cameron's Across Africa', in Harper & Brothers' summer booklist. Appendix to *Harper's Magazine*, July, 1877, 1–2, here 1 ('reads'). For the idea of a 'participative' reading of travel literature, see Clare Pettitt, "Exploration in Print," in *Reinterpreting Exploration*, ed. Dane K. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 94–97.

82 'Stanley's Book', *The Literary World*, 19 July 1890, 236–238, here 237.

'civilising movement'. In five sections, objects from all major colonial collections in Europe, together with souvenirs and relics of pioneering explorers and missionaries, were presented in a sensational arrangement. "No such African Exhibition has ever been got together before", the *Times* assured potential visitors. Abundant weaponry, cultural and economic instruments, tropical plants and heads of wild animals were exhibited, and the work of European idols such as Livingstone, Baker and of course Stanley was celebrated. "A jungle scene with a native and a crocodile deserves mention", the *Times* wrote, as did the reproduction of "a native hut […] furnished according to the original pattern". However, the "great sensation of the exhibition" was the "wonderful" and "fairly true to nature" artistic reproductions of a "wild" and "dark" forest scene, a model of a "peaceful village scene" and a "horrible" Arab slave raid. With a visit to Regent Street, the narrative of the *Times* reveals, the common Londoner could allegedly encounter a "genuine" representation of Central African life and scenery and was turned into an explorer himself: "The entrance is through a palisade or fence of tree stems". Inside, "one enters the camp of an explorer" and, continuing through the various galleries, "finds himself in the heart of Africa". Here, in the middle of London, the colonisation of the Congo had been turned into a spectacle for the metropolitan masses.[83]

Even more dramatic were the two major colonial exhibitions staged by Léopold in the 1890s, which have been mentioned in previous chapters. There, the 'savage' Congolese were finally disclosed to the gaze of the masses. The 1894 Exposition Internationale d'Anvers not only celebrated Léopold's victory over the 'Arab slave traders' with the display of booty and portraits of colonial heroes; it also showed the reproduction of a 'Congolese village' in which 144 African Force Publique soldiers presented a staged life, exhibited among cattle and raw material from the Congo. Three years later, at the Exposition Internationale de Bruxelles, the racist spectacle of a human zoo was extended and became the main attraction at the gigantic exposition of colonial ethnography, imports, transportation and exports in the 'Palais de Colonies' on the royal compound of Tervuren. More than 250 Congolese were exhibited in several 'negro villages' and 'civilised villages', attempting to illustrate the original 'savagery' of the Congolese population and the first successes of the 'civilising movement'. These exhibitions were, of course, primarily advertising efforts of Léopold "to attract capital and adventurers" to his colonial enterprises, as the Congo reformer Bourne has asserted.[84] However, they also had an immediate benefit for the visitors. In confronting the Congolese people displayed in staged reproductions that meant to represent their 'savage' and semi-civilised ways of living, they could recognise themselves as 'civilised' and 'white', millions of spectators could associate themselves with the colonial masters in the Congo, and they could develop pride about 'their' philanthropic and abolitionist achievements in 'Darkest Africa'.[85]

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83 'The Stanley and African Exhibition', *The Times*, 21 March 1890, 14. For a critical discussion of the exhibition', see Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 63–83.

84 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 242 ('attract').

85 On the Belgian colonial exhibitions, see Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 36–38. On human exhibitions as a racist social experience, see Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 71. In 1897, more than 1.2 million out of the overall 7.8 million visitors saw the colonial exposition in Tervuren; see Natermann, *Pursuing Whiteness*, 52 [footnote].

Hence, it was the commodification of the imperial experience and its presentation as a popular spectacle that turned the Congo into a profitable enterprise for broader spheres of the imperial societies. Through its mediation in newspapers, travel literature and exhibitions, the triumph of the 'conqueror' and 'civiliser' Stanley and his heroic officers had become the triumph of the masses. In this way, it turned into the source of what Max Weber has called an "ethnic honour". A form of "mass honour" that was "purely negative", since it was solely based upon the degradation of an alienated other, in this case, the 'Congo' and the 'Congolese'. For the Hungarian geographer Emil Torday, for instance, the "heroic" Europeans who had served in the Arab war or carried the Free State flag to the unconquered regions were a sign of the superiority of the white 'race'. They showed distinctly that "however brave the negro be he cannot approach the white man".[86]

This 'ethnic' or 'mass honour' was a form of racist symbolic capital formed through the racist colonial spectacle. In contrast to the material wages of Congo colonialism, it was distributed equally to members of the imperial societies, notwithstanding their economic and social status. Thus, by the last decade of the 19th century, the Congo had truly become an empire for and 'owned' by the masses in the metropole, which were able to consume and incorporate the racist hierarchies established in the colonial relation in the periphery. Millions of consumers, readers and spectators were offered inclusion in the imagined racist community of colonial 'whiteness' and 'Brightest Europe' established in differentiation to 'Darkest Africa', and they were granted participation in the material and symbolic benefits of the 'honourable' conquest of the Congo.

5.2 'The white man's undoing': Negative societalisation in crisis

Not long after the official proclamation of the Congo Free State in May 1885, when the de jure sovereignty of the new colony had become diplomatically recognised by the imperial community, and its de facto power seemed consolidated, a series of political transformations antagonised interested spheres in the Congo and the metropole. In the 1890s, a growing amount of commentators began to criticise how the Free State administration, at an increasing pace, revoked its pledges of a universal inclusion in the community of colonial 'whiteness' in the Congo, of 'fair' treatment and equal chances for material and symbolic benefits to the representatives of the colonial order in Africa and the masses at home. The emerging Congo reform movement in Great Britain and the United States loudly protested against the Congo Scandal and the exposed betrayal of Léopold's promises to the imperial community. In the Congo, they asserted, the process of racist societalisation was in crisis.

First, in 1886, the Free State began to restrict access to the Congo. Non-Belgians and Protestants were increasingly excluded from the civil and military administration, private trade and the church sector. Additionally, the reformers criticised a repressive

86 Max Weber, quoted in Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 64 ('ethnic', 'mass', 'purely'); Emil Torday, quoted in Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 429 ('brave').

and biased Free State administration that favoured Belgian and Catholic state agents, traders and missionaries. The negative cohesion in the imagined community of colonial whiteness finally corroded when fragmentations along the lines of nationality, confession, class and 'race' began to (re-)appear in the political institutions and social practice of Free State. Furthermore, those who were still admitted to the colonial master class were scandalised by miserable living and working conditions, neglect by the administration and the withholding of the promised material benefits for the colonisers. Moreover, instead of a social and symbolic elevation, many of the aspiring colonial 'heroes' were demoralised by an often monotonous daily routine and disgraced through their shameful involvement in the atrocious rubber regime.

Eventually, the 'undoing of colonial whiteness' and Congolese heroism in the periphery affected the metropole, as well. Revelations of sickness, despair and the brutalities of colonisers increasingly estranged the metropolitan observers from their once-admired imperial idols. In the wake of the exposed Congo atrocities, the close association with the 'conquerors' and 'civilisers' of 'Darkest Africa' that had offered millions of Europeans and Americans an 'ethnic mass honour' was turned into a burdening source of 'ethnic shame'. Finally, reformers criticised the monopolisation and nationalisation of the Free State economy as an attack on the promised material wage increases from the conquest of this African 'El-Dorado'. The closure of the markets of the Congo, as well as the destruction of its resources and labour force through the atrocious mode of production, threatened to destroy a wealth once assured to benefit the imperial community as a whole.

Fragmenting whiteness: the fading 'white' noise in the Congo

Years before the Free State would officially be turned into a Belgian colony in 1908, international observers realised with consternation that the colonial administration had gradually revoked one of its central pledges to the imperial community. Instead of integrating all fractions of the 'civilised world' in a truly universal colonisation scheme, as Léopold and Stanley had promised, more and more aspiring colonial agents, missionaries and merchants were antagonised upon finding their access to the Congo and their chance of inclusion in the colonial master class denied based on nationality and confession.

As chapter 4.2 has stressed, Léopold had quickly begun to pursue his plan to transform the international Congo colony into a Belgian dependency more candidly, once full diplomatic recognition was achieved and a growing number of Belgians began to apply for colonial service. This directly affected the social composition of the Congolese colonial master class. After the resignation of de Winton in April 1886, the post of the Free State's Governor-General was exclusively staffed with Belgian citizens, which were, right from the start, the administrative councils and ministries based in Brussels.[87]

Whenever possible, the new colonial administration began to choose candidates from Belgium to staff open civil or military positions. Any of the more prestigious state positions in the Upper Congo were from then on strictly reserved for Belgians, as some

87 See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 88–96; Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 63.

of the international recruits soon learned the hard way. Herbert Ward, for example, was recalled to the Lower-Congo and his commando of Bangala was handed over to a Belgian officer. Furiously, he resigned from Free State service in August 1886.[88]

Moreover, once the Muslim realms in the East were defeated and the power of the new state seemed to be consolidated in the Central provinces, as well, recruiting Belgian officers for the Force Publique also became a priority. While the Free State still initiated its large scale Italian recruitment programme in 1897, and Scandinavians continued to dominate the important river marine and the mechanical force, Belgians soon became the majority in the Free State service. The multinational character of the civil and military administration of the Free State continued to fade away in the following years, when the contracts of British Free State officers such as Guy Burrows, for instance, were no longer extended.[89]

Initially, the commercial sector offered an alternative for non-Belgian participation in the colonisation of the Congo. In 1886, Ward, like Edward Glave and Roger Casement, joined the Sanford Exploring Expedition, which was about to unlock the ivory trade in the Upper Congo. Afterwards, the future British consul Casement surveyed terrain and supervised workers for the Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo, the railway consortium attempting to bypass the cataracts between Matadi and Stanley Pool. The first station of the railway was opened in June 1892, and it was operated by "[i]mported white men" "of all nationalities".[90]

Nonetheless, as has been discussed in detail above, the Congolese economy was drastically transformed by the monopolisation of trade and industry that began in 1889. With the establishment of the 'vacant land' policy and the so-called 'domain system' between 1889 and 1892, the Free State effectively closed about three-fourths of its territory for merchants not affiliated with the state or its concessionary companies.[91] In 1898, the British Consul Pickersgill reported that, besides Protestant missionaries, he had found only a few "agents of the once all-powerful 'Dutch house'" and "of an old Liverpool firm" and "a few Portuguese traders" left in the Upper Congo.[92]

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88 See Joseph M. Jadot, "Ward," in *Biographie Coloniale Belge*, ed. Insitut Royal Colonial Belge (Bruxelles: Librairie Falk Fils, 1948), Vol. 1, 956. Also see chapter 2.1.

89 See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 59–60, 82. On recruitment in Italy, see Elena, "Overseas Europeans"; on the career of Burrows, see G[uy?] Malengreau, "Burrows," in *Biographie Coloniale Belge*, ed. Insitut Royal Colonial Belge (Bruxelles: Librairie Falk Fils, 1948), Vol. 1, cc. 185–186; Leigh, *Introduction*, vii–xiii.

90 Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 8 ('imported'). On Casement, see Séamas Ó Síocháin and Michael O'Sullivan, general introduction to *The Eyes of Another Race* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press 2003), 8. When Conrad operated a commercial steamer up to Stanley Falls in 1890, the river journey that would serve as inspiration and backdrop for his famous Congo novellas, he was under contract of the powerful Société Anonyme Belge which had absorbed Sanford's firm in December 1889. See Zdzisław Najder, *Joseph Conrad*, 2nd rev. ed. (Rochester: Camden House, 2007), 145–65; White, "Sanford Exploring Expedition", 302.

91 See chapter 4.2.

92 Report of Consul William Pickersgill on the Congo Independent State in 1898, quoted in Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 301 ('Dutch'). Also see Catherine A. Cline, "The Church and The Movement for Congo Reform," *Church History* 32, no. 1 (1963): 46.

The nationalising scheme also affected the church sector, although the principle of religious neutrality remained officially untouched. After Léopold's generous support of the abolitionist movement of Cardinal Lavigerie, Belgian Catholic missionary societies abandoned their reserved attitude towards Léopold's multi-confessional colony. Moreover, on Léopold's specific demand, the Vatican had ordered that the Congo should be from now on evangelised by Belgians only, and by the turn of the century, all Catholic missionaries in the Congo were Belgian subjects.[93] Finally, after Protestant missionaries had publicly criticised the on-going violence in the Free State, Léopold categorically denied Protestant missionary organisations land grants to establish new posts in the Congo starting in 1898, to the great outrage of evangelicals in Great Britain the United States.[94]

Hence, although the colonial elite in the Free State remained, compared to neighbouring colonies, exceptionally diverse throughout its existence, the access to all three pillars of colonial governance in the Congo (the state administration, the trading sector and the church) had been transformed into Belgian-dominated institutions by the turn of the 20th century. While Léopold's dream of a Belgian overseas dependency came closer to its realisation, employment and career opportunities for Americans and Europeans eager to partake in the prestigious and 'heroic' conquest of 'Darkest Africa' were drastically narrowed, and the prospect of a truly international colony in Central Africa was debunked as a chimaera.

In addition to broken pledges of indiscriminate access to the Congolese colonial master class, the impartiality and egalitarian spirit of governance began to show severe cracks. Soon after its formation, the Free State revealed an increasingly repressive attitude towards those non-Belgian and non-Catholic subjects that remained in the Congo. As early as 1890, Williams was astonished to find independent European merchants in a "most unfriendly" relation to state agents. The extra-legal hanging of the renowned missionary-turned-trade Charles Stokes in 1895 and the death of the Austrian merchant Gustav Rabinek in state custody in 1902 finally revealed the "kind of justice and fair play that one got in the Congo State", as it was held in the British Commons. The two affairs illustrated an increasingly authoritarian "treatment accorded to white men" not part of concessionary companies or the state, Bourne was convinced.[95]

Lionel Decle, who had agitated against the murder of Stokes and the shocking "justice à la Congolaise", in 1895 maintained that the Free State oppressed "Europeans and natives alike". The journalist Decle was particularly irritated about the denouncement of 'white' solidarity. So far, 'white' men in Africa had been "brothers" in the eyes of the Africans, he warned, but that one "white man" had dared "to lay hands on" another, in particular, a man of high standing like the well-respected Stokes, was an outrage upon 'white' reputation in Africa.[96]

93 See Vermeersch, "Congo Independent State", 235–36; Slade, *English-Speaking Missions*, 141.

94 See chapters 2.2 and 4.2.

95 Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 19 ('unfriendly'); Alfred Emmott: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1310 ('fair play'); Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 266 ('treatment')

96 Decle, "Murder in Africa", 587 ('alike', 'brothers'), 588 ('white man', 'lay hand'), 594 ('justice').

Instead of protecting the colonisers against the African population, the colonial state had become a danger for non-Belgian members of the colonial master class, the reformers warned. "First an Englishman, now an Austrian have fallen victims to the insatiable greed, the disreputable avariciousness, the brutality and illegality of the system of 'moral and material regeneration' in Africa", Morel dramatically stated in his first book on the Congo Scandal. "Who will be the next European to suffer?"[97]

Not only merchants came into serious conflict with the state authorities. Those Protestant missionaries who were still allowed in the country were "persecuted in all sorts of ways". Their daily life became increasingly complicated by state harassment, especially for those who had publicly challenged state authority or and practice. Measures included the withholding of food supplies, insults, violent threats and, repeatedly, state officials threatened missionaries with imprisonment if they continued to report about atrocities.[98] Moreover, Harris complained how "sentries were sent into the towns" to daunt locals affiliating with the Protestants and American missionary organisations and filed "definite complaint as respects the security of missionary work". With ever-harsher restrictions on their privileges of freedom of movement, the "stay of missionaries in the country practically is threatened", American missionaries asserted.[99]

Based on personal letters of Danish and Italian officers he had received, Morel severely criticised "the treatment by the Congo Executive of the foreign officers who have accepted appointments in the Congo army". In particular, Italians frequently complained that they were treated as second-class officers. This experience felt as a worrying reminder of their ambivalent position in the racial hierarchy of contemporary Europe, and an embarrassing hint at Italy's deteriorated national prestige following the military debacle in Ethiopia in 1896. [100]

Moreover, promotion to "higher positions" increasingly became a Belgian privilege, which directly affected the ratio of foreigners in the lower and middle ranks of colonial service, as well. After all, increasingly fewer internationals were "prepared to accept positions with futures 'only for Belgians'".[101] Internationals in lower and medium-ranked service complained about an increasingly chauvinistic nationalism in the colonial corps after the higher positions in the Free State had become almost exclusively Belgians: "'Je suis officier Belge' is an ejaculation so frequent that, to escape it, one would fain believe such rank to be the highest honour on earth", Canisius noted. Moreover, he complained about the "pleasure" that his Belgian superiors "find in making their subordinates feel

97 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 259 ('suffer'). For more details on the death of Stokes and Rabinek, see chapter 4.2.

98 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 192 ('persecuted'). With the Reverends Edgar Stannard, William Morrison and William Sheppard, charges of libel were brought against three prominent Protestant opponents at Congolese courts, see Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 7; Morel, *The Stannard Case*; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 192; Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 198.

99 Harris, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 7 ('sentries'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 16 ('stay', 'definite'); see Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 41.

100 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 126 ('treatment'); see Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 97–98; Morel, *Great Britain*, 154; Elena, "Overseas Europeans", 80–81.

101 Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 221.

their inferiority". Some of the "comments on brother officers" were considered "as most offensive" by the American formerly in Free State service in the Province Oriental.[102]

Such framing reveals that the negative cohesion created at the colonial frontier, which had bound the socially differentiated group of the colonisers together through the racist exclusion of the colonised, showed signs of exhaustion. The more that the official policy of impartiality was abandoned, the more the daily social practice of the colonisers was affected, as Canisius' perspective suggests. In his case, nationalism was met with classist scorn. The Free State had, as was described in the previous chapter, successfully promoted the participation of working or lower-middle-class men in its ranks. Canisius, son of a German-American journalist who had once been the United States consul in Vienna, emphasised the lack of manners, intelligence and education among his "ill-bred" Belgian superiors who discriminated him and other foreigners: "Until my first contact with this class of men, I had always held the belief that officers in any army were gentlemen" he stated. "I was disillusioned on this point, however, very soon after my first association with the Congo. […] The ignorance of some of these is really astonishing to one accustomed to look upon an officer as at least an educated man".[103]

Furthermore, the Free State's political practice radically betrayed Stanley's promise that the administration would treat its subjects irrespective of "colour". When Williams arrived in the Congo to inspect, inter alia, the potential of Black emigration, he was soon left "disenchanted, disappointed and disheartened". In his short stay, he had observed both "violence and injustice" against the "poor children of nature" (the Congolese natives) but also violations of contract and "cruel and unjust treatment" of soldiers and workers recruited in other parts of Africa. For some army officers, "race distinctions and prejudices" were sufficient to leave the "beating and stabbing" of a Black man by a white man unpunished.[104] Complaints of British subjects from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Accra or Lagos, who were recruited for the railway construction or service in the Force Publique, about involuntarily extended contracts, the holding off of payments, the violence of superiors and dangerous working conditions continued to reach British Consuls and the Foreign Office in the 1890s.[105]

For Williams, the treatment of West African soldiers and recruits debunked the Free State as structurally discriminating on the grounds of 'race' distinctions and defied its 'colour-blind' legislation: "The laws printed and circulated in Europe 'for the protection of the blacks' in the Congo, are a dead letter and a fraud", he emphasised. Williams' hopes that Black Americans could participate on equal grounds with 'white' colonists in the Congolese 'civilising mission' were seriously disappointed.[106] Under these circumstances, African-American "[e]migration cannot be invited to the Congo for a quarter

102 Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 107.

103 Ibid.

104 Williams, "Open Letter", 2 ('disenchanted'), 6 ('violence', 'poor', 'cruel'), 9 ('prejudices', 'beating').

105 See Morel, *Great Britain*, 124–25; Burroughs, *African Testimony*, 23–24; Cookey, "West African Immigrants", 264–70. The Colonial Office had, to the applause of the Aborigines' Protection Society, imposed a formal ban on the recruitment of British subjects from West African dependencies in March 1896, see ibid., 268.

106 Williams, "Open Letter", 9 ('laws').

of a century", the once-optimistic advocate of Léopold and the Free State summarised. Even then, "only educated blacks from the Southern United States" who come "not as laborers, but as landed proprietors" would be suited for living in such a society. Moreover, "[t]hey must come only in small companies. One hundred families in ten years would be quite enough and not for twenty five years yet".[107]

As the following chapter shows, plans for larger-scale emigration towards the Congo were quickly abandoned after this devastating judgement, although there remained a small but constant flow of Black American and West Indian missionaries to the Congo. However, the marginality of their inclusion in the colonial master class became increasingly apparent for African-American missionaries, as well. Their terms of service tended to differ from those of their 'white' colleagues, they received lower wages, served longer and with shorter vacations, were promoted more slowly and seldom became their superiors. Towards the end of the century, missionary boards at home increasingly attempted to limit the autonomy of their Black employees in Africa. 'Racial' prejudice and patronising treatment experienced by Black missionaries from the West Indies or the United States increased over the years, and the relation between 'black and white' missionaries often deteriorated. Sheppard, and after him three other Black males, were accused of sexual misconduct by Morrison, for instance, "racially motivated charges", as has been suggested.[108]

Moreover, on his occasional returns to the United States, the Presbyterian missionary Sheppard painfully realised that the racist symbolic capital he was rewarded with in the Congo as a member of the ruling colonial elite was not a personal possession but a social relation that was not simply transferable overseas. In the Jim Crow South, Sheppard was once more forced into the strict boundaries of a racially segregated regime of white supremacy, despite the public admiration for his exploration and adventures in the Congo.[109]

Hence, the longer the Free State existed, the more the 'white noise' generated in 'Darkest Africa' seemed to fall silent. National, confessional and racial biases in the colonial institutions and apparent nationalist and classist prejudices and 'white' notions of racial superiority among colonisers challenged the solidarity and cohesion of the colonial master class. The reasons for this process cannot be found in the specific political and social context of the Free State alone. While Léopold and the Free State administration actively revoked their promises of equal treatment and universal inclusion in the Congolese colonial master class, this crisis of racist societalisation transcended the discursive and geographic boundaries of the Congo.

In fact, universal concepts such as European civilisation and 'whiteness' had come under severe pressure by more particular political identities throughout the Western world. Ideals of universal rationality and related hopes for peace and political unity that had been promoted since the French Revolution "were bitterly disappointed" in the late 19th century, as the political scientist and Congo critic Paul Reinsch wrote: "It became

107 Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 19 ('century', 'educated'), 20 ('laborers', 'companies'); see Williams, "Open Letter", 14.

108 Killingray, "Black Atlantic", 18–19; Dworkin, "Borders of Race", 197.

109 See Turner, "'Black-White' Missionary", n.p. See chapter 2.3 for more details.

impossible to realize the unity of civilized mankind, and the narrower feelings of nationalism and race antipathy completely overbore the earlier enthusiasms".[110] Indeed, the idea of a universal European polity had become increasingly intermingled with the "inherently limited" concept of the nation. Rising national rivalries not only increased geopolitical conflicts on the European continent and among imperial powers in Africa, but also impeded the potential of multinational governance and coexistence, as the case of the Free State shows.[111]

Moreover, as Black Americans painfully realised, notions of the biological inferiority of the 'coloured races' gained the upper hand over cultural and historicist concepts such as 'savagery' or 'barbarism'. It is intriguing, for instance, how Stanley, who, in his early travelogues, had rejected that 'colour' and physiognomy were signs of an inherent inferiority, in 1890, for his last main work 'Darkest Africa' developed an elaborate 'racial taxonomy' of Central Africa that put the Congolese 'pygmies' and 'negroes' at the lowest stage of the human species.[112]

At the turn of the century, the 'civilising movement' that Léopold had inaugurated in Brussels in 1876 had become the 'white man's burden' in the popular imagination,[113] which excluded even 'civilised' and 'educated' Black Americans such as Williams or Sheppard from the colonial narrative. The performative and cultural notion of 'colonial whiteness' that had been realised in the Congo in its early years was increasingly adapted to the biological concept that now dominated racist thinking in the metropole.

Furthermore, the cross-class alliance that racism was able to offer through negative societalisation was not only challenged by demands for international and cross-racial solidarity raised in the labour movement, but by a thriving 'self-referential racism' or 'class-racism' among traditional elites that specifically targeted certain 'degenerated' elements of subaltern milieus or working classes, as well.[114]

The late 19th century exposed how the capacity of imagined communities such as 'whiteness' or 'civilisation' to create a sustainable form of political and social solidarity was limited. In the early 20th century, when the organised Congo reform movement took shape, Léopold's promised project of 'combining all elements of the civilised world' in one colony had become largely anachronistic. Institutionally, and in social interaction, the social fragmentations of the imperial metropoles proved in this specific historical context stronger than the negative cohesion created through the inclusion of the diverse military officers, civil administrators, artisans, missionaries or merchants invading the Congo as a colonial master class that was formed in strict opposition to the alienated colonised population. The 'white noise' in 'Darkest Africa' had faded, and the quasi-egalitarian colonial project that Stanley had disclosed to the world in 1884, and that had temporally been implemented by survivalist necessity at the colonial frontier, remained, in the long term, an unrealised racist utopia.

110 Reinsch, *Colonial Administration*, 3 ('bitterly', 'impossible').
111 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6. ('limited'); see chapter 1.
112 See chapter 3.1. On the rising dominance of the 'race'-concept, see chapter 1.
113 See Kipling, "White Man's Burden".
114 For 'class racism', see Hund, *Rassismus*, 16; for 'self-referential racism', see MacMaster, *Racism in Europe*, 33.

'An earthly hell': the degradation of the 'white' masters

Moreover, the crisis of negative racist societalisation in the Congo was further intensified through an absence of symbolic and material wages promised to the colonial master class in the Congo. Those Europeans and Americans willing to participate in the colonial conquest and exploitation of the Congo had been lured by luxurious provisions and financial compensation, the increase in social status and power, and the allocation of a racist symbolic capital. Painfully, however, foreigners reaching the Congo realised the glaring gap between the grandiose promises of the Free State in Europe and the actual performance in Africa.[115]

As has been argued in a previous chapter, Léopold and his international advocates had greatly exaggerated the material foundation of Stanley's expedition to suggest an already de facto existing state structure. Instead of a powerful confederation of cities and states embracing the Congo Basin, travellers such as Williams were puzzled to find a thin cluster of often-ramshackle outposts. [116] The impression that tales about well-developed stations and even towns of European standards were nothing more than propaganda continued to intrude itself upon visitors to the state in the following years. New arrivals' disappointments began immediately after disembarking at one of the two main Congo ports and cohered into frustration and finally desperation the farther they reached the interior of the colony. In Boma, accommodation was humid, Canisius complained, filled with insects and "rats literally swarm[ed]". Moreover, there was no opportunity for amusement or socialising in the town that was, after all, the capital of the Free State since 1886. "No cafes are open, no sailors carouse, no lighted window suggests that some one is giving a dinner, that some one is playing bridge", the American journalist Richard Harding Davis complained after a journey to the Congo: "Darkness, gloom, silence mark this 'European watering-place'". In Matadi, some 50 kilometres farther up-river, the situation was hardly better. Here, "everything was scratch and uncomfortable", Burrows recounted.[117]

Leaving Matadi, early visitors such as Conrad still had to tackle the almost 370 kilometres to Stanley Pool by foot. A long march full of privation for Europeans, even though the major burden was quite literally shouldered by around 40,000 African porters working on this route. Travelling with the railway between Matadi and Léopoldville, completed in 1898, was more comfortable, but its high prices and strict weight limits forced "many a poor officer" to leave behind many of his personal belongings, from medicine to ammunition and books. In Léopoldville, the central Free State station, which was built at the start of the navigable part of the Congo River, fresh disillusionments awaited. The settlement "is sometimes spoken of as a Congo town", Roger Casement noted, "but it cannot rightly be so termed". Apart from a well-equipped government station, "there is nothing at all resembling a town – barrack would be the correct term".[118]

115 Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 63.

116 See chapters 4.1 and 4.2; Williams, "Open Letter", 8.

117 Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 64 ('rats'); Davis, *The Congo*, 64 ('cafes', 'Darkness'); Burrows, *Land of the Pigmies*, 6 ('uncomfortable'); see Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 15.

118 Davis, *The Congo*, 73 ('poor'); Casement, "Report on Upper Congo", 22 ('Congo town'). On the number of porters, see Stanley, *Introduction*, xvii.

To reach their final destination in the Upper Congo, future stage agents, merchants or missionaries would spend days and often weeks on small and clumsy steamships. The government was "inordinately proud" of its river marine, which was "glowingly depicted in official and semi-official documents" as a symbol of the material progress that was introduced into the Congo. However, its actual condition was devastating. As "a general rule", the ships were "as uncomfortable and badly arranged as they well can be", the cabin "ill-appointed and dirty", "absolutely sticky with filth", the food "a painful subject".[119]

Once the proud 'pioneers of progress' and representatives of an allegedly superior European culture reached their state or trading post in the remote areas, the real wretchedness began. The material standard of living, for instance, that awaited most state or trading agents in the Congo, in contrast to expectations fuelled by the embellishment of imperial literature and official publicity, showed no signs of comfort, not to mention luxury. Some large stations – those whose photographs had been proudly presented to the European public and aspiring recruits – were indeed well developed and fortified settlements. However, most of the smaller stations that were managed by one or two state or company agents were isolated outposts consisting of a few ramshackle sheds that created only the lowest level of comfort. In contrast to men such as the Belgian Force Publique officer Lémery, who had been thrilled about the luxuries and almost royal status he had achieved, many Europeans who reached the Congo were shocked about a miserable life full of deprivation.[120]

According to Congo critics, "neglect to the white agents" by the state was widespread, moreover. Indeed, due to lacking infrastructure and unreliable techniques, omnipresent security problems and financial shortcomings, over the years, the state administration in Boma showed increasing difficulties in supplying its more distant outposts with the luxurious rations of foodstuff and other necessities proudly listed in Europe. Moreover, concessionary companies such as the Anversoise became particularly "infamous" for their "treatment of its white agents", Canisius complained, and "the parsimonious directors at Antwerp were evidently determined that we should have nothing better" then baked plantains and Kwang.[121] One could recall in this context how pointedly Conrad's first Congo novella tells the miserable story of a colonial station that loses contact with the supply network for months, culminating in a desperate and deadly conflict between Kayerts and Carlier, the two isolated European colonisers, over the last ration of sugar.[122]

Hence, instead of rewarding even working- or lower-middle-class Europeans with admission to a luxurious sphere of consumption that elevated even low-ranking colonists over the inherent African population, the isolated colonial masters often had little material or 'edible' assets to assure them of their cultural superiority over the surrounding Congolese 'savages". In fact, most of the state stations and trading and missionary posts were completely dependent on supplies from the surrounding

119 Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 70.

120 See chapters 2.1 and 4.1.

121 Davis, *The Congo*, 100 ('neglect'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 178 ('infamous').

122 See Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 159–65.

African villages to survive. The "forerunners of civilization […] entered among the Pagan negroes full of high ambition and enthusiasm", Ward remembered. "Later on, one saw German barons of ancient lineage, Italian nobles, and distinguished Austrian officers, building mud huts and planting maize for sustenance".[123]

In contrast to the promise and expectation that inclusion in the community of colonial whiteness would allow every 'white man' in the Congo to reinvent himself as belonging to a superior group of people over the colonised others, "the condition of the white man" at some of the isolated wood posts was "only a little better" than the "utterly miserable" state of the Congolese. An Italian Free State officer, appalled by the indignities, privations and dangers he experienced, saw little distinction between his fate as a coloniser and the misery of enslaved Africans. In a letter to Morel, he described the conditions of colonial service in the Congo as "'la traite des blancs,' the white slave-trade" – "rightly" so, as the leader of the British reformers asserted.[124]

Moreover, the lack of food and medical supplies exacerbated the already serious health problems of the isolated agents struggling with the harsh climate and tropical diseases, critics warned.[125] In addition, as Williams had reported, full of indignation, the state showed little intent and capacity in supporting its suffering subjects. "Your white men sicken and die in their quarters or on the caravan road", he confronted King Léopold in his public letter, since "there is not a solitary hospital for Europeans".[126]

Indeed, as has been mentioned, the mortality rates among Europeans in the Congo were extremely high.[127] Moreover, the climatic hardships (and the surrounding 'darkness' and 'savagery", as the reformers asserted) challenged the character, temperament and morale of the colonial pioneers, as did an often-deadly dullness. Once the romance of exploration was cast off, many Europeans who had been lured by the tales of exotic adventures dominating the imperial Congo literature were deeply disenchanted by a daily routine that was often marked by stagnation and idleness. 'An Outpost of Progress' forcefully described one of these stations equipped by "two pioneers of trade and progress" as Conrad labelled them in bitter sarcasm, who "did nothing, absolutely nothing".[128]

Profound feelings of solitude, loneliness and homesickness were rampant. In these conditions, the most 'heroic' struggle of these proud representatives of 'white' and European supremacy was perhaps their grim daily fight to obtain nutrition, health and hygiene, a skirmish that many of them, as suggested above, lost. "It was always the same story", Ward argued, "each man's calendar showed the days marked off with scrupulous

123 Ward, *Voice from the Congo*, 250 ('forerunners').
124 Davis, *The Congo*, 99 ('condition'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 126 ('traite').
125 See Davis, *The Congo*, 99; Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 178.
126 Williams, "Open Letter", 5 ('Your white men').
127 For health problems of European colonisers and the weakness of the 'white body' that they seemed to signify, see chapter 3.2. Their broken health even followed the colonisers home. Weakened by tropical diseases such as malaria, many of the Congolese adventurers faced an early death. See Ward, *Voice from the Congo*, 250.
128 Park, "Terrible Story", 770 ('temperament'); Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 155 ('pioneers', 'nothing'). For the alleged negative influences of Congolese climate and 'savagery' on the 'civilised' European subjects, see chapter 3.3.

care, and the one topic of conversation alike among men of all nationalities was of the departure from Africa and the return to the comforts of civilisation".[129]

Even the direct economic compensation was beneath the expectations of many Europeans. More and more of the lower-ranking agents were only "wretchedly paid" and they risked their lives for "three hundred dollars a year". In contrast to the early practices, promotions were only slowly granted and were increasingly reserved, as has been contended above, to Belgian citizens. Moreover, in the 1890s, the system of reimbursement in the Congo changed. Fixed salaries were reduced and became replaced by high commissions and bonuses for the collected ivory and rubber collected. In this way, state and company agents could still make a fortune in the Congo. However, they were obliged to engage in the moral outrage of the rubber regime or rest in "poverty".[130]

Hence, along with physical hardships and despair came the moral burden of the "degrading work" the colonial masters in the Congo performed, Washington argued. "Who shall tell the miseries" of an ordinary Belgian who came to the Congo filled with patriotic imaginings, only to find himself thrust into some out-station and told to get rubber, plunged suddenly into an earthly hell," Morel similarly asked. Too much commiseration for the 'patriotic' feelings and 'miseries' of these European conquistadors is certainly misplaced. However, it is still right to assume, as Washington reasoned, that "the degradation and weakening of the oppressors always follow any wrong done to a defenseless people".[131]

Indeed, many colonisers, empowered by a deep sense of racist superiority, had few scruples about imprisoning, torturing or murdering the dehumanised Africans. Others, drunk on their power and exasperated by the misery and hardships of their service, even developed a sadistic joy in their use of excessive violence. Nonetheless, the racist slur and excessive brutality of the colonial regime certainly left its mark on all those who performed it. Some officers he had met had seen "the depths of their degradation" and "tasted the dirty work they were doing", the journalist Davis reported from his visit to the Congo in 1908.[132]

As has been described in the previous chapter, many of those entering colonial service in the Congo had been lured by the prospect of social prestige, public recognition and military distinction. After the larger prestigious battles of the Free State against the 'cannibalistic savages' and 'Arab slave traders' had been won, though, the colonial masters found themselves imprisoning women, whipping children and shooting old men. To those among the Congo colonists whose moral consciousness and empathy had not been entirely extinguished by racist contempt, the lack of 'chivalry', 'honour' or 'pride' in the allegedly 'heroic' work of 'introducing civilisation and trade' into Central Africa

129 Ward, *Voice from the Congo*, 250 ('same story'). For reports on homesickness and loneliness, see ibid., 24, 228; Park, "Terrible Story", 770; Herbert Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1299; Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 128–29; Glave, *In Savage Africa*, 71; Dr Austin Freeman, quoted in Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 201.

130 Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 23 ('wretchedly paid', 'poverty'); Davis, *The Congo*, 113 ('dollars'); see Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 461.

131 Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 375 ('degrading', degradation'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 127 ('miseries').

132 Davis, *The Congo*, 112.

under the flag of Léopold's philanthropic colony was staggering. "One of them picked at the band of blue and gold braid around the wrist of his tunic", the experienced war correspondent Davis reported from his encounter with Force Publique officers, "and said: 'Look, it is our badge of shame'".[133]

The young European colonisers showed the greatest difficulties in upholding what was considered their 'civilised' ideals in these conditions, the reformers claimed. "All reports agree that these men almost invariably give themselves over to the worst vices", Washington noted in the *Outlook*, for instance, "if for no other reason than to escape from the melancholy which their isolation breeds".[134] Indeed, alcohol abuse, for instance, was widespread. Full of detestation, Canisius described the drunkard manager of a trading station "falling upon the gravel walk" under "the loud laughter and apparently witty comments of a crowd of naked savages, gathered around to witness the antics of the noble white man". The racist symbolic capital of such a humiliated coloniser showed severe signs of corrosion. While even a drunken European maintained the structural power to control, physically or culturally annihilate the colonised other, his right to despise the Africans as culturally and morally inferior became shallow. The 'nobleness' of the 'white' colonial master had become a theme of ridicule even by the 'naked savages' that they had come to 'civilise', the anecdote of Canisius suggests. The "awe with which the savage formerly regarded the white man", as he believed, "has largely given way to a feeling of contempt".[135]

Similarly devastating was the self-contempt that a once-aspiring colonial 'pioneer of civilisation' could develop: the burdening combination of physical, psychological and moral deterioration he experienced where he had expected cultural, social and symbolic elevation through inclusion in a colonial master class and abundant symbolic and material wages of colonial 'whiteness'. "What can he do then?" Doyle asked in his pamphlet on the crime of the Congo: "There is one thing which he very frequently does, and that is to blow out his brains". Indeed, the suicide statistics in the Congo were "higher than in any service in the world", the famous writer reminded.[136]

The 'undoing of colonial whiteness' and the 'empire of shame'

The degradation of colonial masters and the general corrosion of colonial heroism in the periphery directly affected the metropolitan societies, as well. The British journalist and executive member of the Congo Reform Association Harold Spender proclaimed in an article on 'The Great Congo Iniquity' that, in the Free State, "the white man's burden" was becoming "the white man's undoing".[137] This notion can, quite literally, be understood as a reference to the physical decay and high mortality of the 'white' colonists in the Congo. However, it also hints at the collapse and 'undoing' of the prevailing stereotype of heroic colonial 'whiteness' through and within the Congo Scandal.

133 Ibid.

134 Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 377 ('reports'); see Park, "Terrible Story", 769.

135 Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 81 ('falling'), 105 ('awe').

136 Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 44 ('suicide'). On suicides of colonial agents, also see Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 377.

137 Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 45–46.

As has been described in the previous chapter, the popularisation of Léopold's colonial enterprise and the commodification of Stanley's African quests had turned the Congo into an 'empire for the masses'. However, after the climax of public admiration for the lionised Stanley in 1890, a process of alienation had begun to estrange the Europeans and Americans from the Congolese 'heroes'. In travel literature, the imperial pioneers in the Congo even began to sink into a kind of anti-heroes. This rupture became particularly apparent in the storyline of Herbert Ward, the former Free State and trading agent who had joined the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition in 1886.[138] In 1891, after his return to England, Ward simultaneously published two books. Although the first, about his initial five years as a state and trading agent, mainly recounted adventurous but ultimately victorious struggles with a stereotypical Congolese counter-world created in the tone and style predetermined by Stanley's travelogues, Ward's second book put the traveller's own psychological and physical deterioration at the centre of attention. "Oh, the horrors of that weary time!" the future sculptor noted frankly: "No flight of fancy was too great, no conception too horrible for my fevered imagination". This new, internal focus on the traveller's hardships, fears and inadequacy appeared, from then on, more frequently in travel literature and to some extent anticipated the emerging Congo reform discourse.[139]

Indeed, many fictional representations of the Congo Free State circled around "[d]egenerated [h]eroes and [f]ailed [r]omance". Conrad, for instance, as has been repeatedly mentioned, turned the sickness, insanity and brutalisation of colonial 'heroes' and the 'undoing' of colonial heroism into a central motif of his Congo literature. The characters in Conrad's two Congo novellas and the company director or ignorant Belgian officers described by the American Canisius had little in common with the heroic imperialists who had been glorified in popular culture for their supremacy over the Congolese 'darkness'. Such crude and weak, suffering and humiliated colonists were rather problematic projection screens for the racist desires of the reading masses in Europe and the United States, who drew their sense of cultural and racial superiority from the identification with their imperial heroes. Davis had conveyed this change when he argued that the young Free State officers he met were no longer colonial heroes to be admired but "men one could pity".[140]

To tales of health problems and psychological distress was added the staggering amount of moral erosion revealed by the activists of the Congo reform movement, who in their pamphlets and books, atrocity lectures and town meetings described in horrifying detail the brutalities committed by the Victorians' admired popular heroes. At the beginning of the 20th century, the cultural monument of the Central African conqueror, this icon of 19th-century popular imagination, was seriously corroding. The almost outright hero-worship of the public for the Central African explorers and colonisers perished under the impression of the sheer abysmal outrages they enacted upon the African population. "[A]ll this fine work on the part of Belgians – or of British, Scandinavians,

138 See Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 29–30; chapter 3.2.

139 Ward, *Stanley's Rear Guard*, 47 ('horrors'), 48 ('flight'); see Ward, *Five Years*.

140 Gehrmann, "Degenerated Heroes", title; Davis, *The Congo*, 113. On Conrad's colonial anti-heroes, see chapter 3.2.

Italians, and other Europeans", Johnston asserted, was from now on associated with the horrible atrocities of the Free State, "instead", as it should have been, "of resulting in a monument to the white man's courage, nobility of purpose, shrewd common sense, and victory over the Devil of reactionary Nature". Indeed, those Free State agents who returned after the Congo Scandal had been exposed, and who had expected honour, social approval or even public admiration for their service at the 'frontiers of civilisation', had to learn that they were increasingly perceived as ruthless murderers, instead. Similarly, those men and women whose biographies had become intertwined with the foundation of the Free State saw their reputation and names destroyed. For Johnston, himself one of Britain's idols from the romantic period of exploration, "the bitterest part" of the Congo Scandal was the destruction of an unprecedented legacy of valour, "a heroism, a cheerful endurance of privation and disease, an honest liking for these feckless savages under their control" that he associated with Léopold's and Stanley's officers.[141]

Eventually, even the tallest statue fell. The veteran explorer Stanley himself had always stayed loyal to Léopold and the Congolese administration and had vigorously defended the Free State against all allegations. [142] However, towards the end of the 19th century, criticism of Stanley's ruthless methods in the Congo became louder. When the full extent of the atrocities in the colony that he had established was disclosed to the British public in February 1904 by the Casement report, Stanley's reputation was seriously hit, as well. The veteran explorer died a few months later after an attack of pleurisy. He was "embittered", noted Harry Johnston, one of his pallbearers, assured by the "gradual growing conviction" that he had established an unscrupulous and disastrous regime. In contrast to the expectations of his wife, the once almost unconditionally worshipped imperial hero could not be buried in Westminister Abbey, next to David Livingstone, as Stanley had hoped. Dean Joseph A. Robinson refused to give his permission. Apparently, these highest national honours were, at the start of the new century and concerning the growing controversies about Stanley's colonial legacy, no longer appropriate for the grandest of all Victorian imperial heroes.[143]

For Park, a major misfortune of the Congo Scandal was this corruption of Stanley's reputation, this greatest icon of African 'exploration' through the brutality of the Congo regime. His work "was intended for and should have effected nothing but good", the leading American Congo reformer was convinced. However, it had "so far led to nothing but evil". Here was "the tragedy and the pathos" of the story. Like other reformers, the American journalist mourned the deprivation of the imperial grandeur and pure 'romantic whiteness' once associated with his imperial boyhood heroes as a personal loss.[144]

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141 Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 463.

142 See Stanley, *Introduction*, xii–xiii; 'Stanley the Bugbear of Congo Land', *New York Herald*, 14 April 1891, 8.

143 Harry Johnston, quoted in Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 15 [footnote] ('embittered', 'gradual'). Dean Joseph A. Robinson never explained his decision. However, in another context he referred to the violent character of Stanley's missions; see Newman, *Imperial Footprints*, 333–34; Tim Jeal, *Stanley* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008), 464. Very likely, the outrage about the atrocities in the Congo Free State influenced this decision, as well.

144 Park, "Terrible Story", 764; see Lösing, "Congo to Chicago".

Moreover, the atrocities and misdeeds that were committed by the 'white' colonial heroes in the name of Christianity, civilisation and progress deeply unsettled the belief in the moral or cultural supremacy of these imagined communities. "Such things are an ineffaceable blot upon the white race in Africa", they "are befouling the honour of the white races", Morel grimly stated, and his close friend and associate Doyle agreed that the "immense series of crimes" had resulted in a "lowering of the prestige of all the white races".[145] Moreover, Congo opponents called the crimes of the Free State "disgraceful to civilisation", "a disgrace to civilization", "a disgrace to civilized Europe" and a "disgrace to European civilization".[146]

At the same time, "national honour" and "national dignity" were involved by the national "complicity in [this] most colossal infamy". For Doyle, the broken "pledge of the united nations of Europe" to protect the Congolese natives was "a disgrace to each of them". However, many reformers pointed to the "peculiar and very clear responsibility" of the United States and Great Britain due to the early recognition by Washington and the huge British public and diplomatic support for Léopold's endeavour in its foundational years.[147]

Secular and religious British Congo opponents declared the fight against the Congo Scandal to be a national duty. The Congo Scandal "affects not only the dignity and prestige of Great Britain in the councils of the world", a resolution of 1,000 Congo protesters maintained, "but, what is of even greater moment, the honour and the moral character of the nation". For the liberal parliamentarian Sir Henry Norman, the disgrace of the Congo Scandal "was not an academical question" but a deeply personal matter for every British gentleman. It seemed to the member for Wolverhampton South and former successful journalist and editor that "without exaggeration or cant, we were so much involved in this matter that any man amongst us who knew the facts must feel compelled to say: 'My country is disgraced by them; I myself am disgraced by them'".[148]

As chapter 3.2 has discussed, many prominent reformers had interpreted the Congolese atrocities as signs of a fundamental moral and cultural decline of an overly materialistic and decadent modernity. The words of Norman suggest that the humiliation to 'civilisation' and the 'white race' through the Congo Scandal also evolved into a deeply

145 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 243 ('blot'); Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 8 ('befouling'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 8 ('lowering').

146 Morel, *Great Britain*, 127 ('disgraceful'); Reverend Richard B. Smith, quoted in Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 51; Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1329 (both 'disgrace to civilization'); Lord Cromer [Evelyn Baring], introduction to *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, by John H. Harris (London and Beccles: William Clowes and Sons 1912), vi ('Europe'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 57 ('European').

147 Henry Norman: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1861 ('honour', 'dignity');*Morel, Great Britain, 127* ('complicity'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 8 ('pledge', 'each'); Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 10 ('peculiar'). On the national honour involved in the Congo question, also see 'Address of Mr. E.D. Morel', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 232; Hall, "Mr. Roots Letter", 5; Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 44; Sir Francis Channing: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1867.

148 'The Congo', *The Times*, 12 July 1909, 4 ('affects', 'nation'); Norman: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1857 ('academical', 'exaggeration'); see Morel, *Great Britain*, 3–6.

personal crisis. It challenged identity and subjectivity for those who had drawn their 'ethnic honour' from their inclusion in these imagined racist communities. Under the umbrella of a humanitarian 'civilising mission', the atrocities against the African population had not only "made civilisation ashamed of its name", as Lord Fitzmaurice, the liberal Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs asserted, but had disheartened those Congo reform activists who had proudly defined themselves as 'progressive' or 'civilised'.[149]

The statements of Casement and the English missionary A.E. Scrivener, two Free State opponents who had seen the atrocities with their own eyes, finally reveal how the elevating character of the racist symbolic capital had been turned upside-down. The violence in the colonial endeavour he had once supported made him "ashamed of my own skin colour", Casement admitted, and the missionary Scrivener similarly stated that he felt "ashamed of my colour" when he thought of the crimes of other 'white men' in the Free State. Hence, the Congo Scandal eventually turned ethnic honour, or racist symbolic capital, into 'ethnic shame' – and not only for those who had directly participated in the Congo atrocities, as Morel emphasised: "'every white man who has a soul, whether brought into contact with them on the spot, or acquainted with them from a distance, cannot but 'cringe with shame' for his race".[150]

Eventually, the crisis of racist societalisation triggered by the Congo Scandal affected large spheres of the imperial societies. A deep sense of betrayal took hold of the British and American public that was particularly articulated in the hundreds of atrocity meetings organised by reform activists. Those who "attended these meetings and heard the case presented", Lord Monkswell, the President of the British reform association said, were "filled with surprise, as well as shame, horror, and indignation". 'Ethnic shame' could even affect the sphere of everyday consumption. Whenever "you ride down the streets of your beautiful cities on your bicycles, with the tires made of rubber, and in your automobiles, with the tires made of rubber", Morrison told his listeners at the Universal Peace Congress in Boston, there exists the possibility "that the very rubber that you are riding upon has cost a human life".[151] Hence, instead of becoming a source of racist symbolic capital and creating a mass honour for the imperial societies, the colonisation had become a burden for the British and American public. When the full extent of the Free State atrocities reached the metropolitan public, the Congolese empire for the masses became an empire of shame.

149 Fitzmaurice: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here 1329 ('ashamed'); see speech of Doyle, reproduced in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 22; Park, "Recent Atrocities", 1328; see Conrad to Casement, 21 December 1903, reproduced in Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 69–70, here 70.

150 Casement, quoted in Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 57 ('skin colour'); A.E. Scrivener, quoted in Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 52 ('colour'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 243 ('soul').

151 Lord Monkswell [Robert Collier]: 'The Congo Free State', HL Deb 29 July 1907 Vol. 179 cc 402–437, here c 403 ('surprise'). 'Address of Rev. W.H. Morrison', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 237 ('ride').

The Congo Scandal and the metropolitan 'wages of whiteness'

Merchants, manufacturers but also workers in the imperial metropoles had not only been promised a racist symbolic capital but tremendous material benefits through the unlocking of the Congolese markets and natural resources for the global economy. As has been shown in the previous chapter, Stanley had enthusiastically described the region as an 'African El Dorado'. Most reformers, with this narration in mind, believed that the economic potential of the Congo remained tremendous. The Congo Basin was "leading all other sections of the earth in its supply" of rubber, for instance, they reminded the United States Senate. Hence, "[i]t is evident that the resources of the country, rightly conserved and developed, would secure for it wealth indefinitely great".[152]

In 1905, the experienced colonialist Johnston was still convinced that there "should be a great future, commercially at any rate, before the Congo Free State". However, the great expectations outside Belgium had been darkened, as he admitted. The Congo colony neither conserved nor rationally developed its resources and, most importantly, it refrained from sharing this unlimited wealth with its imperial co-conspirators. As has been previously maintained, since 1889, the Free State had gradually established a monopolised and state-run economy that largely excluded independent and international trade. By the mid-1890s, the free and open access to the Congolese markets and resources guaranteed in international treaties and bilateral conventions had been revoked. The "regret naturally felt" that "this wealthy territory" was now closed was a central motivation for the public criticism of Léopold's politic, as Johnston confessed.[153]

The "claim of one man [Léopold] to a gift of so fabulous value" meant to sacrifice the "allied rights of all mankind" to the wealth of the Congolese nature, American missionaries urged.[154] Indeed, Alfred Emmott emphasised the immense differences between the promises made to the British economy and the actual trading figures. "Sir Henry Stanley, many years ago, promised us £ 20,000,000 of trade per annum", he reminded. "Our exports are £125,000 at present", he argued in the spring of 1903. One year later, trade between the United States and the Free State similarly amounted to "little or nothing", as American reformers noted.[155]

British parliamentarians continued to point to the importance of Congo trade for their constituencies and demanded that there "must be freedom of trade in the Congo and guarantees for collective and individual liberty".[156] The closure of the Congo endangered the anticipated profits of those directly engaged in African trade. Moreover, it directly affected expectations of a macroeconomic stimulation of economic growth. "Tropical Africa was probably the China of the future for the absorption of British manufactured goods", it was argued, hence "as business men [sic], we could not afford to

152 Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 3 ('leading', 'evident').

153 Johnston, *History of Colonization [1905]*, 230. For the free trade dimension of the crisis of racist policy in the Congo, see chapter 4.2.

154 Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 18 ('claim', 'allied').

155 Emmott, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 39 ('Sir Henry'); The Boston Herald, 28 September 1904, reproduced in Congo Committee, "Congo News-Letter, July 1904", 3 ('little').

156 John Kennaway: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1852 ('liberty').

allow a huge country like that to be closed to our trade. Why should it be?" [157] Eventually, Léopold's restrictions on free trade would affect the British economy as a whole, Morel warned. The "destruction of commerce" through monopolisation let the "home manufacturers suffer" he pointed out, and as a result, also those workers and artisans whose wages in Europe were dependent on Congolese trade. Hence, the leader of the British reform campaign demanded persistent pressure upon the British Government by "chambers of commerce, by manufacturers and trades unions" alike.[158]

Moreover, for the reformers, the free-trade dimension and the so-called 'native question' had intersecting aspects, for example concerning the effect of the Free State atrocities on the promised Congolese potential as an outlet market. The violent Free State regime had a devastating impact on the millions of Congolese 'savages' who should have been turned into obeying customers through the assimilation programme of the 'civilising mission', it was warned. "Already rich areas are almost hopelessly impaired, and the depopulation of the land and the incitement of a brooding hatred in the hearts of the people threaten irrecoverable loss" of the Congolese "wealth rightfully belonging to the world".[159] If central Africa was deserted by the colonial terror of the Free State, who was going to buy the European commodities in the future? In this way, "African markets for the absorption of European merchandise" were not only closed but also "ruined".[160]

The depopulation of the Congo Basin of course also affected the supply of labour-power and thus, eventually, the grasp on the desired Congolese natural resources. The repeatedly discussed health problems of pioneering European colonists, combined with fragments of climatic determinism, had established the conviction that a broader transfer of European workers to the Congo was illusionary. "White labor can never hope to get a foot-hold here", Williams had already predicted. This argument was frequently made throughout the reform debate. In consideration of the fact that European industries' grasp of Congolese resources would always depend on African labour, critics blamed the murderous Free State economy not only as inhumane and morally questionable but also as economically unsound: "And it all seemed so foolish. To kill the people off in the wholesale way […], because they would not bring in a sufficient quantity of rubber to satisfy the white man – and now here is an empty country and a very much diminished output of rubber as the inevitable consequence", Scrivener stressed, full of consternation.[161]

"Another great evil was the steady robbing of the country of all its resources" through its ruthless mode of production, the reformers argued. Indeed, the trade in elephant

157 Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46.

158 Morel, *British Case*, 185 ('destruction', 'suffer'), 186 ('chambers'); see Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 36; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 203.

159 Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 22.

160 Morel, *British Case*, 185 ('ruined').

161 Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 20 ('white'); Rev. A.E. Scrivener, quoted in Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 51 ('foolish'). Also see Davis, *The Congo*, 115; Alfred Emmott: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here cc 1310–1311; Emmott, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 39; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 36; Weeks, *Among Congo Cannibals*, 83; Washington, "Future of Congo Reform", 9.

tusks, for instance, which in the first decade of the Free State was the most important Congolese commodity, was a self-destructive industry. Towards the end of the century, the reservoir of ivory vivant showed signs of exhaustion through the ruthless shooting of elephants.[162]

As Harris pointed out, the "wanton destruction of elephants in order to obtain rapidly every tusk of ivory" had its counterpart in "the ruthless exploitation of rubber". The quickly rising export numbers of rubber in the 1890s were only possible due to the implementation of the notoriously atrocious rubber regime. However, while this forced rubber collection led to "immense profits", such "exhaustive exploitation cannot conceal its ruinous nature", the reformers emphasised.[163] Time and again, they told the "piteous tale" of the manner in which the rubber vines were handled. Under the high pressure of brutally enforced rubber quotas, "vines were cut down with little thought for the future", the existing lianas so frequently tapped that they "soon dry up and die". In this way, the "rubber is got, but a plant which has taken centuries to grow is destroyed for ever".[164]

The "lack of attention" to proper and sustainable collection was intensified by "the natives' hostility to the Congo State officials", Bourne reported. Indeed, rubber vines were also the target of sabotage, and they were thus deliberately destroyed to damage the economic foundation of the colonisers.[165] Apart from the "inhumanities" and "monopolies", Congo opponents also pointed to "the crass stupidity of a system which dries up the sources of production". By 1903, "the exhaustion of the rubber-vines [had] already begun […] in very sensible degree", and in their first Congo-critical memorial to the United States Congress, the American missionaries claimed that the "profuse bleeding of the rubber vines has brought about their destruction in wide areas".[166]

Throughout the reform debate, Congo opponents continuously expressed their outrage about the Free State's destruction of "the sources of wealth to which it owed its birth", a wealth that, it had been promised, would reach all spheres of the imperial community. "[E]ven if it was in accordance with the spirit" of the Berlin Act, "it was still the duty of Europe to intervene", Emmott emphasised in the Commons, since "the resources of rubber were being dried up" through the forced production. "In other words, the State was exploiting its chief natural resource, and there would be nothing left to trade upon", even if the Free State were abolished and the region were once more opened

162 Leif Jones: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1844 ('evil'); see chapter 2.1.

163 Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 213 ('wanton', 'ruthless'); Paul S. Reinsch, "Real Conditions in the Congo Free State," *The North American Review* 178, no. 567 (1904): 221 ('immense', 'exhaustive').

164 Cromer, *Introduction*, vii ('piteous'); Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 239 ('cut down'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 79 ('dry up'); Decle, "Murder in Africa", 587 ('centuries').

165 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 266 ('hostility'); see Harms, "End of Red Rubber", 82.

166 Emmott, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 39 ('inhumanities', 'monopolies', 'stupidity'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 67 ('degree'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 14 ('profuse'). Similarly, see Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Congo Free State Government, *The Congo*, 63; Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 73, 106; 'Rev. Dr. W. Morrison to M. Ohaltin', quoted in Foreign Office, ed., *Further Correspondence Regarding the Taxation of Natives, and Other Questions, in the Congo State* (London: Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Harrison and Sons, 1909), 43.

to international merchants.[167] In 1906, Park summarised the whole economic disaster: "The supply of ivory is practically exhausted; in certain districts the yield of rubber has nearly ceased. The land is being depopulated".[168]

Eventually, the closure of markets and the destruction of workers and resources could also negatively affect the technological development and production of consumer goods in Britain and America, the reformers warned. Rubber, for instance, had become "one of the most important and most profitable of commodities" of modern economies, as the Liverpool parliamentarian Austin Taylor reminded in a Congo-critical debate. Other regions in the world market could perhaps compensate for a decline of ivory or coffee imports from the Congo. However, an exclusion from its immense rubber reservoirs had severe effects on the production of important articles such as bicycles or automobiles. After all, the Congo "is the great rubber-exporting district of the world", a resource "that is increasingly used in all the appliances of civilization".[169]

5.3 'To root out the canker': Access, purge and the racist spectacle of humanitarianism

For Congo opponents in Great Britain and the United States, an organised attempt to overcome the scandalous betrayal of social, symbolic and material promises by the Free State was inevitable. "We owed it to our honour as a nation; we owed it to our dignity, we owed it to one another; we owed it to civilization", Henry Norman contended in the House of Commons, but "each man, it seemed to him, owed it to his self-respect".[170] In defence of their personal self-worth but also the collective interests of the British or American nation and civilisation as a whole, the reform movement developed multi-layered remedies for the crisis of racist societalisation exposed in Central Africa.

First, it is be shown how secular and religious activists alike demanded full access for Protestant missionaries and independent merchants to the Congo and respect for their privileges as members of the colonial master class. A return to the 'open door' policy and freedom of trade would at the same time secure the imperial societies their 'rightful' share of the Congolese wealth. However, in consideration of the shameful atrocities committed by Free State agents, British and American reformers were reluctant to insist that civil and military officers should once more be recruited internationally. In fact, Black American activists and Italian officers had entirely abandoned the hope that a genuinely universal colony could be re-established.

Moreover, a complex discursive manoeuvre of purification based on an extensive medical symbolism and eugenic metaphors attempted to repel 'ethnic shame' triggered

167 Cromer, *Introduction*, vi–vii ('sources'); Emmott: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1315 ('accordance', etc.).

168 Park, "Terrible Story", 772. Indeed, within the first decade of the 20th century, the wild rubber reservoirs of the Congo Basin were already largely extinguished, see Harms, "End of Red Rubber", 77.

169 Austin Taylor: 'Class II', HC Deb 9 June 1904 Vol. 135 cc 1235–96, here c 1248 ('commodities'); Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 43 ('great', 'appliances').

170 Henry Norman: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1861.

by the Congo Scandal. First, the British nation, Protestant religion and Anglo-Saxon 'race' were identified as the moral centre of a once-'healthy organism of European imperialism' that was now threatened by the contagious Free State 'disease'. Afterwards, the Congolese 'malady' was traced back to an 'inferior type' of colonisers in the Congo, namely Belgian officers and those with a lower-class background, who had allegedly been driven to violence and atrocities through a class-specific deficiency of morality and a lack of national character. With demands for the removal of Belgian and subaltern agents from colonial mastery and their association with the 'dark' Congolese counterworld, the reformers attempted to re-establish the moral integrity of 'civilisation' and 'whiteness' through the exclusion of these 'unworthy' elements. The price was, however, a further fragmentation of these once-universal imagined communities, which directly affected the political cohesion of the reform movement.

Finally, it is discussed how the reformers included the European and American masses in the position of the 'civilised and white saviours'. Through the success of so-called atrocity lectures, the Congo reform movement became a mass campaign of national scope. At these public demonstrations, which attracted hundreds of thousands of Americans and Britons, humanitarian activism was turned into a racist mass spectacle. In this way, the overwhelming 'ethnic shame' of the Congo Scandal was once more turned into a source of mass honour, generated in demarcating the alienated Congolese other as well as the 'foul' elements of European 'civilisation'.

Access or withdrawal from colonial mastery?

Attempts to reinstate the privileges of British and American imperial stakeholders such as missionaries or merchants that had been abrogated through the scandalous Free State policy played a major role throughout the Congo reform movement. Indeed, reform activists such as Morel showed little restraint in admitting that their colonial reform strategy combined "moral contention" with "legitimate utilitarian considerations".[171] As the previous chapter has shown, the Free State had gradually revoked its pledges concerning the establishment of a truly universal colony. This had promised, first, all those considered 'civilised' a chance at inclusion in an imagined community of colonial 'whiteness', and second, impartial treatment and equal symbolic and material wages to all members of this colonial master class irrespective of social status, nationality, confession or 'race'. Instead, Americans and Europeans were increasingly excluded from the economy, church and administration in the Congo, and they were outraged about discrimination by a state that had openly begun to favour Belgian, Catholic and 'white' candidates in all pillars of colonial governance.[172]

In response to this first dimension of the crisis of racist societalisation, the aforementioned 'legitimate' practical considerations raised by the reformers culminated in straightforward demands. The reformers requested that the United States and British governments insist upon the "open door" in Central Africa and re-establish what were

171 Morel, "Future of Tropical Africa", 361 ('contention').
172 See chapters 5.1 and 5.2.

understood as the fundamental rights of its citizens, namely to participate in and benefit from the colonisation of the Congo, as had been promised in the foundational years of the Congo Free State and codified in racist contracts such as the General Act of the Berlin Conference.[173]

As chapter 4.3 has described in more detail, evangelicals and free trade partisans thoroughly disagreed over whether Christianity or commerce was the pivotal condition for a humane and practical colonialism or the principal medium to 'civilise' the Congolese 'savages'. However, despite the at-times strident ideological disputes, calls for freedom of trade and free missionising were also raised by all camps of the organised reform campaign. In this context, Protestant missionaries in Great Britain and the United States and British merchants, manufacturers and free traders could agree on the central remedy for their inequitable marginalisation in the community of the Congo colonisers or the full exclusion from the Congo they opposed. The Free State and its eventual successor had to return to the principles of the Berlin Congo Conference and recognise the privileges of indiscriminate access to the Congo Basin and equal participation in its economic exploitation and cultural assimilation established for imperialists of all nations and creeds.[174]

Early in the Congo controversy, the strong influence of missionaries and merchants in the British and American reform movement had been effectively used by apologists of the Free State to reject public criticism as an interested campaign of "'Liverpool merchants', jealous of Antwerp's growing importance as a rubber market" and Protestant missionaries "pursuing 'material interests'", as Morel remembered. While the reformers initially strongly decried these charges as attempting to undermine the sincerity of their public criticism of Léopold's Congo, the indignation expressed by Morel was flimsy if one takes into account the prominence of free trade and missionising questions within the reform debate.[175]

However, to suggest that the insistence upon the 'open door' in Central Africa was exclusively motivated by the personal gain of missionaries or merchants involved or hoping to become involved in the colonisation of the Congo would oversimplify matters, as well. For one, to 'open up the Congo to Christian civilisation and capitalist trade' was promoted as a beneficial means of "uplifting" the Congolese 'savages' from their alleged backwardness and moral and material misery by those committed to the principle self-legitimation of Europe's New Imperialism, the 'civilising mission' narrative. Additionally, the Congo reformers claimed to defend not particularities but the "legitimate interests" of broader commercial and evangelical milieus, or even the British and American peoples as a whole.[176]

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173 Morel, *British Case*, 186; Congo Reform Association to Foreign Office, 5 December 1912, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Present State*, 53, 54; Stead, "Emperor of the Congo", 38; Cahill, "Humanity", 7 (all 'open door'). For the provisions of the Berlin Conference, see chapters 2.1, 4.1 and 5.1.

174 For the political demands of the reformers, also see chapter 4.3.

175 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, xi ('Liverpool'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 191 ('pursuing'). For an elaborate rejection of the accusations by Free State apologists, see Morel, "King Leopold's Defence".

176 Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 16 ('uplifting'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 206, 208; Morel, *British Case*, 148 ('legitimate').

As has been previously described, the establishment of an international colony in the Congo Basin guarding over the free trade provisions of the Berlin Congo Conference was sold to the interested spheres of the British and American public as a macroeconomic stimulation of tremendous potential. However, the monopolisation and nationalisation of Congolese trade and industry gradually implemented since 1889 had increasingly barred American and British economies from the promised multidimensional wage increases resulting from the access to the so-far undeveloped Congolese market, as Congo reformers complained. "As Englishmen", Morel emphasised in one of his first public appearances as a Congo opponent, "we had a right to protest against that, and to insist upon our Government remembering that commerce is the backbone of the prosperity of our country, and that we could not allow the markets of the future to be closed to us".[177] Morel believed that a rising demand for manufactured goods and the supply of important resources such as rubber collected by a cheap force of African labour benefited merchants and manufacturers as well as the middle and working classes in the metropole. For the leader of the British reformers, only a return to the free trade regime of Berlin would guarantee the British masses their rightful share of the surplus generated through the conquest of the Congo and its forced integration into the global capitalist market. Freedom of trade in Central Africa was not only "for the good" of the colonial merchant or the colonial administrator, Morel emphasised, but "for the good of the Europeans in the far-off Western world, who handle the product of the black man's labour".[178]

Moreover, there had never "before been a case in which humanitarian and commercial considerations so coincided", Morel accentuated. As the previous chapter has shown, the reformers had opposed forced labour and the violent rubber regime implemented by the Free State as atrocious and inhumane but also ultimately as destructive for the Congolese natural resources and labour force. Hence, concerning the future economic exploitation of Tropical Africa, "what is morally right is economically sound", as the secretary of the British reform association later summarised. Precisely, the reformers understood their demand for the abolishment of forced labour and the atrocious rubber regime also as a plea for a more sustainable mode of production. At the "frontiers of civilization", Booker T. Washington stated, a particular political "wisdom" was needed: "A wide view of the world's economy demands that we protect from destruction not only the forests, and the beasts that live in them, but the indigenous races". A political economy based on free labour and the recognition of 'native land rights' under the firm colonial control of a European sovereign power, as was promoted by many reformers, would not only stop the depopulation of the Congo Basin through murder and flight, but also reduce the ruination of rubber vines and other resources through terrorised workers. Thus, the Congolese natural wealth could be preserved for the benefit of contemporary but also future American and British generations.[179]

177 Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46 ('Englishmen').

178 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 36 ('for the good'); see Morel, *Red Rubber*, 203; Morel, *British Case*, 185; chapters 5.1 and 5.2.

179 Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46 ('coincided'); Morel, "Future of Tropical Africa", 361 ('sound'); Washington, "Future of Congo Reform", 9 ('frontiers', 'wisdom', 'wide'); see also Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 22.

However, while Protestant missionaries, British merchants and their supporters in the reform movement vigorously fought for their access to the church and the economic sector of the Free State, others had early and profoundly equivocated about the idea that an equal and inclusive colonial master class could be (re-established in the Congo. After the devastating report of W. Williams in 1890, organised emigration programmes for Black Americans were quickly abandoned. Those who had promoted emigration as an escape from the racist violence and segregation they experienced in the United States, and as a chance to become colonial masters themselves, had no inclination to travel to a colony that was, as Williams had shown, defined by structural 'racial' discrimination, as well. Instead of struggling for their promised chance at participating in the colonisation of the Congo on an equal level with 'white' colonisers, the 'United States and Congo Emigration Company' of the Baptist Gaston, for instance, by 1890 had already begun to promote emigration exclusively to Liberia, although it still operated under its old name.[180]

In the face of the previously discussed disturbing reports about health problems and high death rates, devastating living conditions, restrictions of promotions, reduced salaries, debasements by superiors and, not at least, the appalling moral outrages committed against the African population, the interest in a colonial career in the Congo diminished not only among Black Americans. While many foreigners such as Herbert Ward, Guy Burrows or Edgar Canisius were initially incensed by the increasing marginalisation or exclusion of non-Belgians from the colonial master class, the experience that 'pioneering in Darkest Africa' brought physical and psychological deterioration and shame instead of the promised increase in status, prestige and material wealth had led to a broad disillusionment among acting and prospective colonial agents. This disenchantment further accelerated the demographic change in the Congo advanced by the on-going preference of the Free State administration for Belgian recruits. By 1908, in the final years of the Free State before its transformation into Belgian Congo, Belgians already accounted for two-thirds of its military and civil agents. In regard to these changes, it was no surprise that the issue of the living and working conditions of foreign colonial agents and their mistreatment through the administration lost in relevance when the mobilisation of the British and American reform association reached its height. By then, the activists in Liverpool and Boston lacked first-hand reports of fellow citizens to raise the interest of the American and British public into joining the fate of the Congo's foreign legion. While there were still considerable amounts of Swiss, Swedes and Italians on the payroll, not a single American or British recruit remained in Free State service in 1908.[181]

For some time, as the previous chapter has shown, reformers were still able to use the reports of Danes and particularly Italians to create scandal about the ill-treatment of foreign state agents. After all, between 1903 and 1909, during what contemporaries

180 See 'Liberia for the Negro', *The Washington Post*, 22 July 1890, 8; 'Emigrants to Africa', *The Washington Post*, 19 September 1889, 6; 'To Return to Africa', in *The Washington Post*, 21 December 1889, 9. Williams' early death in 1891 prevented a further engagement in the Congo debate.

181 See Edgerton, *Troubled Heart*, 105; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 100. There remained also small numbers of Danes, Norwegians, Dutchmen, Luxembourgers, Finns, French, Russians, a Bulgarian, an Austrian and an even an Argentinian in Free State service.

had called the "Italian epoch", Italians had become the European nationality second in numbers in the Congo after Belgians. However, by 1909, all Italian officers had retreated from the Congo. After their continuing protests against the "duties assigned them" and the disadvantages they experienced remained unheard by the administration, more and more Italians resigned, as reformers emphasised. Moreover, their outraged reports "led to fierce debates" in the Italian parliament and ultimately an official revocation of cooperation with Léopold's colony by the Italian government in 1909. Like Black Americans two decades before, Italians chose to withdraw from a colonial elite that only offered them a second-class position in the community of the 'white' colonisers and had become a source of shame and misery rather than of racist symbolic capital, social advancement and material wages.[182]

The "eloquent action of the Italian Government" was commented on sympathetically within the reform movement. In this way, Italy has "washed her hands of the King of the Congo and his works", as Park noted. Concerning the state sector, the British and American reformers revealed a similar inclination that stood in contrast to the approaches to church and economy. Despite the opposition to transformations of the originally international colony into a narrow Belgian dependency raised in the early years of the Congo controversy, new chances for European and American adventurers to participate in the military and civil service of the Congo were not among the demands raised in the heyday of the movement. This was the case for several reasons. On the one hand, as chapter 4.3 has discussed in more detail, only a few reformers at the beginning of the 20th century believed that the international origins of the Free State represented the desirable institutional framework for colonial governance in Africa. Instead, they favoured empires organised along national lines. Second, in consideration of the sheer magnitude of moral outrages committed by the Free State administrators, the reformers had little inducement to emphasise or even extend the participation of their fellow citizens in the Congolese crimes. Instead, they also attempted to wash their hands of the Congo Scandal, and the dishonour and 'ethnic shame' with which it had deluged 'civilisation' and the 'white race'.[183]

The 'healthy organism' of civilisation and the 'Congolese disease'

The abandonment of the idea of international colonial governance implemented by a multinational corps of civil and military administrators by the majority of the Congo reformers points to a tense relationship between at least two aspects of the crisis of racist societalisation in the Congo. Firstly, Congo opponents were offended at how the confessional and national bias of the Free State government had led to a collapse of the promised egalitarian frontier community in the Congo. Secondly, the notorious Congo atrocities had turned the broad inclusion of recruits of many nationalities, confessions and classes into a colonial elite that initially indeed seemed to represent 'civilisation' as a whole into a burden for the British and American public. This was true not merely for

182 Elena, "Overseas Europeans", 79 ('Italian Epoch'); Park, "Blood-Money", 68 ('duties').

183 Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, iii ('eloquent'); Park, "Blood-Money", 68 ('washed'); see chapters 4.2 and 5.2.

those personally involved in the conquest of 'Darkest Africa' and its inhabitants, but also for those broad spheres of the imperial public that had drawn some sort of 'mass honour' from their affiliation with the 'heroic' colonisers, for whom the Congo had become an 'empire of shame' instead of a source of 'ethnic honour' or racist symbolic capital, as the previous chapter has claimed.

In this situation, the Congo reformers were inclined to accept and even extend the fragmentation of the once-universal concepts of 'civilisation' and 'whiteness' in order to reduce the shame and dishonour emerging from the Congo Scandal. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, nationalism and a self-referential or class-racism was generally rising at the turn of the 20th century. This meant that the racist speculation about an external other was increasingly supplemented by a concern about the affiliation and integrity of the internal self. Concepts of 'race' and 'nation' became increasingly synchronised, and various sub-races of the 'white race', such as the Anglo-Saxon or Germanic 'race', gained in importance in the political imagination. At the same time, a rising eugenics movement concerned with 'racial' and national 'hygiene' promoted the safeguarding of society understood as a fragile "political organism" through the elimination of 'unworthy' and 'injurious' elements, including undesired parts of the working classes or those declared physically or mentally 'unfit' or suspected of behaving in ways that were considered to deviate from moral and social norms.[184]

As the following pages show, reform publications reveal both a strong influence of race-nationalist thinking and a deeply engraved eugenics metaphoric. In this respect, the Free State or the Free State system was, in a reoccurring symbolism, called a "cancer" or a "disease" and described as an "open" or "festering sore". This medical symbolism was far-reaching and multidimensional. In the first instance, it maintained the pre-existence of a 'healthy', hence stable, legitimate and morally justifiable institution of European imperialism before the actual advent of the Congolese 'malady'. This was the main precondition of the thesis of exceptionalism that Morel promoted with particular vehemence, as did other prominent Congo opponents.[185]

The atrocities committed by the Free State, it was claimed, were without analogy in any other contemporary European empire, and they outshined all imperial crimes of the past. The "hands of no colonising Power are clean", Morel was ready to admit. However, to argue that these "occasional back-slidings" were "in any sense of the word comparable" to the abuses in the Congo was "to exhibit a lack of proportion and absence of mental balance beyond the boundaries of reasonable discussion", he sturdily stated. "We have all failed at times", Doyle similarly argued in references to contemporary colonial scandals in German or French dependencies, but these were "isolated

184 Jordan, *Imperial Democracy*, 170 ('organism'). With Starr Jordan and G. Stanley Hall, two leading members of the American Congo Reform Association were dedicated eugenicists, see Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, 131–34; Winfield, *Eugenics and Education*, xix, 115–17.

185 Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 32; Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Present Status", 6; Address of William W. Keen (1906), reproduced in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "The Service of the Congo Missionaries," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 8; Morrison, "Personal Observations", 42 (all 'open sore') [This notion was also a reference to a remark of David Livingstone on the slave trade, inscribed on his tomb in Westminster Abbey]; Hall, "Mr. Roots Letter", 4 ('festering'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 302, 352 ('cancer'), 352 ('disease').

cases", divergences from an otherwise just colonial norm.[186] Even the "amenities of the 'middle passage' in the old days", as Conrad sarcastically called it, "were as nothing" to the misconducts in the Free State. The Congolese atrocities were simply the "ghastliest episode"[187] and "the greatest crime of all history" and.[188]

By declaring the Congo atrocities a spatially limited and historically exceptional phenomenon intrinsically tied to the particularities of the Congolese imperial formation, the reformers repudiated the realisation that all colonial conquests and relations were necessarily based upon military, structural and epistemological violence. This discursive manoeuvre allowed the adherence to the idea of just imperialism even while recognising the massacres and outrages committed in the Congo.

In their closer depiction of this once-'healthy organism' of imperial rule, British reformers resorted to a strident glorification of Britain's "dignity as a great nation", its "great liberating traditions", "glorious part in the emancipation of the negro race" and "heritage of moral glory". 'We', it is proudly proclaimed in reference to the great abolitionist campaign at the turn of the 19th century, "are of the race of Clarkson and of Wilberforce". Choruses of praises of Anglo-Saxon humanitarian and "antislavery traditions" were combined with celebrations of a supposedly specifically just and rational treatment of the colonised masses in the British Empire.[189] "It had always been the boast of this country", Samuel lauded in the great Congo debate in May 1903, "not only that our own native subjects were governed on principles of justice, but that, ever since the days of Wilberforce, England had been the leader in all movements on behalf of the backward races of the earth".[190]

Nonetheless, in consideration of Britain's broad support for Léopold's colonial movement in the late 19th century, the Congo Scandal was often described as a heavy assault on British national dignity and honour, as the previous chapter has shown. Through its complicity in the Congo atrocities, the British nation was faced "with a crisis in its moral history", secular and religious Congo opponents agreed.[191] However, reformers attempted to perceive this crisis also as a chance, "an occasion", for the British people to "pursue" its "great traditions […] by taking the initiative in this matter", as Samuel emphasised. "[S]aving the races of Central Africa" by taking the lead of the movement for Congo reform was Britain's destiny, Morel asserted, the "plain and

186 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 199 ('hands', 'occasional', 'exhibit'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 85 ('isolated'); 86 ('failed'); see Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 41.

187 Conrad to Casement, 21 December 1903, reproduced in Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 70 ('amenities', 'nothing'); Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 41 ('ghastliest').

188 Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 126 ('greatest'); see speech of Doyle, quoted in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 22. The notion of Doyle was frequently reproduced by Congo reformers, see, for instance, the remarks of Dr Clifford at the Protestant demonstration in the Royal Albert Hall 1909, reproduced in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8.

189 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 181 ('dignity'), 200 ('glorious', 'Clarkson'); Morel, *Great Britain*, 5 ('liberating', 'heritage'); Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 44 ('antislavery').

190 Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here cc 1299–1300 ('boast'); see Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity".

191 Morel, *Great Britain*, 4 ('crisis'); see 'The Congo', *The Times*, 12 July 1909, 4; chapter 5.2.

simple duty" of a chosen people: "Can we fail to see the finger of God pointing out to us the path we are called upon to tread"?[192]

Religiously charged nationalism was also apparent at public protests in Britain. "God had given Englishmen a world-empire", the Chairman of an anti-Congo demonstration in Banbury argued, since the British people possessed special "powers of organisation and principles of emancipation". These powers could now be turned towards the suffering Congolese, he suggested.[193] To the irritation of some secular reformers, the Protestant stream of the reform movement particularly emphasised the centrality of Christian faith and Christian morality for these emancipative traditions of the British nation and empire. In a national manifesto, British church dignitaries and Nonconformists stressed that it was "especially in the minds" of those "guided by the principles of the Gospel of the Lord Jesu Christ" that objections against the "dishonour" of the Congo Scandal would evolve. Hence, it was mainly the members of the Christian churches who held the power to abolish the Free State system, it was argued; they were defined as the world's true moral conscience and could point 'civilisation' towards the right path to return. If they "speak out", the political leaders of the world "must need listen, and the best instincts of every civilized country will respond".[194] Moreover, evangelical activists such as John Harris used the silence and complicity of Catholics to emphasise that "the honour of having on the spot saved the Congo natives from extirpation" and of generally opposing "any form of oppression" belong to "one section of the Christian Church" in particular: "The colossal crime of the Congo was exposed on the spot almost entirely by the Protestant missionaries". At the same time, Harris did not hesitate to suggest "that the Almighty had the Anglo-Saxon race in view […] when He gave Moses the ten commandments on Sinai's mountain".[195]

Pleas to Protestant conscience and national or Anglo-Saxon pride went hand in hand among evangelical Congo reformers. Religious leaders protesting against the Congo Scandal agreed that the "greatest by far of British interests is the maintenance of the moral force of the nation". The 9,000 representatives of the Protestant missionary and church organisation assembled in Royal Albert Hall in November of 1909 began their Congo protest "with the signing of a hymn beginning 'O God, our help in ages past'" as the *Times* wrote, the large assembly only dispersed after "the National Anthem had been sung".[196]

Moreover, the frameworks of Protestantism and particularly Anglo-Saxonism allowed the inclusion of the American reformers into the imagined community to which these reformers appealed. The definition of the Anglo-Saxons as the paramount subgroup of the 'white race' and foremost actor of European civilisation became increas-

192 Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1300 ('occasion', pursue', 'traditions'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 200 ('saving', etc.)

193 Rev Spendlove, quoted in 'The Congo Reform Association', *Banbury Guardian*, 22 November 1906, 7.

194 'The Congo', *The Times*, 12 July 1909, 4.

195 Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 124 ('Almighty'), 265 ('colossal').

196 'The Congo', *The Times*, 12 July 1909, 4 ('greatest'); 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8 ('singing', 'Anthem'). "Britons awake", a Congo hymn that was intonated in churches and town halls throughout the country commenced in a typical combination of evangelical fervour and nationalist appellation, see Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 67–68. For more details, see below.

ingly popular in the latter half of the 19th century among British and American intellectuals, in a time when notions of 'race' and 'nation' gradually became synchronised. With Dilke, the Radical Liberal and committee member of the Aborigines' Protection Society, an important mentor of the political imagination of a legitimated global Anglo-American dominance based on an alleged racial 'superiority' of the Anglo-Saxon was a pioneer of the British reform movement.[197] Likewise, Jordan, the president of Stanford University who became vice president of the American reform association, was one of the most important figures in the eugenics movement of his day and an outspoken advocate of Anglo-Saxon superiority, which he attempted to safeguard through his concerns for the 'blood' of the American nation.[198]

Both American and British Congo opponents expressed their view that past abolitionist traditions, contemporary humanitarian empathy and the ability of 'just' rule of the 'dark races' were British as well as 'Anglo-Saxon' virtues.[199] In a speech in London, the American missionary Morrison articulated his "hope that England and the United States would ever be found the foremost advocates of justice and freedom throughout the world, and would unitedly seek to advance the cause of righteousness and of civilization". According to Morel's biographer, the potential of an appeal to a common Anglo-Saxon 'identity', described as the primary global agents of justice, was one of the main reasons for the British reformers' preferences for alliances in the United States to those on the European Continent. Indeed, Morel finished his first major Congo book with the expectation that the "Anglo-Saxon race", hence the "Governments and the Peoples of Great Britain and the United States", would "make up their minds" to handle the Congo's outrage, and "point a way and set an example" that others would then follow.[200]

These examples can be interpreted as an attempt to offer identification with a strong racial-national 'we' as a resort to parts of the crisis of racist societalisation that has been described in the previous chapter. The deterioration of racist symbolic capital emerging from the affiliation with universal communities of 'civilisation' and 'whiteness', hence the 'ethnic shame' that was part of the Congo Scandal, were met with strong appeals to national honour, religious chosenness and 'racial' pride. The reformers not only suggested the existence of a once-'healthy body' of European imperialism delimited from the Congo Scandal but also maintained the idea that this political organism had a British, Protestant and Anglo-Saxon 'heart'. However, the already mentioned medical metaphoric indicated that the Congolese 'disease' or 'cancer' threatened this healthy imperialism and the heart of civilisation it represented. The Free State system was described as "infectious", a "virus" and as spreading hazard that "pollutes" the surrounding

197 For the rise of Anglo-Saxonism and Dilke's significance, see Lorimer, *Race Relations and Resistance*, 27.

198 Starr Jordan opposed imperialism and warfare precisely because they promoted the 'survival of the unfit', as he claimed, since only the most devoted and fit men tended to sacrifice their lives in these causes, see Jordan, *Imperial Democracy*; David S. Jordan, *The Blood of the Nation* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1902).

199 See Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 106; George White: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1856.

200 Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 49 ('foremost'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 372 ('Anglo-Saxon race', etc.); see Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 45.

empires and imperial societies.[201] "Let it be remembered that in the heart of Africa, vitally affecting the welfare of all the surrounding portions of the continent which are in present or prospective occupation by the European Powers is a poisonous growth of spurious 'civilisation' which contaminates and more than threatens overwhelming injury to all its neighbours", the veteran humanitarian Bourne dramatically warned.[202]

'Cutting out the parent growth': saving 'civilisation' through 'purification'

Furthermore, the disease-metaphor implied that it was possible to identify certain inimical elements, quasi-'germ' cells of the Congolese malady. In this aspect, the motif revealed its eugenic dimension. Chapter 3.3 has already discussed in detail how widespread stereotypes about the inherent violence of the soldiers of the Free State, driven by murderous 'racial' and 'savage' instincts and unrestrained by morality and culture to murderous violence, declared Africans to the 'actual' perpetrators of the Congolese atrocities. Still, the reformers admitted that there was also wilful, purposeful and excessive violence by Europeans in the Congo. At least partially, these disturbing acts of atrocities by 'white' and 'civilised' agents were explained by recourse to the myth of an allegedly morally degenerative influence of the 'dark' and 'savage' Congolese space and sprit upon the minds of European colonisers already present in Stanley's foundational Congo literature. In this way, even torture and murder by a European agent could be defined as an essentially African crime, and the corroded frontiers between 'civilisation' and 'barbarism' could be re-established.[203]

At the same time, as the following pages show, the reformers turned, in the manner of the eugenic thinking of their days, their attention to the integrity of the community of colonial 'whiteness' established in the Congo and speculated about the limited worth and type of the colonisers Léopold sent. In this speculation, the reformers reveal the strong impact of national chauvinism and class contempt. This applied not only to critics who had worked in the Free State, as the remarks of Canisius in the previous chapter have shown, but also to prominent reform activists in Europe and the United States. The exceptionally high ratio of lower- and working-class recruits among the colonial elite in the Congo, "driven to serve […] by the whips of failure, poverty, or crime", as Richard Harding Davis asserted,[204] became a prominent topic for scornful remarks in critical Congo publications.

Morel would, in retrospect, still claim to remember his "involuntary shudder of repulsion" when, during a visit to Belgium, he observed a group of men waiting to be shipped to the distant colony in Central Africa: "Young mostly, and mostly of a poor type, undersized, pallid, wastrels. Some shaking with sobs: others stumbling in semi-intoxication". This mixture of negative physical (shortness and pallor) and social shortcomings (youth, fear and alcoholism) and eugenic classifications ('poor type' and 'wastrels') in the

201 Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 21; Morel, *British Case*, 8 (both 'infectious'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 213 ('pollutes'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 101 ('virus').

202 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 302–3.

203 See Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 23; chapter 3.3.

204 Davis, *The Congo*, 112 ('whips'). Davis, however, still preferred these "soldiers of fortune" to "the truly rich" behind the Free State, ibid., 113.

description of Free State agents was already fully developed in Morel's main work *Red Rubber*. Here, he described the civil servants in the Congo as "ill-bred" and composed of the "déclassé, the failures, the off-scourings of Europe", while the army corps consisted of "blackguards", the "riff-raff of European armies, the 'lost souls'".[205]

At the same time, particularly those reformers who actively fought against the Belgian annexation as a potential political remedy to the crisis of white supremacy in the Congo vigorously emphasised that the transformation of the once-international colony, which had steadily increased the ratio of Belgian nationals in military and civil administration, the church and the economic sector, had made the crimes of the Congo essentially a Belgian crime. "They cannot disassociate themselves from this work or pretend that it was done by a separate State", Doyle stressed: "It was done by a Belgian King, Belgian soldiers, Belgian financiers, Belgian lawyers, Belgian capital, and was endorsed and defended by Belgian governments". Morel had declared in 1902 that the Free State was the "Belgian Curse in Central Africa".[206]

In this way, the European offenders of the shameful violence in the Congo were relegated to the social and national margins of the 'civilised' and 'white' community. Furthermore, a direct correlation between the social and national composition of the colonial master class in the Congo and its atrocious outrages was suggested, and at times openly asserted. The colonial agents that Morel and other reformers described were quite obviously not the proud representatives of the superior 'race' and 'culture' that had enlivened the Victorian imperial imagination. For the leader of the British reform movement, they were also men "of whose fitness for residing and governing in tropical Africa even a novice would have doubts". The 'unfitness' of the lower- and working-class agents for colonial mastery became a recurrent theme. Missionaries such as Grenfell and Harris doubted that "the type of official on the Congo" gave any hope for an "enlightened administration" or a "wise and capable" leadership.[207]

For many of the middle- and upper-class reform activists, a low social background was tantamount to a low-grade morality and a tendency towards excesses and violence. The journalist Morel and Doyle, a writer and medical doctor, pointed to the alleged "indifferent" or "low morale" of the deprived recruits, and the Cambridge-educated Second Baronet Charles Dilke asserted that the average low-ranking agents were "the very last kind of persons likely to deal tenderly with the natives in newly occupied countries".[208] The university president and head of the American reform association G. Stanley Hall likewise claimed that the "inferior" type of colonisers in the Congo often had "little moral courage", and for his compatriot Canisius, "low birth and instincts" were intrinsically related. For some better-off Europeans, as a remark of the prominent traveller

205 Morel, "History of the Congo Reform Movement", 27 ('involuntary', 'young'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 126 ('blackguards', 'riff-raff'), 127 ('ill-bred', 'déclassé').

206 Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 123 ('Belgian King'); Morel, "Belgian Curse", title ('Belgian Curse').

207 Morel, "History of the Congo Reform Movement", 27 ('fitness'); Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 300 ('type', 'enlightened'); Private letter of George Grenfell, 29 December 1902, reproduced in Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 480–482, here 482 ('wise').

208 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 96 ('indifferent'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 23 ('low'); Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 42 ('last kind').

Grogan reveals, the Congo had simply become a "happy hunting-ground for a pack of unprincipled outcasts and untutored scoundrels".[209]

Moreover, the particular class composition of the Congo colonisers was at times directly correlated with the vilification of Belgians. The "quality of men sent by King Leopold, […] is far inferior to those sent by England", Hall claimed and referred to the experience of Canisius. The former Free State and trading agent suggested that, in contrast to the imperial courage of Anglo-Saxon elites, only a few Belgians "of the better class" had been willing "to risk health and renounce the luxuries of European life in order to promote the civilization of the jungle". Belgians, Canisius scornfully claimed, were generally of a "selfish and cowardly character". Moreover, the "happy genius which demands just dealing with the aborigines", which allegedly few English colonisers lacked, was "utterly wanting in the Belgians even of the better class", he added.[210] "I at once noted the great inferiority of the Belgians in every way to the English or Anglo-Saxons", the missionary Morrison wrote in similar tone about a stop in Antwerp on his way towards the Congo.[211]

Over the years, Morel's and Doyle's special antipathy against Belgium became particularly pronounced.[212] The two men related the alleged lack of imperial fervour and 'class' among the Belgian recruits to a deficiency in the national character of a minor nation without any imperial tradition. Morel doubted that "so small a people" would be able to solve the large problems at stake: "can they apply the remedy? Can they tear the races of Central Africa from that relentless grasp? Are they able to do it? Were they able to do it, could they shoulder the burden […] – a burden heavy, ungrateful, dangerous for so small a people"? Arthur Conan Doyle had a clear answer: "No, it is impossible, and that should be recognized from the outset". He agreed with Morel's assessment of the limited imperial qualities of the Belgian nation: "She could not carry the burden".[213]

Hence, after the identification of the healthy foundation of European civilisation in British nation, Anglo-Saxon race and Protestant religion, the Congolese disease was traced back to national and social elements at the margins of the racist imagined community declared 'unfit' to represent 'superior' European civilisation and enact Europe's claim to imperial power over 'Darkest Africa': "men of inferior character, wholly unsuited to exercise authority over uncivilized peoples". Finally, the medical and eugenics metaphoric led to the demand for surgery on the infected organism, which was, this study maintains, offered as a remedy for the crisis of racist societalisation within the Congo Scandal. "The source of the disease must be dealt with", Morel demanded: "The canker must be rooted out and cast upon the dunghill".[214]

209 Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 669 ('inferior', 'little'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 72 ('low birth'); Grogan and Sharp, *From the Cape to Cairo*, 227–28 ('hunting-ground').

210 Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 669 ('quality'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 73 ('selfish'), 106 ('better', 'risk', 'genius', 'utterly').

211 Letter from Morrison to Mrs. Sterling, 24 February 1897, quoted in Robert Benedetto, *Presbyterian Reformers in Central Africa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 104. Also see Herbert Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here cc 1298–1299; Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 300.

212 See Stengers, "Morel and Belgium", 237–46.

213 Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 123 ('impossible', 'out of question'); see Johnston, *Introductory Chapter*, xi; Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 298.

214 Samuel, "Congo State", 874 ('exercise authority'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 352 ('source', 'cancer').

This cleansing operation had both practical and symbolic dimensions. At first, it aimed at the "speedy disappearance" of the Free State, hence its political elimination, which was, as Morel stated, an "imperative for Africa, and for the world". Additionally, the operation also focused on the removal of the unworthy and contagious elements from the imperial organism. On the one hand, as has repeatedly been suggested, Morel, Doyle, Harris and other reformers fought strenuously against the Belgian annexation of the Free State. "It is out of the question that Belgium should remain on the Congo", or in Africa as a whole, they stated. The opponents of the Belgian solution preferred, in the case of Morel, international governance or, in the case of Doyle and Harris, a partition of territory between France and Germany. Either way, 'inferior' Belgium or Belgians had to be excluded from the collective experience of European imperialism.[215]

On the other hand, reformers called not only for the recruitment of men of "better education and breeding", since the "tendency to misuse" power would become less likely when "men of higher grade" were chosen for colonial service, but they also straightforwardly demanded a social purge. To "break completely with the past", Harris claimed after a visit to Belgian Congo in 1912, would mean "to clean out" the 'unworthy' lower- and working-class sediment within the colonial master class in the Congo. "[T]hese soi disant administrators, […] incapable of appreciating colonial requirements", he suggested, should be sent back to Europe and relegated to their 'rightful' place within the European class society, and should thus "return to their original employments of running music halls, tram driving, breaking stones on the highway, bus conductors, waiters, bricklayers, clerks, and so forth".[216]

Furthermore, while reformers demanded physically removing Belgian and lower-class members from the community of the colonisers, they also challenged the belonging of these inferior and harmful social and national elements to the racist community of Brightest Europe symbolically and categorically. In terming the Belgian colonial corps of officers a "sea of blackness", or referring to Belgian colonial agents as "brute" or "brutes", or in describing King Léopold as 'Vampire', 'cannibal' or 'oriental despot', an affinity between Belgians and the 'dark' Congolese counter-world was suggested, for instance. Belgian 'cruelty', it was asserted, was more related to tales of non-European brutality than to European standards of civilisation. "I have heard and seen much of the callousness of the Chinese", Canisius wrote, "but certainly their indifference to human suffering does not exceed that of the average Congolese Belgian".[217]

Likewise, the notions of moral and physical 'inferiority' or 'ill-breeding' that reformers used to describe lower-class colonists were semantically related to European stereotypes about the Congolese other. Comparisons between the lower classes at home and 'coloured races' and 'savages' were widespread within racist discourse, and not only in

215 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 213 ('speedy', 'imperative'). For the controversy about the 'Belgian solution' as political remedy for the Congo Scandal, see chapter 4.3.

216 Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 221.

217 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 126 ('sea'), 127 ('brutes'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 127 ('brute'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 70 ('callousness'). As chapter 3.3 has shown, indifference to human suffering was a central allegation made of African soldiers and sentries. For reform images that present Léopold textually and visually as a vampire, cannibal or despot, see chapter 3.2.

the modern framework of eugenics.[218] In the reform discourse, the motif of the worrying corrosion of alterity between 'civilisation' and 'savagery' and the 'triumph of the wilderness' over the colonising subjects that had been identified as central to the crisis of racist discourse and representation in the Congo had achieved a distinct class dimension. Lower-class Europeans planted among African 'savagery', it was suggested, had a particularly high risk of 'going native' and of cultural 'degeneration', as Johnston had argued in 1897. "I have been increasingly struck", the former British colonial administrator wrote, "with the rapidity with which such members of the white races as are not the best class, can throw over the restraints of civilization and develop into savages of unbridled lust and abominable cruelty".[219]

Such formulations support the interpretation that some reformers extended the marginalisation of responsibility for the Congolese atrocities into a symbolic externalisation of the 'ethnic shame' and dishonour. The crisis of negative societalisation was resolved through the surgical removal of foul and miasmic elements to overcome the disgrace of 'civilisation' and 'whiteness' triggered by the Congo Scandal. In this way, the moral integrity of the imperial powers, and the imagined communities 'European civilization' and the 'white race', were reinstalled not only through the exclusion of Belgium, as was rightfully maintained,[220] but also the lower and working classes from the collectives they were once chosen to represent in Central Africa. The price, however, was an intensification of the fragmentation of these once-universal categories along confessional, national and class lines.

Disintegrating universalism and the fragmentation of the reform movement

This fragmentation was not a merely discursive phenomenon; it directly affected the social reality of the reform movement. The prominence of social antagonisms such as nationality, class, confession and 'race' within the reform debate led to controversies and animosities, and they eventually challenged the cohesion and mobilisation potential of the campaign.

First, it is reasonable to assume that the strong class contempt of the middle- and upper-class reformers was a main cause for the failure of the reform movement to reach the parties and trade unions representing organised British and American working-class milieus. Ramsay MacDonald, the only prominent Labour politician who joined the executive ranks of the British reform association, similarly believed that failures in (British) imperial policy could be blamed on the thriving practice of entrusting colonial governance to "the most narrow-visioned of our social classes". However, for the promoter of a socialist reformation of imperialism, these were the "sons of the well-to-do" and not workers.[221]

218 See Hund, *Rassismus*, 9.

219 Harry H. Johnston, *British Central Africa* (New York: Edward Arnold, 1897), 68. For the 'corrosion of alterity' and the 'triumph of the wilderness', see chapter 3.2.

220 See Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 51; Bass, "Imperial Alterity", 301.

221 MacDonald, *Labour and the Empire*, 26–27 ('sons'). For the limited working-class affiliation with the Congo reform movement, see chapter 2.3.

Moreover, the strong religious fervour of evangelical Congo opponents had allowed apologists of the Free State "to represent the matter as a contest between rival creeds", as other reformers criticised. Indeed, Roman Catholic missionaries in the Congo and dignitaries in Great Britain and the United States had rarely protested against the treatment of the colonised in the Congo and were among the most active defenders of the Free State against public allegations. Secular reformers such as Morel, Bourne, Doyle and Park, and the American Baptist Barbour, had unsuccessfully attempted to avert this sectarian character of the reform movement.[222]

Protestant Congo opponents, on the other hand, rejected the harsh stance on Belgium and Belgians by Doyle, Morel and other English journalists who "classed together" Belgian officers "as a bloodthirsty, incapable lot". Publicly, they emphasised that it was "not their desire to irritate or exasperate" or "to denounce" the Belgian people. [223] Despite such reassurances, the majority of the Belgian public was inclined to dismiss the reform movement as a campaign based on anti-Belgian sentiment, as apologists frequently claimed. Even the closest Belgian ally of the international reformers, the Socialist Émile Vandervelde, warned that the anti-Belgian rhetoric of writers like Doyle, combined with speculations about a partition of the Congo, threatened to unite Belgians against the foreign criticism. "I cannot refrain from saying that the support given us in England and in the United States would be still more efficacious, and our position in Belgium would be far better if […] things had not been said which could only produce a most unfortunate impression in our country", he concluded an article in the English speaking press.[224]

The British nationalism and Anglo-Saxon pride that were particularly strident in Morel's Congo criticism alienated Belgians but also complicated alliances between British reformers and humanitarians in France and Germany.[225] At the same time, these provoked unease and objections among British and American reformers, as well. A glorification of Britain's abolitionist achievements in the Congo debate was a backhanded compliment, the English primate warned, for instance. After all, England had once almost held "a monopoly in the West African slave trade". In consideration of "that dark and shameful record", any "spirit of self-righteousness […] would be pitifully

222 Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 97 ('admitted', 'unworthy'). Bourne and Morel strongly criticised the evangelical style and tone in Congo protests of the missionary Henry Grattan Guinness, for instance (see further below). Thomas Barbour withheld information about escalating conflicts of the Baptists with Jesuits in the Congo to avoid further religious polarisation (see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 276). Robert Park appealed to the "solidarity of Christendom" as a whole, instead (Park, "The Congo News-Letter", 2). Mark Twain, on the other hand, attempted to escalate Roman Catholic opposition in order to stir up the Protestant majority in the United States (see Hawkins, "Mark Twain's Involvement", 160–61).

223 Private letter of George Grenfell, 29 December 1902, reproduced in Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 481 ('classed together'); The Archbishop of Canterbury [Randall T. Davidson] ('denounce') and Rev. C. Sylvester Horne ('irritate'), both quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8. Also see John Weeks, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Evidence Laid*, 60.

224 Émile Vandervelde, "Belgium and the Reforms of the Congo," *Contemporary Review* 96, July-December (1909): 659 ('refrain'); also see Stengers, "Morel and Belgium", 221–28.

225 See Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 185.

out of place", he cautioned the Protestant Congo opponents assembled in Royal Albert Hall in November of 1909.[226]

While the myth of a just and non-violent British imperialism thrives in historiography until today,[227] the claim that the methods of exploitation in the Free State differed categorically from those in British dependencies had already been rejected by contemporaries, including some with direct insights into British imperial policy. "Ghastly!" Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne internally commented on the Congo affairs in March 1905, for instance: "But I am afraid the Belgians will get hold of the stories as to the way the natives have apparently been treated by men of our race in Australia". In 1908, the Colonial Office concluded that one "might say that there is no atrocity in the Congo – except mutilation – which cannot be matched in our [East African] Protectorate".[228]

Prominent Congo opponents were sceptical, as well. Conrad rejected the rise of nationalism in Europe in general and in the reform movement in particular. "[I]n the old days England had in her keeping the conscience of Europe", he was ready to accept. "But now I suppose we are busy with other things" like business interests instead of "humanity, decency and justice", the novelist wrote to his friend Casement.[229]

Casement similarly rejected any claim that "England and America are the two great humanitarian powers" as unsustainable. He was increasingly estranged by the "God-is-a-British-God style" of evangelical activists such as John Harris and the rising nationalism of Morel. "British honour, so far as I am concerned, disappeared from our horizon in Ireland more than a century ago", Casement wrote to his once-close friend in 1909.[230] In retrospect, Casement claimed that it had been the "the image of my poor old country" that had come to his eyes first when he had seen colonial violence in the Congo. "The whole thing had been done once to her – down to every detail", Casement emphasised in reference to the long and violent history of British rule over the Irish island. For the Ulster-born Casement, his Congolese experience in 1903 had been tantamount to an awakening of national consciousness. In "those lonely Congo forests, where I found Leopold, I found myself also, the incorrigible Irishman", he famously noted.[231]

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226 The Archbishop of Canterbury [Randall T. Davidson], quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8.

227 See Wagner, "Savage Warfare", 218.

228 Minute of Lansdowne, March 1905 and minute of the Colonial Office, April 1908, both quoted in Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 185.

229 Conrad to Casement, 21 December 1903, reproduced in Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 70 ('old days', 'now'); also see Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 73–74. In 'Heart of Darkness', first published in 1898, Conrad still referred positively to British rule, see Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 10.

230 Casement to Morel, quoted in Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 269 ('great humanitarian powers'); Casement, quoted in Porter, "Sir Roger Casement", 68–69 ('God-is-a-British-God'); Casement to Morel, 29 May 1909, quoted in Porter, "Sir Roger Casement", 68 ('British honour').

231 Casement to Alice Stopford Green, 24 February 1905, quoted in Angus Mitchell, *Roger Casement* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2013), 98 ('poor country', 'whole thing'); Casement to Alice Stopford Green, 20 April 1906, quoted in A[ndrew] N. Wilson, *After the Victorians* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 108 ('lonely'). For Casement's activism for Irish independence that eventually brought him to the ballot, see Mitchell, *Roger Casement*, 173–350.

As an Irishman, his perception of the Congolese atrocities was necessarily different from that of his English friends, and Casement became convinced since he "was looking with the eyes of another race – of a people once hunted themselves". Casement's reaction to the shameful Congo Scandal was as unusual as it was radical. The once-proud representative of the British Empire, who had been "on the high road to being a regular imperialist jingo", as he confessed,[232] became highly critical of British imperialism and fundamentally re-imagined his political identity, altered from 'coloniser' to 'colonised'. Subverting the imagined community of 'civilisation' or 'whiteness' that allegedly bound together Ireland and England was the community of fate between the colonised people of Africa and the Americas and the Irish people, whom, after his second major humanitarian inquiry in the Putumayo region of Peru in 1910, Casement began to call the "Irish Putumayo", the "White Indians of Ireland", or "the white slave race of European people".[233]

In the United States, the idea of a 'healthy' and 'just' American or Anglo-Saxon tradition of imperialism was even more controversial. After all, the American Congo Reform Association had been heavily influenced by the Anti-Imperialist League, founded in June 1898 in opposition to the aggressive expansionism of the McKinley era, initiated by the American-Spanish War and the annexation of the Philippines. Reports about atrocities of American soldiers and the high death toll in the Philippine independence movement in 1899–1902 had "banished illusions" that the imperial expansion of the United States would be exceptionally humane, American anti-Imperialists felt. Instead, they had shown "what tyrannic instincts can lurk in democratic breast".[234] Moreover, in the simultaneously occurring Second Boer War, many American anti-imperialists – like Irish nationalists – had deeply sympathised with the fate of the Boer states in South Africa, whom they stylised as an innocent people that fell victim to British imperial oppression. For the pro-Boer activists, Anglo-Saxonism was more related to the "lust of power and greed" that fuelled the violent expansionism in Great Britain and the United States than to humanitarianism. Consequently, these anti-imperialists believed that their struggle against the imperial turn of American foreign policy was also a "struggle against the swelling pride of Anglo-Saxon self-consciousness" in the United States.[235] In these milieus, Morel's appeals to British and Anglo-Saxon pride likely further hindered

232 Casement, quoted in Wilson, *After the Victorians*, 107 ('jingo'), 108 ('eyes').

233 Roger Casement, "This Irish Putumayo," Letter to the Editor, *Irish Independent*, 20 April 1913, 5 ('Putamayo)'; personal notes of Casement, quoted in Séamas Ó Síocháin, *Roger Casement* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2008), 356 ('White Indians'); Casement to John J. Horgan, 16 February 1914, quoted in Wilson, *After the Victorians*, 108 ('white slave race'). For Casement's Putumayo-experience, see Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 122–43.

234 William L. Garrison, in Anti-Imperialist League, *Report of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League* (Boston: The Anti-Imperialist League, 1904), 20–23, here 21 ('banished', 'tyrannic'). Also see 'The Report of the Secretary', reproduced in Anti-Imperialist League, *Report of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League* (Boston: The Anti-Imperialist League, 1905), 3–15, here 13. For the emergence of American anti-imperialism, see Cullinane, *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism*, 11–50 in particular.

235 Garrison, reproduced in Anti-Imperialist League, *Sixth Annual Meeting*, 20 ('lust', 'struggle'). On the Boer-campaign of the League, see Cullinane, "Transatlantic Dimensions", 303–6.

the formation of transatlantic alliances rather than facilitating them. Indeed, in consideration of the strong influence of Anglophobe anti-imperialists in the American Congo Reform Association, its editorial secretary Park felt particularly obliged to emphasise its independence from the British counterpart.[236]

Moreover, as chapter 2.3 has mentioned, radical Black American commentators were little inclined to understand the Congo Scandal as exceptional, and they emphasised similarities and structural relations between colonial atrocities like those of the Free State and the murderous Jim Crow regime in the American South. Du Bois and, notably, his conservative intellectual antagonist Washington directly connected the atrocities in the Congo to the lynch mobs active in the United States. The "oppression of the colored race in any one part of the world means, sooner or later, the oppression of the same race elsewhere", the latter warned. For both Black American leaders, anti-black violence in the colonies and the United States were based on the same "[r]ace hatred" or the "colour-line", and were thus structurally related.[237]

American government officials, on the other hand, were reluctant to take the lead in the diplomatic pressure on Léopold precisely because they feared greater international attention to their imperial atrocities or domestic racist violence and segregation. That "the United States, whose negroes are burned at the stake […] and whose soldiers have been water-curing Filipinos, should profess to have an anxious concern for the inhumane treatment of the negroes in Africa subject to King Leopold's caprices", the editor of the *Boston Transcript* summarised, "is something to make him laugh. He would be warranted in retorting with pious gravity: 'Physician, heal thyself'".[238]

However, the influence of these critical perspectives on the dominant ideological position of the reform movement remained limited. Previous chapters have shown that 'racial' stereotypes and contempt for 'educated' or 'Europeanised' Africans and African-Americans were rife in the reform discourse. In contrast to the expectations of Black Americans, the disposition of white reformers to extend their Congo activism to a general criticism of 'race relations' or racism in the colonies and the metropole was extremely limited. Moreover, the system of racial segregation implemented in the American South was a role model for the reformed system of imperial governance the segregationist stream of the reform movement promoted.[239]

In 1912, towards the end of the reform campaign, two of its most prominent voices publicly disavowed the thesis of exceptionalism it had long promoted, although at a time

236 See Cullinane, "Transatlantic Dimensions", 308–9; Clay, "Transatlantic Dimensions", 20–21. In the persons of W.T. Stead and John Clifford, the British reform movement was supported by leading anti-war activists. Arthur Conan Doyle, on the other hand, had been one of the most prominent jingoists during the Second Boer War.

237 Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 375 ('oppression'); 'Address of Dr Booker T. Washington', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 260 ('hatred'); Du Bois [draft author], "Nations of the World", 259; Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 19 ('colour-line'). See chapter 2.3 for more information.

238 Editorial of the Boston Herald, 28 September 1904, reproduced in Congo Committee, "Congo News-Letter, September 1904", 3.

239 See chapters 2.3, 3.2 and 4.3.

when both men were no longer members of the organisations. Although the colonisation of the Congo was "[e]xceptional […] in some respects", it was "in other respects typical" for European imperialism, Robert Park expressed in a speech at the Tuskegee Institute: "wherever European civilization has touched Africa it has been on the whole a disintegrating, destructive" effect.[240] John Harris, who left the British reform association after on-going quarrels with Morel, became equally sceptical that the "more progressive" imperial powers "treat the natives better" than the Free State. If so, he asked his readers, "where is the evidence? Does East Africa provide it? Does the treatment of the Herreros and the shooting of British Kaffirs demonstrate it"?[241]

However, for those defending the singularity of the Congo atrocities, violence in other European empires were only indicators of the described infectiousness of the Congolese disease. "So far as other powers are open to evil influences in dealing with native races", Dilke stated, "it is the example of the Kongo Free State that has largely affected them". If methods of the Americans in the Philippines, or the Dutch in Sulawesi and Sumatra, or of Britain, France, Portugal, Germany in Africa at times resembled the Congolese atrocities, it was only because other states tended "to imitate" the notorious Free State system, Johnston claimed. The "mental outlook on colonial enterprise" of other European nations was "poisoned and corroded by the foetid example placed before them". The Congo had become "a forcing house for the propagation of poisonous seeds, seeds which the wind carried hither and thither". Hence, the Congolese 'disease' may have produced offshoots, but "the essential task" of the reform movement remained "cutting out of Africa the parent growth", Morel responded.[242]

Humanitarian activism as racist mass spectacle

Moreover, Morel firmly rejected any claims that British national 'honour' was vanishing or had already been buried. While he quoted at length "admirable sentences" from the public letter Conrad devoted to the reform movement, precisely those pessimistic remarks from the "well-known author" about Britain's moral integrity were edited out. Nonetheless, Morel's strong appeals to nationalist emotions in his grand oeuvre, published in 1906, read like a direct response to the aforementioned objections of Conrad or Casement: "Let us reject with indignant scorn the croaking of the pessimists who tell us that our people have deteriorated and that they have forsworn the ideals of their forebears", Morel demanded: "Let us prove to them that they are wrong! Let us prove to them that the heart of the nation still beats soundly as of yore!"[243] Only three years later, the once-optimistic secretary of the British reform association contentedly remarked that the British "nation has challenged that monstrous" endeavour of King Léopold, as

240 Park, "Cultural Groups", 369.

241 Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 295–96 ('more progressive', etc.)

242 Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 44 ('So far'); Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 475 ('imitate'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 164 ('mental', 'poisoned'); speech of Morel, reproduced in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 28 ('forcing house'); Morel, *British Case*, xiii ('essential task').

243 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 200 ('Let us'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 351 ('admirable'). In the reproduction of the 'Statement of Joseph Conrad' in Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 30, the critical parts were similarly edited out.

he had supposed. The "nation has pledged its honour, its prestige, its reputation that an end shall be made of the rubber slave trade in the Congo" and the "the forces of national consciousness" have shown their humanitarian capacity.[244]

Between 1906 and 1909, the British and American reform campaigns had indeed evolved into mass movements, and, at least in the case of Great Britain, into a "great national movement". In this way, the humanitarian intervention in the early 20th century was turned, like the 'heroic' conquest of 'Darkest Africa' in the late 19th century, into a commodified racist spectacle. Reform publications of world-famous authors such as Doyle were purchased in high numbers, and more polemic publications from Morel or pamphlets issued by the reform association reached a considerable readership, particularly if some of the famous atrocity photographs were included.[245]

The tens of thousands of readers of these various reform publications, like those of earlier imperial travel writings, were not only confronted with a highly stereotypical representation of the Congo and its inhabitants, as previous chapters have shown, but were similarly able to associate themselves with the righteous cause of the heroic Congo reformers saving the allegedly 'voice- and helpless' Congolese victims of atrocities from their African perpetrators, stereotypically described as 'ferocious' and 'cannibalistic savages'. As chapter 3.3 has maintained, the crisis of racist representation within the Congo Scandal was met with the emergence of the position of the 'white and civilised saviour'. Congo reform activists such as Morel and Casement were celebrated as a new type of imperial heroes. The 'humanitarian' stood in the void that was left by the humiliated 'civiliser' and 'conqueror', those icons of the Victorian imperial imagination and popular culture whose reputation had collapsed under the pressure of the Congo Scandal.[246]

In the several hundred public demonstrations organised by Congo reformers in churches and town halls throughout Great Britain and America, and in large venues like Royal Albert Hall in London, hundreds of thousands of visitors encountered these 'heroic' humanitarians.[247] Through these public demonstrations, the final part of this chapter claims, the American and particularly British masses eventually experienced their inclusion in the community of the 'white and civilised saviours' and were (re-)assured of their own moral and cultural superiority, beliefs that had been seriously shattered by the impact of the Congo Scandal.

The most popular among the mass happenings organised by the reform movement were so-called 'atrocity meetings'. In these lectures, the audience was shocked with

244 Morel, *Great Britain*, 5 ('monstrous', 'pledged'), 6 ('forces').

245 Ibid., 13 ('great'). Morel's *Red Rubber*, first published in November 1906, sold 7,500 copies within 6 months. Already in May 1907, a new printing of 10,000 copies, priced at only one shilling, reached the shops; see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 250. Simultaneously, the British reform association sold 10,000 copies of a brochure titled 'The Camera and the Congo Crime', which included 24 atrocity photographs, see Grant, "Limits of Exposure", 76. Doyle's *The Crime of the Congo*, written in August 1909, sold 25,000 copies within a week; see Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 271.

246 See chapters 3.2 and 3.3.

247 The historian Dean Pavlakis has collected evidence of 1,590 Congo meetings in the United Kingdom alone and estimated the overall attendance from 1903 to 1913 as somewhere between 400,000 and 1,100,000; see Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 104–5.

'horror narratives', graphic descriptions of the infamous Congolese carnage, their setting and aftermath, and they were illustrated with larger-than-life projections of photographs through the so-called magic lantern, a limelight projector that had become increasingly popular and technologically sophisticated in late Victorian times.[248]

The first lantern lectures that broached the issue of the Congo Scandal were organised by Guinness, the founder of the Congo Balolo Mission, which had been present in the Congo since 1889. Even before his involvement in the reform movement, which would eventually make him a co-founder and member of the executive committee of the British reform association, the son of a charismatic and famous Irish evangelist had toured Scotland and England with popular lectures on missionary work in the Congo, dedicated to raising funds for his evangelical organisation. "Illustrated by Magnificent Lime-Light Views", as an announcement promised, and promoted under titles such as "Toil and Triumph Among Congo Cannibals", these lectures were racist spectacles that entertained visitors with highly stereotypical representations of 'Darkest Africa'.[249] Guinness styled the Congo as a "savage land, where cannibalism, cruelty, domestic slavery, polygamy, and other vices bound", while assistants projected "beautifully reproduced" slides of Congolese landscapes, villages and "anything but attractive people" on larges screens. Afterwards, the evangelical leader praised the dangerous work of his missionaries, who had committed to "carry the gospel to that country" and to overcome the Congolese vices and 'savagery'. In conclusion, Guinness asked not only for prayers but also "for the practical sympathy of his hearers", and a collection for the Balolo mission would end "a most interesting and enjoyable meeting".[250]

Starting in early 1903, the Congo Scandal found its way into Guinness's by then well-established lectures. Images of Congolese 'savagery' and praises for the imperial civilising mission were increasingly supplemented by references to the persistence of "forced labour" and to the "iniquitous" way in which European administrators treat "these poor folk". Moreover, Guinness began to include photographs of "a burning village" or "natives in chains" to emphasise the gravity of the charges.[251] In November and December of 1903, a recently returned Congo Balolo missionary from the Faroe Islands organised a series of presentations in Edinburgh about the "terrible slavery" he had experienced in the Free State. Daniel J. Danielsen had accompanied Casement on his tour of inquiry and could, to the great sensation of the visitors, project photographs of some victims of mutilations that the consul had interviewed, the atrocity pictures that would profoundly influence the course of the Congo debate. Impressed by the tremendous public response to the talks, Guinness decided to put together a new show that included

248 See ibid., 187.

249 'Public Notes', *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, 10 March 1893, 1 ('Illustrated'); 'Visit of Dr Guinness', *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 6 February 1903, 5 ('Toil'); 'Lecture by Dr Guinness', *Paisley & Renfrewshire Gazette*, 21 March 1903, 3 ('To-Day').

250 'Mission Work on the Congo', *Islington Daily Gazette*, 27 February 1903, 4 ('savage land', 'beautifully', 'anything', 'practical', 'enjoyable'); 'Lecture by Dr Guinness', *Paisley & Renfrewshire Gazette,* 21 March 1903, 3 ('carry').

251 'Visit of Dr Guinness', *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 6 February 1903, 5 ('forced labour', 'iniquitous'); 'Congo Maladministration', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 28 October 1903, 5 ('village', 'chains'). Also see 'Lecture by Dr Guinness', *Paisley & Renfrewshire Gazette*, 21 March 1903, 3.

slides of Danielsen's soon iconic atrocity photographs. While the colonial imagery and religious style persisted, the new lecture put the focus on 'The Reign of Terror in the Congo'.[252]

The new lecture series became a huge popular success. Nonetheless, the strong evangelical atmosphere of the events irritated prominent secular reform activists such as Morel and Bourne, who feared the intimidation of Catholic sentiment and generally favoured a less emotional approach. When the commercial, philanthropic and religious milieus of the British reformers combined their forces in the Congo Reform Association under the leadership of Morel in March of 1904, a more conservative and traditional style of humanitarianism prevailed. In the following two years, the new organisation concentrated on the collection of extensive evidence, the production of documentation and parliamentarian memorials to lobby policy-makers and ministers, instead.[253]

Mass events and the spectacle of atrocity meetings regained importance by 1906, though, after a general disenchantment with the political reservation of the governments in London and Washington captured reformers on both sides of the Atlantic. Religious reform activist in particular, who could resort to a substantial tradition of grass-roots activism and the successful example of the early Guinness lectures, advised against the organisation of the reform associations as elitist pressure groups. Urging them to widen the popular foundation of the movement, they emphasised the importance of arousing public sentiment. "You appeal to the educated classes and politicians", the recently returned Congo Balolo missionary John Harris wrote to Morel in August 1905, "what I want to do is appeal to the popular mind".[254]

About six months later, John and his wife Alice arrived in the United States at the invitation of the American reformers to conduct an extensive tour through 50 cities and smaller towns between January and March of 1906. In more than 150 Congo protest meetings, the two skilled speakers amazed the crowds with dramatically recounted first-hand experiences of Congolese atrocities. Frequently, the outraged audience formed local committees of the reform association on the spot.[255]

Inspired by this great success, the British reform association, still headquartered in Liverpool, began to organise a series of local meetings, as well, and successfully established local auxiliaries in London, as well as in smaller and larger towns in the province. Most importantly, the Harrisses produced a new, standardised lantern lecture now that also included the photographic evidence Alice collected in the Congo. The two alone led about 300 atrocity lectures in and around London between May of 1906 and April of 1907.[256] Moreover, a third set of the lantern lecture was made available for other speakers and was frequently lent by the reform association. Additionally, a commercially produced lantern lecture on 'The Congo Atrocities', based on photographs of Alice

252 'Congo Slaves', *London Daily News*, 27 November 1903, 10 ('terrible'); see Slade, "English Missionaries", 69; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 60–61.

253 See Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 61–62. Grant accounts for 3,000 visitors of the 'Reign of Terror' lecture in Aberdeen, 3,000 in Dundee, 2,000 in Edinburgh and 4,000 in Glasgow, all in early 1904.

254 John Harris to Morel, 19 August 1905, quoted in Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 189 ('You appeal').

255 Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Campaign of Education", 16 ('amazement'); see 'Atrocities in Congo', *New Haven Morning Journal and Courier*, 1 February 1906, 3. See chapter 2.2 for more details.

256 See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 187.

Harris and information from Morel's *Red Rubber*, was issued and distributed by Riley Brothers, which, according to its own account, was then the largest outfitter of magic lanterns in the world. The new sequence of atrocity meetings launched in 1906 played a major role in the transformation of the American and British reform campaign from elitist lobby groups into mass movements.[257]

In terms of style and content, the lantern lectures of Guinness, the Harrisses and Riley Brothers followed a fairly consistent dramaturgy. The strong evangelical influence frequently gave the meetings the character of a religious ceremony. Often set in a religious environment, led and presided over by Nonconformist ministers or church dignitaries, atrocity lectures started with prayers and Bible readings and concluded with the Benediction. Proudly, the audience intoned missionary hymns such as 'Forward Christian Soldier' or Reginald Heber's 'From Greenland's Icy Mountain', the most famous chant in this genre. These hymns loudly demanded the continuing dispersal of Christian 'light' towards the 'darkness' of the non-European world through the missionary movement.[258] "The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone", it was intoned at the beginning of lectures of Guinness, Harris and other religious Congo demonstrations: "Shall we, whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high, Shall we to those benighted the lamp of life deny?"[259]

Hence, as early as its ceremonial opening, these mass events were set in the racist context of the 'civilising mission'-narrative. In the following lectures, the account of atrocities was certainly the dramatic climax; however, it was neither the sole nor the predominant part. Likewise, the slides shown were also "not devoted to that phase of Congo life entirely", as has been noted. In the first part of the shows, lecturers held the crowd "spellbound" with eloquent descriptions of the Congo as a wealthy but 'savage' country illustrated with projected maps and geographic fact sheets. "Let them not think that the Congo was a paradise before the Belgians went there", said the speaker of a lantern lecture in Cheltenham. "On the contrary, it was a land of darkness". More "cinematograph pictures depicting the daily life in the Congo" before the advent of European rule followed and showed the brutalities of the slave trade or an alleged "Entrance to a cannibal village", thus emphasising the persistence of 'Arab'-slavery and 'African savagery' as two pivotal motifs that had been used to legitimise the imperial intervention of the 1870s. Photographs of the iconic Stanley accompanied a recounting of his 'heroic conquest', and the audience was reminded of the economic and philanthropic promises of Léopold and the Berlin Congo conference.[260]

257 Riley Brothers, *The Congo Atrocities* (Bradford, 1907). List and titles of slides retrieved from Lucerna – the Magic Lantern Web Resource, http://lucerna.exeter.ac.uk/set/index-slide.php?language=EN&id=3001743; see Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 187.

258 See 'The Congo Horrors', *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*, 19 October 1907, 8.

259 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains', reproduced in Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 386. The hymn was sung in lectures by Harris, but also at the Royal Albert Hall demonstration, for instance; see 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8. It was also part of Guinness' early Congo lectures, see 'Mission Work on the Congo', *Islington Daily Gazette*, 27 February 1903, 4; 'Visit of Dr Guinness', *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 6 February 1903, 5.

260 Reports on lectures of Rev. J. R. M. Stephens, Congo missionary of the Baptist missionary society, 'The Congo Atrocities', *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 23 November 1907, 8 ('paradise'); 'The Congo Atroci-

Hence, even before the actual part on the infamous Congo Scandal began, the crowds at the atrocity meetings were offered an entertaining colonial spectacle. Fascinated by Harris's slides of a journey on the missionary steamer Livingstone, for instance, the spectators were probably, like the audience of one of Guinness's early lectures, travelling "in imagination from one Mission Centre to the another". Like the Congo exhibitions or adventurous travel literature of the late 19th century, the narrative and images at the mass events organised by the reform movement "brought home to the audience" a highly stereotypical image of the Congo and allowed fascinated visitors to identify with the 'noble civilising work' of their compatriots.[261]

Afterwards, in the middle of usually one-hour-long lectures, the attention was turned towards the betrayal of this allegedly heroic and philanthropic legacy of colonisation through the Free State, and the 'horror narratives' began. The main speaker would draw a "vivid picture" of the infamous Congolese atrocities, such as the cutting off of hands, the whipping with the chicotte or alleged instances of cannibalism by Free State soldiers. Both 'savage perpetrators' and 'helpless victims' were projected onto the screens. Slides claimed to show "savage" sentries and "Cannibal Soldiers" but included also images of "women hostages" and the now world-famous photographs of mutilated boys and girls or depicted limbs.[262] The impression of these graphic (verbal and visual) accounts was dramatic on the audiences. How "immensely effective" the slides of mutilated bodies had been in exciting the masses was already emphasised by Guinness personally, and journalists praised his sensational projections of Congolese "with one or the other of the hands missing" as "views admirable in the extreme".[263] Likewise, at the lectures of John Harris, "the excitement was much intensified when the pictures were thrown upon the curtain"; the photographs that were of "a revolting nature" but "greatly moved the audiences", as it was noted.[264]

Finally, after illustrating the imperial 'promises' once made by Léopold, Stanley and the Free State, and their 'betrayal' through the Congo Scandal, the atrocity meetings concluded with the disclosure of a path to redemption for the suffering colonised population and for the masses in the metropole, as well.[265] Unsurprisingly, considering the

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ties', *Coventry Herald*, 18 October 1907, 4 ('cinematograph'); Riley Brothers, *Congo Atrocities*, slide 9 ('Entrance'). Also see slide 10–11 and the report on a lecture of Guinness, 'Congo Reign of Terror', *Preston Herald*, 30 March 1904, 4.

261 Report on a lecture of Guinness, 'Mission Work on the Congo', *Islington Daily Gazette*, 27 February 1903, 4 ('imagination'); Report on a lecture of Rev. J. R. M. Stephens, 'The Congo Atrocities', *Coventry Herald*, 18 October 1907, 4 ('brought home'); see reports on lectures of John Harris, 'The Congo Atrocities', *Banbury Advertiser*, 22 November 1906, 7; 'The Congo Reform Association', *Banbury Guardian*, 22 November 1906, 7.

262 Report on a lecture of Guinness, 'Congo Reign of Terror', *Preston Herald*, 30 March 1904, 4 ('vivid'); Riley Brothers, *Congo Atrocities*, slide 14 ('cannibal'), 15 ('savage'), 21 ('hostages'), 34, 36, 40, 41 (mutilated), 29, 38 (limbs).

263 Guinness to Morel, quoted in Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 61 ('immensely'); Report on a lecture of Guinness, 'Congo Reign of Terror', *Preston Herald*, 30 March 1904, 4 ('missing', 'admirable'.)

264 Reports on lectures of John Harris, 'The Congo Horrors', *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*, 19 October 1907, 8 ('excitement'); 'The Congo Reform Association', *Banbury Guardian*, 22 November 1906, 7 ('revolting', 'moved').

265 Grant has convincingly shown how the reformer's atrocity lectures were framed by the evangelical narrative of "promise, betrayal, redemption"; Grant, "Christian Critics", 42.

strong Protestant influence in the design and organisation of lantern lectures, significant emphasis was put on the importance of Christian conversion. Guinness's early critical Congo lectures had presented the practical support of his own missionary organisation as the appropriate response to African 'savagery' and European atrocities.[266] With the pressure of Bourne and Morel, it was later announced in Guinness' 'Reign of Terror' lectures that the meetings "were not connected with anything definitely religious"; however, the leader of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union only reluctantly softened the evangelical style and tone of his lectures.[267]

Moreover, in Riley's set, it was still proclaimed with utter conviction that "amid all these tales of darkness there is just one ray of light": the Protestant missionaries. While a photograph of John Harris was projected on the screens, the speaker urged the establishment of more Protestant mission stations in the Congo.[268] As was scheduled in this commercial set, in his own lectures, John Harris would show slides about the daily life of missionaries and 'natives' in the Congo to emphasise how "wonderfully responsive" the latter were to the fair treatment of the evangelicals. In general, the religious framing of John Harris's Congo meetings and the accompanying appeals to "Christian love" and "Christian sympathy" revitalised the evangelical impetus of Guinness' early lectures. The last pictures in a Harris lecture showed photographs of the missionary-explorer David Livingstone and eventually the devoted leader of the British reform association Morel, whom Harris "described as one of the greatest emancipators of the Congo, and one of the greatest humanitarians who ever lived". This combination not only related the contemporary humanitarian activists to the admired icon of Britain's glorious imperial past but also emphasised Harris' conviction that Christian conversion and political reforms had to go hand in hand.[269]

Most importantly, however, the mass spectacle organised by the reform movement culminated in the symbolic inclusion of the masses. The joint prayers and the communal singing of evangelical hymns transcended the barrier between speaker and audience at the Congo protest, but the participation of the audience was particularly promoted in other parts, as well. After the notorious atrocity pictures had been displayed, the accompanying script of the Riley lecture advised appealing directly to the crowd. "Are the Churches of Christ to remain silent?" the speaker should ask. "Will the heart of the civilisation remain unmoved? Surely not".[270] Indeed, talks of John Harris were "fre-

266 See, for instance, 'Missionary Meeting at the Colston Hall', *Western Daily Press*, 25 November 1903, 9.

267 Report on a lecture of Guinness, 'Reign of Terror', *Preston Herald*, 30 March 1904, 4.

268 Accompanying script to Riley Brothers' "Congo Atrocities" lecture, quoted in Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 68. Also see report on a lecture of Rev. J. R. M. Stephens, 'The Congo Atrocities', *Coventry Herald*, 18 October 1907, 4.

269 Reports on lectures of John Harris, 'The Congo Atrocities', *Banbury Advertiser*, 22 November 1906, 7 ('wonderfully responsive', 'described'); 'The Congo Horrors', *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*, 19 October 1907, 8 ('love', 'sympathy'). Also see 'The Congo Atrocities', *Banbury Advertiser*, 22 November 1906, 7.

270 Accompanying script to Riley Brothers' "Congo Atrocities" lecture, quoted in Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 68.

quently punctuated with cries of 'Shame!'", as an observer reported.[271] Collective moans, cries, and sobs intensified a ritualistic experience of the atrocity meetings. Humanitarian protest and evangelical ritual were completely merged in the singing of so-called Congo hymns, which were composed for the reform movement. "Britons awake", one of these demanded, "let righteous ire, kindle within your soul a fire, let indignations sacred flame, burn for the Congo's wrongs and shame".[272]

The call to the soul of the audience and the collective intonation of hymns point to the performative character of these humanitarian protests. Within the entertaining, imaginative tour through the Congolese 'darkness', the revolting but fascinating exposure of the shameful Congo atrocities and promising outlines of a path to redemption, the collectively experienced emotional outrage, and the enflamed indignation of the audience, assured the assembled men and women of their full membership in the community of the saviours at the 'heart of civilisation'. This discursive manoeuvre was most clearly revealed by one of the largest Congo protests, the Protestant demonstration in November of 1909 that brought, as was previously mentioned, thousands of Congo opponents to the packed Royal Albert Hall. In a well-orchestrated choreography, the Archbishop of Canterbury delivered his speech around five projected tableaus that stood for the crucial episodes in Congo history. The first picture recalled the great task of Cameron's and Stanley's "unveiling" of the gigantic land "practically unknown" but with "varied wealth", and the colonial "enthusiasm", "praises", "hopes" and "buoyant optimism" that "Stanley everywhere inspired". The second picture showed the German Chancellor's Palace in Berlin 1884, to remind audience members of the humanitarian pledges of the Berlin Convention, and Great Britain's and America's role in recognising Léopold's colonial endeavour. The third picture was the delegation of the London Lord Mayor to Brussels in May of 1885, which celebrated the "enlightened, philanthropic, and disinterested efforts" of Léopold. The fourth picture showed the Congo Free State as it was perceived after "hideous outrages" have been exposed. Finally, the last picture was dramatically revealed: "It is the Albert Hall to-night". The Archbishop drew a direct line from the heroic and promising days of Congo colonialism to the assembled Congo opponents.[273] Similarly, the Bishop of Oxford, who spoke afterwards, "believed that the recital and memory of their meeting that night would go far to awaken in England that old chivalry for righteousness and justice". This audience's dedication to saving the 'helpless victims' in the Congo from their 'savage perpetrators' was the true heir and reincarnation of Britain's heroic and just imperial legacy, it was suggested.[274]

Like Stanley's Congolese quests in the romantic age of exploration, imperial humanitarianism in the early 20th century was culturally enhanced and made a collective social experience. The commodification of humanitarian activism through Congo reform literature and photography, and particularly through the atrocity lectures, allowed the popularisation of the saviour stereotype that the Congo reform discourse had

271 Report on a lecture of John Harris, 'The Congo Horrors', *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*, 19 October 1907, 8 ('Shame').

272 Congo hymn, reproduced in Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 67–68.

273 The Archbishop of Canterbury [Randall T. Davidson], quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8.

274 The Bishop of Oxford [Francis Paget], quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8.

generated. The third pillar completing the dramatic triangle of racist humanitarianism discursively reinstated the boundaries between European 'civilisation' and African 'savagery' and reinstalled the former in symbolic dominance over the latter. On the strength of the atrocity lectures, the reformers were able to open this position of humanitarian 'whiteness' to broad spheres of society and offer a remedy for the burden of 'ethnic shame' that the Congo Scandal had unloaded upon the masses in the imperial metropole. For only a small entrance fee or donation, hundreds of thousands of visitors were admitted to a multimedia-based racist spectacle, and those who had become alienated from their imperial boyhood idols and disillusioned by the undoing of colonial heroism in the Congo could encounter the celebrated humanitarian as a new type of imperial hero, to be admired without remorse.

Most importantly, the visitors participated in a protest ritual that performatively accomplished their inclusion in the group of the white and civilised saviours. Next to brave individual leaders, in particular Morel, the general 'public' became the second – a collective – protagonist of this narrative of imperial heroism. "Public opinion has been the real author of the change in Congo administration", a Christian newspaper asserted, although, as it was added, it was Morel who had "done more than any other man to create that public opinion".[275] Empowered to save the distant Congolese from 'the greatest crime of all history', and symbolically elevated to a position of moral righteousness, for Europeans and Americans, the imperial gaze towards the Congo once more became a source of 'mass honour', a racist symbolic capital generated not only in demarcation of the African other but also of the 'spurious' part of European civilisation that was represented by the Congolese malady.

Proudly, the Bishop of Winchester announced at the public ceremony in honour of Morel in May of 1911 that opened this study, the reform campaign became "one of those achievements which become part of our permanent moral capital". Relieved of his feelings "of shame and remorse" related to the Congo Scandal, Lord Cromer, who presided over the hundreds of notable guests in the London Metropole Hotel, confessed that now that he could "look with sympathy on the endeavours which have been made to overcome it", and he was once more "proud of European civilisation". A fundamental achievement of the reform movement was, such formulations reveal, the redemption of the discursive and political as well as the social crisis of racism that had unsettled the imperial public. Among the many speeches and greetings, the words of Arthur Conon Doyle were particularly intriguing. Like many others, the famous author was convinced that Morel and the Congo reform movement has served the interest of the Congolese, but he insisted that Morel and the "little band of humanitarians" who had helped him – the first great international human rights movement of the 20th century – "has served others as well". The Congo reform movement "has restored to many of us those beliefs which we should desire to have"; Doyle emphasised, precisely the belief in the cultural superiority of imagined communities, which included aspects such as progressiveness, civilisation, Christianity or the 'white race', which had been shattered by the moral burden of the Congo Scandal. "Therefore", Doyle concluded, "I say, that in restoring our

275 'The Hero of Congo Reform', *Christian World*, 1 June 1911, reproduced in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 45 ('real', 'more'); see chapter 3.3.

faith in the race to which we belong, he has served us as truly as he has served the down-trodden races of the Congo".[276]

276 Speech of the Bishop of Winchester, reproduced in ibid., 5 ('moral capital'); speech of Lord Cromer, reproduced in ibid., 6–7 ('sympathy', 'proud'); speech of Doyle, reproduced in ibid., 22 ('appealed', etc.).