

THESIS

RHETORICS OF DISGUST AND LOVE IN THE BELGIAN
COLONIZATION OF THE CONGO

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2010

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

April 30, 2010

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY KARYN ELAINE KISER ENTITLED RHETORICS OF DISGUST AND LOVE IN THE BELGIAN COLONIZATION OF THE CONGO BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

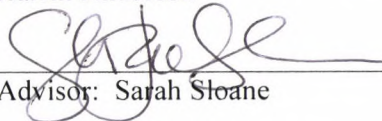
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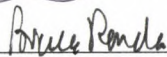
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

RHETORICS OF DISGUST AND LOVE IN THE BELGIAN

COLONIZATION OF THE CONGO

As colonial and postcolonial studies insist, the Western legacy of colonization has had—and continues to have—a profound impact on the composition of subject positions and the subsequent distribution of power in Western civilization. Connected to the colonizer/colonized binary produced through colonial involvement is the reason/emotion binary; Western concepts of civilization and primitivism are closely related to the reason/emotion binary as reason and emotional restraint have historically been markers of civilization while the Western notion of the primitive includes emotional excess to the point of animality. Given this link between reason, emotion, and colonization, recent emotion studies scholarship that seeks to unpack the reason/emotion binary has much to offer colonial studies.

One such emotion theorist is Sara Ahmed, who in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* investigates the manner in which emotion produces and sustains social meaning to construct subjectivities. The intersection of this scholarship and colonial studies, then, lies in emotion's role in composing *colonial* subjectivities. My aim in this thesis is to explore that intersection, investigating how emotion operates as an organizing principle within the colonizer/colonized binary and, more specifically, in the historical moment of Belgium's King Leopold II and his campaign for Belgian colonial involvement in Africa.

My focus throughout this research rests on rhetorics of disgust and love, two seemingly incompatible emotions. In traditional conceptions, the former involves a strong bodily revulsion and the latter an equally strong affection and desire. However, within Ahmed's framework of relational emotions and sustained affective investments, disgust and love operate similarly to identify objects of emotion and, in so doing, allow for emerging subjects. Close attention to these emotions in colonial texts from Belgium's Congo Free State offers new and instructive ways of understanding the intersecting relationships within this discourse.

Despite Leopold's international notoriety in the late 19th and earlier 20th centuries, through a series of complex historical and political phenomena, the story of the founding of the Congo Free State and its aftermath has been largely erased from the Western historical narrative. In the interests of exploring the largely untold story of the Congo, this thesis is a close textual reading of historical documents from Leopold, the explorer Henry Morton Stanley, and the lawyer Henry Wellington Wack, which support colonization, as well as documents from Congo Reform Association leader E. D. Morel. My ultimate goal in analyzing these texts is to offer insights into rhetorics of disgust and love beyond the immediate historical situation while at the same time drawing long-overdue attention to this colonial circumstance.

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Introduction: Emotion and Cultural Meaning in Colonial Narratives

These are facts, and they are not got over by calling a man who points them out a "sentimentalist." – E.D. Morel

Our refined society attaches to human life (and with reason) a value unknown to barbarous communities. – King Leopold II

Emotion has long been described by scholars—when it is given any attention at all—as an impediment to reason. A “self” in this tradition is the Western rational thinker, a person whose reason is under threat by the corrupting forces of emotion. Just how profoundly this binary organizes our world is evident in its connection to a large cluster of binaries, a point pursued by current scholarship in emotion studies. Making such a claim helps frame my overall intent in this thesis: to explore how emotion operates as an organizing principle within the colonizer/colonized binary and, more specifically, in the historical moment of King Leopold II and his campaign for Belgian colonial involvement in the Congo. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, the monarch built his campaign for a humanitarian mission to end slave trade in the Congo, a campaign that culminated in the 1885 establishment of the Congo Free State. Despite these pronouncements of philanthropy, alternate economic motives were operating below the surface. By the beginning of the twentieth century, other European powers took notice of Belgian colonial agents’ brutality toward the Congolese in the pursuit of ivory and rubber profits. Rhetorics of disgust and love in this complex historical circumstance can offer insights into how these emotions contribute to organizing colonial relationships and composing Western subjectivities.

Alison M. Jaggar highlights several corresponding dualisms relating to the reason/emotion binary in “Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology”: “Not only has reason been contrasted with emotion, but it has also been associated with the mental, the cultural, the universal, the public, and the male, whereas emotion has been associated with the irrational, the physical, the natural, the particular, the private, and, of course, the female” (166). The privileging of reason over emotion, then, might be seen to mirror our societal preferences for masculinity over femininity, intellectuality over physicality, the cultural over the natural, the universal over the personal, and the mind over the body. Another extension of this framework is the civilized/primitive binary, employed by national leaders like Leopold during the colonial era, which I will discuss further in this introduction.

In the past fifteen years, emotion theorists have historicized scholarly engagement of emotions across disciplinary lines, identifying a few prevailing phases. Jaggar traces discourse on emotions back to the *Phaedrus*, in which Plato posits emotions as what Jaggar calls “irrational urges” (166). This relates to what scholars have today termed as the positivist view of emotions, or the belief that emotions are connected intimately to physical sensation and originate within the body outside of a rational context.

In contrast, a cognitivist understanding of emotion emphasizes the cerebral, insisting on the intentionality of emotion and its intellectual interpretation by the “feeler.” In “Embodied Emotions,” Jesse Prinz explains this perspective: “On a standard cognitive appraisal theory, emotions contain evaluative judgments that explicitly characterize their formal objects” (54). Though the related judgments connect to physiology, these “rational” interpretations take precedence over physical sensations, situating emotion

consequently within the structure of rationality.

Later social constructivist conceptions broadened the discussion by situating emotion within a specific cultural context. This is emotion studies' current moment, marked by attention to how emotional responses vary across societies depending on what the culture considers an appropriate response for a given context. Emotions are aligned with cultural norms that align with wider cultural hegemonies.

Recent scholarship has scrutinized the reason/emotion binary by expressing the complicated bond between the two terms. In a discussion of emotion's role in justice, Robert C. Solomon asserts that emotion offers the framework for reason:

If an offense is worthy of anger it thus becomes rational (that is, warranted) to be angry about it, and if one argues that it is even more rational (for example, more effective in terms of self-esteem or common prudence) not to get angry, that only shows, I want to suggest, how firmly entangled are the life of the emotions and the various meanings of rationality. (23)

Because the relationship between reason and emotion is more complicated than an either/or construction, further attention to the interplay between the terms can make a space for fuller understandings of how they work in and through our world, including their involvement in colonial processes.

This reason/emotion binary is still articulated in composition studies today. Textbooks decry "emotional appeals" in favor of reasoned arguments in which emotion is somehow absent. Emotion theorist Laura Micciche begins her book *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, and Teaching* by explaining the history of emotion in the discipline. "Emotion, much like rhetoric, has been denoted as having a 'mere' quality. To say that an

argument is ‘merely’ emotive is tantamount to saying it is not representative, but instead personal and idiosyncratic: not thoughtful, but solely reliant on opinion, which academics are more than ready to cast as suspicious, often with good reason” (3). Emotion’s relationship here to thoughtlessness returns to the Enlightenment belief that emotion hampers thought and blinds people to both their true selves and the truth of the world. Micciche calls the reason/emotion binary “unnecessarily limiting and, worse, inaccurate when it comes to assessing, theorizing, and teaching the functions and uses of rhetoric” (6). Because emotion is a method of sociocultural meaning-making, exploring emotions in Belgian colonial discourse offers a window into how meaning was constructed and organized in that colonial circumstance.

Important also is the connection Micciche draws here between emotion and rhetoric in their shared history of subordination. Such a kinship may explain why, as rhetoric has achieved legitimacy as its own discipline, many rhetoricians and composition theorists have turned their attention to the emerging discipline of emotion studies. This strand of scholarship emphasizes emotion’s relational qualities and examines how emotion exists in the space between bodies and objects to produce the very boundaries that organize the world. Furthermore, these emotions are not simply ready-made phenomena felt inwardly and expressed outwardly. Anger does not, for instance, originate in the body and come out through a scowl. Jaggar notes from Elizabeth Spelman’s term for the positivist conception of emotion: the “Dumb View” —“dumb” in the sense of muteness—explaining that this is a “quite untenable” understanding given the multitude of variations in how physiology is expressed and interpreted (169). In the revised framework offered by emotion studies, that anger is mediated by social, political,

and cultural factors.

A frequent feature of the attention to these contextual factors is scholars' calling upon Judith Butler's theory of performativity. Where Butler denaturalizes cultural distinctions like gender, these theorists denaturalize affect by investigating their social nature. In "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," Butler reflects on the performance of gender: "Gender is not a performative that a prior subject elects to do, but gender is performative in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject it appears to express" (380). Emotion theorists align emotion with the same process—to paraphrase, emotion constitutes as an effect the very subject is appears to express. Micciche explains this emphasis: "To speak of emotions as performative is to foreground the idea that emotions are enacted and embodied in the social world. It is also to posit emotions as produced between people and between people and things. That is, we *do* emotions—they don't simply happen to us" (1-2). An important distinction here is that the claim of emotion as performative does not deny the visceral experience; to do so would be to reiterate the privileging of the mind over the body. Instead, theorists simply seek to widen the scope beyond the visceral to show that the physiological elements do not manifest themselves in a vacuum. Rather, bodily experience is only part of the performance of emotion. While I likely cannot will myself to blush, I blush because I recognize embarrassment as the appropriate response in a given cultural context. I somatically *perform* embarrassment.

Theorists have also drawn attention to the role of emotion in power structures, which is particularly relevant to any discussion of colonial relationships and their contained hierarchies of power. According to Jaggar, "Just as values presuppose

emotions, so emotion presupposes values” (124). Emotions are always already value-laden and value-constructing, and the subjects and objects of emotion are assigned specific values within varying cultural contexts. The intersection of the social, political, cultural, and visceral in constituting organizing hierarchies is significant in emotion studies scholarship, something identified in particular by theorist Sara Ahmed.

As another voice for the revision and expansion of emotion scholarship, Ahmed offers a series of rhetorical analyses of social texts in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. In her investigations, Ahmed explains how emotions function in, through, and around bodies to draw boundaries between individual bodies, objects, concepts, and cultural or national collections. For Ahmed, these boundaries have a place in power relationships: "It is not difficult to see how emotions are bound up with the security of social hierarchy: emotions become attributes of bodies as a way of transforming what is 'lower' or 'higher' into bodily traits" (4). Connected to hierarchising is the positing of *objects* of emotion, a rhetorical maneuver that constitutes a profoundly foundational binary—subject/object. Recalling the Dumb View, Ahmed explains, "So emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others" (10). The subject position denoted by an "I" relies on emotional responses, and the attachment to such a position reflects an *affective investment*. The emotions that enable our subject positions must be sustained to continue the drive toward that subjectivity.

Given emotion studies' emphasis on historicizing and contextualizing emotions through specific cultural artifacts, my rhetorical analysis of Belgian colonial texts must

begin with an understanding of cultural values and emotional positioning during the colonial era. Echoing the public/private binary still active in current American culture's privatization of the self, the late Victorian culture from which these colonial texts emerged was marked by restraint, especially emotional self-control. This has its roots in the wider Cartesian model of rationalism and the thinking subject, exemplified through the oft-quoted *cogito ergo sum*. At the time of Belgium's colonial involvement in Africa, the notion of the "self"—still not conceived of as a construct, but as an inherent phenomenon—was measured in large part by reason and rationality. An emphasis on emotion in rhetorically analyzing these texts and their position in the drive toward subjectivity, then, adds a new layer to the existing discussion of colonial-era subjects and speech positions.

Worth noting at this point is what I mean by the term "subjectivity" throughout this research and writing. My concept of the self is rooted in psychoanalysis. Although Sigmund Freud is rightly criticized for his ongoing emphasis on the patriarchal, scholars like Ruth Robbins identify that Freud represents an important turning point: "Whatever selfhood is, Freud argues that it begins with the body, a turn of the wheel away from Descartes" (11). In that way, as both Robbins and the scholar Rei Terada note, any current scholarship on emotions is in part indebted to Freud and psychoanalysis.

Jacques Lacan, Freud's most famous interpreter, offers an evolved psychoanalytic approach by placing subjects in a linguistic context. This moves beyond Freud's original model of a subject in isolation and situates subjects within the social, emphasizing the importance of *difference*. This is particularly helpful as a model for colonial subjectivity; as Edward Said insists, the colonized has long served as the contrasting image of the

West and offered an avenue for Western identity through difference, a process repeated in the Belgian colonization of the Congo. Additionally, this emphasis on difference offers a ready connection to Ahmed's concept of emotions as drawing differential boundaries between subjects and Others.

The Lacanian emphasis on difference is predicated on what Lacan calls the "mirror-stage," the originary point of self-awareness achieved by the revelation of something outside the self. However, the nature of the relationship between a subject and its apparent Other is problematic. Nick Mansfield explains:

This image [of an Other] may provide [a self] with a sense of its own unity, but the image has an external source: it comes from, and remains part of, otherness itself...The subject, as its very birth, only gets a sense of its own definition from the outside, specifically from an image of itself returned to it from the world. The subject does not define itself. Instead, it is defined by something other than itself.

Put in Lacanian terms, *the subject is the discourse of the other*. (43)

Because the self in this framework is continually defined through difference, a subject position depends on the presence of something or someone outside of the self. This emphasis on the outside means that a subject can never be *self-contained*, and thus lacks a center. This precarious subject position, because it never has a complete, autonomous existence, paves the way for the subject's continual drive toward self-completion. This is why subjectivity denotes in this analysis an impossible destination, something strived for but ultimately unachievable. Lacan revisionist Julia Kristeva offers a helpful term for this concept: *sujet en procès*, or a subject-in-becoming. She emphasizes through this term that the process is never complete; rather, it always involves something outside of the self

.that comes to substitute the self's inherent lack of self-containment.

Slavoj Žižek takes Lacan a step further by discussing a specifically political mode of subjectivity. In so doing, he frees the subject from its strict Cartesian associations with reason. Anthony Elliott identifies this inclination, noting how, while Žižek still discusses rationality, “Žižek wishes to speak up for the ‘other side’ of reason—the excessive, unacknowledged kernel of human passion” (83). Through his focused attention on ideologies of race and nationalism—again, germane to colonialism—Žižek describes a process by which budding subjects attach themselves to ideological Others. However, crucial in this framework is that subjects’ ongoing alignment with such narratives only covers over the subjects’ inherent lack of a center.

This returns to subjectivity as an ongoing process, and I see it relating to how some emotion studies scholarship has defined “emotion.” For instance, in “Emotion and Pedagogical Violence,” Lynn Worsham defines emotion as “the tight braid of affect and judgment, socially constructed and lived bodily, through which the symbolic takes hold of and binds the individual, in complex and contradictory ways, to the social order and its structure of meanings” (121). The emphasis here seems to echo the Lacanian concept that subjects are born into a pre-existing symbolic order and must navigate that order through aligning with an Other. For Worsham and other emotion theorists, then, emotion is a prevailing path by which bodies “achieve” a subject position in a complex social framework.

Crucial also to my concept of subjectivity is the relationship between the subject and what Lacan identifies as the subject’s opposite—death. In this light, subjectivity is a way of overcoming the mortality associated with the “human animal.” This involves the

intersection of four binaries: civilized/primitive, man/animal, reason/emotion, and mind/body. The West has traditionally conceived of civilization as being marked by emotional restraint, whereas Western notions of primitivism are marked by emotional excess to the point of animality. “Civilizing” reason, of course, is located in the mind, whereas “primitive” emotion finds a home in the body. The Western aversion to inhabiting an animal body is reflected powerfully in much colonial discourse, including that of the Belgian Congo, as the colonized is described by the colonizer as animalistic. This animality in turn offers a strong contrasting image for Western subjects who have somehow overcome their corporeality. Western subjects of civilization, then, are directed away from emotion and animality as these phenomena are connected to a decay-prone body. In a way, we deny the bodily experience of subjectivity because the mortality that is incompatible with the *permanence* of a subject is situated precisely within the body. Within this framework, colonization itself is the drive toward a permanent, death-proof subjectivity, and Belgian colonial involvement is no exception.

Many emotion theorists have drawn attention to the connection between emotion and subjectivity. Catherine Lutz demonstrates this trend in her essay "Emotion, Thought, and Estrangement: Emotion as a Cultural Category":

Emotions are viewed as constituting subjectivity in several of the senses in which the term subjective is used... [One] sense in which the emotions are subjective consists of the notion that emotions constitute the perspective of the individual on events... The emotions create the possibility for this individuality in at least two senses. First, they constitute individual opinion. It is only I who have these particular emotions, opinions, and values. From this perspective, emotions are

Me in a way that thoughts are not. (298)

An emotional response indicates the responder's capacity for having a perspective while at the same time constituting that capacity.

Rei Terada also connects emotion to a poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity, which she describes in *Feeling in Theory* as a “fictive threshold” that is never crossed (17). In this work, she aligns emotions with Derridian *différance*, the condition of possibility for being. Crucial to *différance* is the idea that being is not possible, but continually deferred in space and temporality. Terada insists that, in the same way, subjectivity is continually deferred as an unachievable destination. In Terada’s framework, emotion is part of the drive toward subjectivity. Emotion thus becomes a marker for subjectivity’s absence because it is evidence of the endless pursuit of a subject position. After all, if subjects existed, the drive toward subjectivity—and emotion—would be over. Emotion studies, then, has a great deal to offer concepts of subjectivity, especially in the context of colonial relationships, where the identity manipulation occurring between the colonized and colonizer relies almost entirely on either party’s constructed *feeling* about itself through the interaction.

My desire to join emotion studies and colonialism is in part inspired by the absence of emotion-based analysis I recognize in colonial studies. This gap can perhaps be explained by what emotion theorist Megan Boler calls the “absent-presence” of emotion—it is nowhere and everywhere (xv). Also, in my own experience, when I read scholars like Frantz Fanon discuss how it feels to be marginalized, I have aligned those texts more with psychology, still privileging intellect over emotion. Ahmed’s emphasis both on the relationality of emotion and the connection between bodily experience and

cultural factors provides a fuller understanding of how emotion functions in Western societies at large and particularly in constituting colonial relationships and Western subjectivity.

In addition, within several periods of scholarship on emotions, references to Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust recur as explanations for how emotions have historically involved value judgments that hold a powerful potential for subjugation. This is perhaps because the discipline of emotion studies is a Western phenomenon, and Hitler is arguably the weightiest villain in the Western historical narrative. The frequency of Hitler as an illustration creates a space for further scholarship in the interests of widening the example set. Indeed, because scholarship is, in a sense, storytelling, I am interested in telling a different story with my research—the story of the Belgian Congo.

I have been surprised in my own life to discover how few people know this story. I came to this historical narrative by way of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the fictionalized account of his real-life journey to the Congo during its colonization by Belgium. In a way, this novella has been decontextualized and presented as a universal account of humanity on the borders of civilization. Surprisingly, even *Heart of Darkness* has been aligned with Hitler: one example is emotion theorist Elspeth Probyn's *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities*. As she uses the novella in her discussion of cannibalism, Probyn comments, "The description of Kurtz is also uncanny in its foreshadowing of the horror of Hitler..." (96). So powerful is Hitler as the referential frame for "extreme" emotion that the historical villain in Conrad's work—Belgian King Leopold II—is overlooked entirely. This is not to say that I am attempting to establish a hierarchy of events like the Holocaust and the brutality of the Congo Free State; rather, I seek to

expand the set of examples used in discussions of emotion.

Leopold's colonial ambitions well preceded his ascent to the throne in 1865. Within the larger context of European powers' history of competition, Belgium was relatively impotent at the time; after being ruled by Spain, Austria, and France, the country had gained independence from the Netherlands in 1830 (Hochschild 33), whereas European powers like Portugal and Spain had begun their colonial expansion as early as the fifteenth century. Leopold took notice of the political and economic benefits of a colony, and after exploring potential expansion into the "Far East," he turned his attention to Africa. As he famously remarked to a friend in 1877, "I do not want to miss the opportunity of our obtaining a share in this magnificent African cake" (qtd. in Emerson 78).

According to Congo scholar Ruth Slade in *King Leopold's Congo*, after an earlier attempt in 1878 to gather European powers to discuss trade expansions in the Congo, Leopold launched a campaign in 1884 to end the widespread slave trade in the Congo by increasing Western presence under the guise of Christian philanthropy (39-40). This campaign culminated in the 1885 establishment of the Congo Free State, legally the personal property of the monarch himself. Despite this early success, by the mid-1890s, the material reality of exploitation and forced labor in the Congo Free State had drawn harsh criticism on the international stage.

The strongest branch of this movement was the Congo Reform Association. Frequently credited as one of the first human rights organizations in history, this collective was begun in 1904 by British consul Roger Casement, who soon enlisted British journalist E. D. Morel as its mouthpiece. By 1907, Casement and Morel's

message of royal Belgian hypocrisy was so effective—and Leopold's reputation so tarnished—that the Belgian government began negotiations with Leopold to annex the Congo Free State. Internationally despised, Leopold died soon afterward in 1909.

Relatively limited knowledge of this colonial circumstance is not inexplicable given the greater context of Belgium's involvement in the Congo. Certainly a significant challenge for researchers interested in the Congo Free State is the limited availability of documents to cobble together the colony's history. This was, in fact, Leopold's intent. In August of 1908, when the monarch was forced to sell the Congo colony, he wanted to give away as little as possible, subsequently burning the State archives. Adam Hochschild's bestseller *King Leopold's Ghost* describes the incident: "The furnaces burned for eight days, turning most of the Congo state records to ash and smoke in the sky over Brussels" (294). And not only were Leopold's records destroyed, but key parts of the subsequent documentation were also kept from the public eye. For instance, the Commission of Inquiry that investigated Leopold's Congo behavior ended with a damning report. However, although the investigation collected indicting statements from African witnesses, these did not make it into the final document except through oblique references; African voices were thus silenced. As Hochschild notes, "Not until the 1980s were people at last permitted to read and copy [African eyewitness accounts] freely" (255).

Interestingly, a second explanation for the Belgian Congo's relative obscurity is Germany's brutal four-year occupation of Belgium in World War I, which began only shortly after its colonial atrocities were brought to light in the international community. After the tiny nation's citizens were demoralized, the global community seemed to

forgive Belgium for the ten million Congolese who died in its economic rape of the Congo through the ivory, rubber, and slave trades. Belgian involvement in Africa was in this way erased. In this research, I am greatly indebted to scholars like Hochschild, Slade, and Marie-Bénédicte Dembour who took on the challenge of piecing together this time period through decades of sifting through what primary resources were available.

The portrait these scholars have produced of the Congo Free State demonstrates that recent theories of emotion have something to offer this historical narrative. At times in my research, it seemed that every conceivable feeling on the spectrum of human emotion was visible in this colonial history, from Belgian disgust and love to African shame and fear to British indignation and anger. Given the small scale of this thesis, I focus only on disgust and love as two related emotions visible in print and visual rhetorics from this period. My belief is that such an attention will both illuminate these texts for future study and further the current conversation unfolding in emotion scholarship.

While some readers would argue that French-language primary texts from Belgium represent the best resources for investigating Belgian colonial rhetorics, I am limited by what is available and by my own intermediate French skills. My analysis, then, is a close textual reading of several historical writings from some of the biggest players surrounding the Congo Free State and its aftermath, including Henry Morton Stanley, E. D. Morel, and Leopold himself.

As one of the premiere adventurers and travel writers of his time, the lengthy books Stanley produced during and after his Congo excursions are invaluable insights into the colonial period. Leopold recruited him as early as 1877, just after Stanley's

successful descent of the Congo River (Slade 37), and Stanley helped make a case for European—and later specifically Belgian—involvement in the Congo through his eyewitness accounts of the African land and people. Written in English, *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State* reveals how Stanley describes Congolese after witnessing their behaviors and customs and what emotional responses result in contact with this Other: “Such love as we possessed for them was simply immeasurable” (2: 4).

Leopold's colonial face is represented in the English translation of his "Letter from the King of the Belgians," originally published in 1898 in *The Land of the Pygmies*, a book written by Belgian colonial agent Guy Burrows. This address, identified by Morel as having been directed specifically to Belgian agents in the Congo, utilizes a tone of earnest supplication meant to rouse continued support for the "civilizing" efforts: "To those upholders of manly traditions and pioneers of progress who survive, I desire to address some words which my heart dictates to me" (285). Leopold's ultimate message is that Belgian colonial involvement is “the work of moral and material regeneration” for the Congolese (286-87). The letter's frequent inclusion in anthologies, perhaps most notably in the Norton Critical Edition of *Heart of Darkness*, is likely due to its position as one of the only texts that survived Leopold's systematic erasure of documents.

In addition to his letter, Leopold is represented in this research through a 1906 *New York Times* interview, published after many British and American voices had begun to draw attention to the monarch's unsavory intentions in Africa. The article, entitled “King Leopold Denies Charges Against Him,” captures the rhetoric of his counter-campaign to reestablish his previous international esteem. Leopold charmed the American media through his perceived candor and earnestness in responding to

allegations of cruelty, in this interview even teasing the interviewer for daring to conduct the conversation without protective measures: “Let me see if you have a revolver in your pocket. Have you armor under your coat?” Overall, this interview epitomizes Leopold’s constructed narrative of Western Christian selflessness and philanthropy.

Henry Wellington Wack, an American attorney, was another author commissioned by Leopold to produce a textual account of colonization that portrayed Belgian involvement favorably. Hochschild identifies the monarch’s instructions to Wack, that the American was “to act as if he were not the State’s employ, but merely an impartial publicist” (245). After Leopold became the target for severe criticisms regarding Belgian brutality in Africa, then, Wack's *The Story of the Congo Free State* was released in the United States to tell the "real" story of colonization: "It occurred to me that my knowledge of mid-African affairs might enable me to place before the American people a complete statement of the actual facts of the Congo Free State, and that my self-imposed task could not fail to be of value at a time when interested partisans were endeavouring to deceive them" (iv). Despite the author's continual insistence on the objectivity of his account, that Wack was Leopold's mouthpiece means that his narrative reflects, at least in part, Leopold's rhetoric.

Texts emerging from the Congo Reform movement provide another layer of colonial discourse. Morel delivered his first public speech damning the Congo in 1902 (Slade 183), and Morel's later *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, published originally in English in 1905, is a detailed account of cruelty and violence in the Congo Free State. As Morel writes, he “became convinced that the system of government carried on by the authorities of the Congo State was a bad and wicked system, inflicting terrible wrongs

upon the native races” (ix-x). This text is representative of rhetoric in the aftermath of Belgium's colonial involvement, including powerful indictments of Leopold's hypocrisy given the disparity in the monarch's proclaimed intentions.

Finally, necessary for any analysis of this kind is the admission of my own speech position as I engage with these texts. My attentions are situated in Western thought, more specifically in North American academic culture. As a white American woman, I cannot deny that I benefit from the oppressive regimes handed down from colonial circumstances like the Congo Free State. Also, because my initial engagement with scholarship on the Belgian Congo was through Conrad's novella, my readings are inescapably colored by his narrative. Although my research concerns a specific period of global history that well precedes my own historical moment, I move forward in my analysis with an appropriate awareness of the inevitable differences in cultural understandings of emotion. At this point in my research, it seems to me that emotion is a mode of meaning-making that operates in a similar manner across these differences. An analysis of texts emerging from Belgium's colonization of the Congo, then, can offer insights into rhetorics of disgust and love beyond the immediate historical situation while at the same time drawing long-overdue attention to this colonial circumstance.

Cannibals and Hypocrites: Disgust Responses and Metonymic Relationships

So recently as 1898, and possibly the present day, it was necessary to maintain a constant guard at the cemetery in Leopoldville...to prevent the Bangalas unearthing the dead and carrying them off to feast upon. Several such cases were proven against them, and capital punishment had to be resorted to in order to stamp it out. This horrid subject is sickening to contemplate; but no description, however brief or superficial, of the Congo people, can ignore a fact which has occasioned, and still presents, such a tremendous difficulty for civilisation to surmount. – Henry Wellington Wack

I had not expected to find such blatant racist statements filling page after page of the relevant legal colonial literature, but this is what I felt I was reading. The research opened a new world to me, which rather disgusted me, but which I felt was all the more worth studying. – Marie-Bénédicte Dembour

At the same time, the generation of the object also creates the subject. By naming the event as disgusting, the subject 'stands out' in the 'standing apart' or 'pulling away' from the event. – Sara Ahmed

This first passage, a brief description of Congolese cannibalism, is an artifact of colonizers' affective investments that demonstrates how the emotion of disgust operates in the colonizer/colonized relationship. This common practice of some Congo natives sickens the Western writer (and reader), and this experience of disgust helps produce the very boundaries that, for the West, organize the world into West/East, Europe/Africa, and civilized/primitive, the very binaries that power the colonial drive. The second passage, from Dembour's scholarship on the Congo Free State, illustrates another feature of disgust in the colonial structure, that disgust necessarily involves proximity between subject and object. Given the complicated framework of disgust, understanding how this emotion operates can illuminate colonial discourse in new and instructive ways, revealing

how affective investments helped to make possible the Belgian conquest of the Congo and its aftermath.

Some brief background information on colonial practices in the Congo Free State can help contextualize disgust in this discourse. Slade explains that forced labor developed in part because colonial agents were paid based on the ivory and rubber commissions, and Leopold created a State monopoly by forbidding Congolese to sell ivory or rubber to any private buyers (177). Because rubber is a particularly difficult substance to harvest, its Congolese collectors were subjected to increasingly brutal methods of motivation from colonial agents as rubber supplies dwindled. In many cases, agents would hold harvesters' family members hostage, only to return them when the required amount of rubber had been collected. Indeed, Hochschild quotes Leopold as remarking that forced labor was "the only way to civilize and uplift these indolent and corrupt peoples of the Far East" (37).

Related also is the practice of cutting off hands; to avoid "wasting" ammunition—meaning, in this context, using a round of ammunition that does not kill somebody—colonial leadership in the Congo demanded that a hand be produced for each round used. Often, this meant that Congolese were mutilated, their hands cut off to serve as "proof" of an unwasted bullet. Within this framework, colonial agents were disgusted with what they perceived to be Congolese laziness, and later voices from the Congo Reform Association aligned the agents themselves with disgust by identifying their violent behaviors as morally disgusting.

Admittedly, the current emotion-studies perspective that disgust constitutes organizing binaries is only part of disgust's long and varied representation in scholarship.

In *A General Theory of Emotions and Social Life*, Warren D. TenHouten offers a representative description of disgust as "specifically related to a particular motivation (hunger) and to a particular system (the digestive)" (27). Perhaps more than any other emotion, disgust is situated powerfully within the human body, contributing to a mind/body binary in which, through the privileging of the mind, the less "cerebral" disgust is sometimes left behind. In an essay attached to their translation of philosopher Aurel Kolnai's writings on disgust, Carolyn Korsmeyer and Barry Smith explain the emotion's historical reception: "It is rooted so deeply in bodily responses that some theorists have hesitated even to classify it as an emotion in the fullest sense, considering it more akin to involuntary reactions such as nausea, retching, and the startle recoil" (1). This may account for the fact that, although disgust has been theorized by many scholars, there is a disproportionately smaller collection of writings on disgust than on emotions like anger or fear.

Despite these hurdles in scholarship, disgust does have history on its side; writing in the 1890s—during the Belgian conquest of the Congo—Charles Darwin lists disgust among the basic human emotions in his *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. He connects disgust with the sense of taste:

As the sensation of disgust primarily arises in connection with the act of eating or tasting, it is natural that its expression should consist chiefly in movements round the mouth. But as disgust also causes annoyance, it is generally accompanied by a frown, and often by gestures as if to push away or to guard oneself against the offensive object. (257)

This response, he explains, was likely inherited from our biological ancestors.

The prevailing view in twentieth-century literature on disgust matches the spirit of Darwin's writing, describing the emotion as an instinctive, evolutionary phenomenon meant to protect the human body by prompting the rejection of harmful substances. This is frequently expressed in the discipline of psychology, which places disgust on a timeline with other evolved emotions that serve particular developmental stages. For example, a young child is instinctively disgusted by a slug leaving a trail of slime because she has developed psychologically to protect her body from harmful agents like feces, slime, or mucus. The simultaneous desire to vomit that she may experience as part of her disgust in turn ensures that she will not ingest any of these substances.

In that framework, disgust occurs relatively late in a child's development, a point psychoanalyst Susan B. Miller identifies as problematic given that the instinct to protect one's body from "noxious food" would have utility long before a child reaches four years of age (5). Her work *Disgust: The Gatekeeper Emotion* is representative of the subsequent revision of this evolutionary approach. At this point, language surrounding disgust shifts from "body" to a more holistic term: "It is the *self*, not the body per se, whose vulnerability to invasion and degradation is at issue when disgust arises [emphasis added]" (Susan B. Miller 4). Scholars' heightened awareness to the notions of "self" and "other," though not explicitly connected to the structuralist notion of identity-through-difference, functions along those lines. Miller's explanation of disgust echoes the Lacanian model of subjectivity with its emphasis on something or someone outside of the self: "Disgust responds to an encounter with something experienced as outside the self. That 'Other' is felt to be noxious and ready to transfer noxiousness to the self. Therefore, one wants distance from the bad 'Other.' Disgust thus involves jeopardy to the self, which

responds to that danger by devaluing—even despising—something outside, and determining to keep free of it" (Susan B. Miller 13). Rather than serving a biological function, i.e. keeping the body from unhealthy encounters, disgust serves a psychological function; although the mind/body binary persists, disgust is aligned in this scholarly tradition with the privileged mind, serving the "deeper" needs of the self. Rather than a visceral phenomenon, disgust becomes an almost rational phenomenon.

Oft-cited disgust scholar William Ian Miller is a similar voice linking the emotion to the self in *The Anatomy of Disgust*. "Disgust, along with desire, locates the bounds of the other, either as something to be avoided, repelled, or attacked, or, in other settings, something to be emulated, imitated, or married" (50). Through this service to the self, disgust helps organize "selves" into cultures and societies. On one level, this occurs at the intersection of disgust and legality, where a disgusting act is made illegal for that very reason (Nussbaum 4). More powerful, however, is the concept of moral disgust, described by many writers as creating a culture's moral identity. Earlier concepts of what ought to inspire disgust, like slime, mucus, or feces, are replaced by behaviors, like lying, stealing, or sexual promiscuity, and disgust becomes a moral sentiment. William Ian Miller again weighs in, and with a notable glance to the "primitive": "We usually think of a disgust-dominated moral regime as a primitive one of totems and taboos. But as we have seen, the Christian language of sin latched on to disgust with a vengeance, as did in more moderate forms the moral philosophies of Hume and Smith" (193). Disgust, then, has been profoundly influential in organizing both Western notions of morality and consequently Western civilization in general.

The "self" popularly celebrated within that civilization is addressed in recent writings from the emerging discipline of emotion studies, which offer an elegantly subtle revision of classical understandings of disgust: rather than simply contributing to the needs of the self, disgust felt toward an Other is an affective investment that *constitutes* the self. As Susan B. Miller puts it, "The boundaried self is a construct. If we believe in it as the moment's reality, it offers us the power and comfort of extrusion by way of disgust, but also the burden of securing its safety and worth" (192). The "self" to which recent writers refer is not a ready-made entity whose borders are patrolled by disgust, but, like other emotions, disgust is inextricably linked to the performance of the self, which draws those borders as it protects them.

However, even within the framework of a constructed self, Susan B. Miller still adheres to the organizing binary that once precluded disgust scholarship. Moral disgust, she explains, "raises further questions about the body's relevance to disgust and supports the assertion that disgust is fundamentally about the self" (14). The body, and thus the visceral experience of disgust, is still subordinate to the mind. Scholars who operate within this binary, regardless to what extent they write about emotions, are residually privileging reason over emotion because of reason's intimate association with the mind. The scholarship seems to undo itself.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed illustrates the current moment of emotion studies scholarship by problematizing the mind/body binary. She draws attention to the ways in which disgust is mediated by social factors, creating the very space in which I make my own analysis. By titling her chapter on disgust "The Performativity of Disgust," Ahmed draws on Butler's concept of performed states over necessary, naturally-

occurring states. However, more radically, Ahmed begins this chapter by integrating and interrogating the mind/body binary that typically organizes our understanding of disgust. Disgust is "not simply about 'gut feelings.' Or if disgust is about gut feelings, then our relation to our guts is not direct, but is mediated by ideas that are already implicated in the very impressions we make of others and the way those impressions surface as bodies" (83). This emotion is not merely a naturally-occurring phenomenon within the body, and the body is itself also "performed" by and through interacting ideas. Again, this is not to say that emotions are not "real" in terms of having the material reality of a bodily experience; an emotion like disgust simply cannot be reduced to that bodily experience because it is mediated by sociocultural factors. Thus the mind/body binary is problematized.

Just as Ahmed disrupts binaries, she explains how disgust contributes to the very construction of one of the most foundational organizing binaries for Western civilization: subject/object. Borrowing from Mary Louise Pratt, Ahmed calls disgust a "contact zone," and it is precisely the contact between things in the experience of this emotion that draws relational borders (87). Because disgust necessarily has an object—one is disgusted *by something*—then the relationship between one who feels disgust and that which is disgusting is a subject/object relationship. Ahmed writes, "To name something as disgusting is not only to transfer the stickiness of the word 'disgust' to an object that then comes to stick, but also to the subject. In other words, the disgusted subject is 'itself' one of the effects that is generated by the speech act, 'That's disgusting!'" (94). To make this point, Ahmed is relying on speech act theory, the notion that an utterance can perform something into existence in the moment of the speech act. Here, a speaker

performs an object into existence and, in so doing, posits himself or herself as a subject. Given the perks of subjectivity, such as a speech position, agency, and perceived permanence, disgust is thus potently involved in the human ambition for privileged positioning in the world.

Because disgust is in some ways the forward slash in the subject/object binary, the emotion necessarily contributes to the division of power within that relationship. Ahmed again explains, "The relation between disgust and power is evident when we consider the spatiality of disgust reactions, and their role in the hierarchising of spaces as well as bodies" (88). The one who experiences disgust emerges as a subject on the left side of the binary, the position reserved for the privileged term. For that subject, experiencing the emotion constitutes the object—perhaps another body, an idea, or an event—as *subordinate*. For example, to return to the first passage at the beginning of this chapter, this process is repeated again and again in colonial discourse to posit the colonized as subordinate to the colonizer.

Before I begin looking at these texts, one more note is worth making about disgust. This emotion operates through interactions in part by way of *substitution*. In scholarship on disgust, authors nearly always make the point that objects of disgust are not regarded as disgusting because of any inherent or necessary quality. Darwin himself mentions this, writing, "It is remarkable how readily and instantly retching or actual vomiting is induced in some persons by the mere idea of having partaken of any unusual food, as of an animal which is not commonly eaten; although there is *nothing in such food to cause the stomach to reject it* [emphasis added]" (258). Besides contributing to

recent conceptions of emotion as existing *between* things rather than *within* them, this distinction sets the stage for how objects of disgust are posited through substitution.

Forging a connection between disgust and the discourse surrounding the Belgian Congo requires no rhetorical contortion. This emotion is powerfully visible in both traditional and visual texts emerging from Europe and America, and it constitutes the borders between several opposing groups within the colonial framework.

Within the context of Belgium's colonization of the Congo, those objects and events found disgusting were metonymically related to unpleasant substances like blood and rotting flesh and to unwholesome behaviors like cannibalism, savagery, and animality. For instance, rather than an African body possessing an inherent disgusting quality, a Belgian observer may posit that body as disgusting because he or she has substituted the body for the concept of uncivilized behavior: "The absence of familiar civilization is disgusting" becomes "The African is disgusting." As Wack writes in his Leopold-inspired text, "...rational minds are made to turn from the [Congolese] subject in disgust" (470).

This substitution gains power and the metonymic relationship between *x* and *y* is further established by the repetition of statements that present *x* and *y* together. Frequently in this colonial discourse, the same adjectives appear alongside "natives" or "Africans" over and over again, cementing the association, as in "the savage African black man" (Wack 99). Indeed, even a passing reference to African habits as "sanguinary"—literally "bloody"—further the process. This is active in Leopold's address to his colonial agents, in which he asserts, "Placed face to face with primitive barbarism, grappling with sanguinary customs that date back thousands of years, [agents]

are obliged to reduce these gradually” (285).

This rhetorical maneuver, which succeeds in forging many different associations surrounding the Belgian Congo, is related to the Derridian notion of trace. According to Derrida, signs bear the “trace” of other signs, never holding a self-contained meaning apart from those other signs. Likewise, the disgust object is not self-contained, but bears the traces of other already-disgusting objects. Signifiers like "African" or "blackness" or "cannibalism" interact with a slipperiness that produces these metonymic relationships. Within colonial discourse, disgust is a reaction to the perceived and performed link between Africa and the absence of civilization. For a Belgian, disgust keeps out the contaminating Congolese primitivism that threatens both the physical body through connections to cannibalism and blood and the social order through connections to taboos like nudity and murder.

King Leopold II's first step toward securing an African colony for Belgium was to build a campaign that framed the colonization as a humanitarian mission. Many scholars of colonialism, including David Spurr, identify this tactic as typical in the process of garnering support from one's own citizens, and the language of "Christian benevolence" is especially prevalent. In *The Rhetorics of Empire*, Spurr discusses the trope: “But this equation with a deeper moral identification, far from being regarded as a weakness in the logic of colonial discourse, instead provides one of its fundamental principles: a colonized people is morally improved and edified by virtue of its participation in the colonial system” (33). Indeed, the possibility of moral improvement for the Congolese is presented in colonial texts as a compelling byproduct of the mission to suppress the slave trade, which I will explain shortly. At the center of the Belgium-as-rescuer narrative sits

disgust, the gatekeeper emotion, the affect by which Leopold and his cronies performed an "aboveness" that allowed them free reign in Africa.

At that time, an elaborate slave trade was taking place in the Congo. Though slavery was also not an uncommon practice, neither globally nor in European colonies, many European nations condemned the Congo slave trade. This disproportionate attention can likely be credited to the fact that the enterprising race there was reportedly Arabs from the east, to whom Hochschild refers as "a distant, weak, and safely nonwhite target" (28). In reality, as Hochschild continues, the slave traders were Africans from different areas who spoke Swahili and in some cases assumed Arab personas through Arab clothing (28). (It is worth noting here that the "Arab" category in this discourse is the Eastern construct from the late nineteenth century, not today's Arab.) Leopold utilized this Other as an opportunity to compose a narrative of Belgian benevolence, organizing a summit among European leaders to discuss the problem. The summit posited Brussels as the center of the struggle against the "Arab" slave trade, producing the perfect conditions for Belgium's establishment of a colony to curb the practice and spread "civilization."

The rhetorical strategies of disgust played a large part in garnering support from the international community when it came to the slave trade. Wack's Leopold-commissioned *The Story of the Congo Free State* is one such example among many, containing numerous statements about the slave trade. Published in 1905, this text harkens back to the "disgusting" Arab at a time when Leopold was under fire for crimes against humanity. Wack's text falls relatively late on the timeline of Belgian colonization. However, because disgust organizes social meaning in part through repetitive

performances that establish metonymic links, the later date for this writing means that the rhetorics of disgust found here can be read as calling upon earlier disgust performances, further establishing the metonymic relationships that join both “Arab” and African bodies with morally and viscerally disgusting qualities or behaviors.

One such behavior is the practice of slavery. Wack reports extensively on the slave trade, offering frequent and vivid descriptions: "Bands of predatory Arabs swooping down upon the defenceless natives decimated whole tribes, and carried away men, women, and children by the thousand. The slave-trader stalked like a pestilence through the land, leaving in his wake the smoking ruins of a hundred villages and the charred skeletons of his black victims" (60). This passage, like so many others, represents an intersection of several rhetorical devices that build metonymic relationships. The so-called Arab is depicted as unquestionably animalistic through the words "predatory" and "swooped." This animality is drawn together with vivid images of death and decay, contributing to the connection between animality and mortality, two qualities avoided through subjectivity. Also, not unimportantly, the description of charred human remains inspires a visceral sensation of disgust at this animality, mortality and savagery. The disgust response encouraged by such passages works, as Ahmed would say, to constitute the borders between the Europeans and the "Arabs," between civilization and savagery, and repeating the disgust act continually maintains those borders.

Such border-patrolling is illustrated interestingly by the slave trade's repeated conceptualization as a bodily illness. In the above passage, the phrase "like a pestilence" epitomizes this pattern. Wack, an American, is situated within the West, where he

consistently posits the Arab slave-trader as a virulent epidemic that threatens to invade the body. Crucial to this recurring metaphor is the conceptualization of Europe as a body: "More atrocious than the pestilential slave dhow was the slaughter of blacks by the slave-raider, the fiend incarnate who until a few years ago carried on his inhumane traffic under the very gaze of Christian Europe" (Wack 126). The use of the phrase "Christian Europe" articulates nicely the extent to which Europe was defined by Christian morality within colonial discourse, and the gaze mentioned by Wack in this passage recalls the "gaze" of subjectivity. Europe—or more specifically Belgium, or more generally the West—has a sort of collective corporeality that allows it to "look upon" objects, and the slave trade is again notably referred to as pestilential. As opposed to the strict literal invasion of an illness, the slave trade in the Congo functions as a figurative infection that could invade and become *incorporated* into the figurative body of the colonizers and "civilization." Because such incorporation precludes that the slave trader is a separate object to gaze upon, this "pestilence" threatens the subjectivity co-constitutive with that gaze and corporeality.

Another example of the discourse of Arab slave-traders as pollutants is in their connection to bodily fluids thought to contaminate the body, fluids which coming from another body would present a threat to one's health. Wack scarcely ever mentions slave-traders without also mentioning blood: "If this great task has fallen upon a man of ordinary natural powers and acquired means, that part of Darkest Africa which now defies the organised conspiracy of the despoiler would interest nobody save the slave-trader who terrorised the land and polluted the sea with the black man's blood" (66). Continuing today, the Western world recognizes blood as a contaminant, capable of

rendering even the vast ocean unclean. Again, metonymic relationships are established between the slave-trader, darkness, disorganization, animality, and the absence of civilization, each of which threatens European subjectivity.

Highlighting this continual threat, the necessity of drawing and maintaining borders betrays a closeness between the Europeans and the slave-traders. Were the Europeans already appropriately distanced from the slave-trade itself, the disgust response would be unnecessary. This speaks to a key feature of the emotion, one highlighted by Ahmed: disgust requires and is inspired by proximity. As she writes, "Such a risky proximity does not involve pulling toward the native's body, in an expression of forbidden desire. Rather natives must get too close for the white man to move away. Furthermore, the feeling that the proximity of this other is disgusting is dependent on past associations, in this case evoked through a negation" (Ahmed 88). Europeans, and specifically Belgians, experience disgust in this colonial framework because of a perceived threat of integration.

The necessity of proximity is evident in Wack's introduction to his quotation of a Belgian eyewitness who again recounts the behaviors of slave-traders:

With what extremity of horror they conducted their operations has been so graphically described by a Belgian merchant, M. Hodister, that we make no apology for quoting his account in full... "Men, women, and children, tied together promiscuously, corpses strewn the ground, blood puddles emitting an acrid smell, and the assassins, horrible in their war paint, which during the struggle has run with their sweat and blood, complete the picture." (87)

Wack's expressed justification for including a passage that he considers disgusting is just this—that the passage is *extraordinarily* disgusting. For his notably Western audience, the act of reprinting and reading the passage is required to establish the proximity that will facilitate the disgust reaction. Exposure to this imagery of mangled bodies lying in pools of blood is the only thing that can trigger this gatekeeping emotion. This is precisely the reason that scholars traditionally link disgust with a sense of desire, an intention of closeness. By bringing an object close enough to arouse a threat and subsequently disgust, this discourse provides a subject-in-becoming with a contrasting image to foster the drive toward subjectivity.

Westerners' disgust for the slave-trader opened a space for Belgium to assist in eradicating the slave trade. After what was considered a successful campaign, Leopold took the opportunity to establish his colony with ample support from other global powers. Disgust for the Arab was quickly eclipsed by reactions to natives of the Congo, and new metonymic relationships and disgust reactions emerged. The simultaneous opportunity for and threat to subjectivity engendered through objectifying the Congolese functioned similarly to Europe's discourse on the "Arabs." Central to this threat was the colonizers' perception of animality in the native population, a quality in contrast to the traditional Western subject position. To further remove themselves from "being animal," the Europeans in Africa positioned native races as animals, constructing a human/animal binary tied to similar binaries like colonizer/colonized and civilized/primitive. Indeed, part of the performance of "being human" is recognizing animality in other bodies. Martha C. Nussbaum addresses this phenomenon in *Hiding From Humanity*: "So powerful is the desire to cordon ourselves off from our animality that we often don't stop

at feces, cockroaches, and slimy animals. We need a group of humans to bound ourselves against, who will come to exemplify the boundary line between the truly human and the basely animal" (107). Because "civilization" is often understood as that which restrains humanity from its instinctive animal desires, the very presence of Belgians as a force for civilization within the Congo is a performance of Belgian "aboveness" over an animalistic Congolese.

Indeed, the human/animal binary is integral to colonization and can be found in many genres of colonial discourse. Wack begins his book by illustrating global interest in Africa: "In 1860 the attention of mankind was just beginning to turn to Africa" (4). That the author excludes Africa from the term "mankind" is not of passing interest to the context of the rest of *The Story of the Congo Free State*, but illustrates a foundational theme for his and other writings: that Africans are not fully human beings. In *Heart of Darkness*, a work in which Conrad portrays the colonial mission as a sham, the narrator Marlow expresses the importance of the human/animal binary: "No they were not inhuman. Well, you know that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman" (62). The "worst of it" for Western subjectivity is the inability to claim that Africans are less than human or, to borrow a term from Nussbaum, "quasihuman" (107). The "humanness"—crucial to subjectivity—of the Western world is also implicit in the West's very ability to name others as nonhuman and react with disgust at their nonhuman state.

Europeans' disgust reactions to African behaviors and practices play a significant role in positing Africans as animal-objects and Europeans as human-subjects. In his description of the Musserongé tribe, Wack states, "They file their teeth to a point, or cut

them square, or into semicircles, their object being to provide themselves thereby with a weapon for use as a last resort in a fight, when they literally throw themselves upon their enemies and seize them by the throat with their fangs, as a bulldog might do” (153-54). Although he begins with a more restrained picture of the geometric shapes of Congolese teeth, Wack ends with a violent image of natives ripping one another's throats out. The positing of these natives as animals is implicit in the entire passage, but Wack also offers an explicit comparison of Africans to bulldogs. The reader's disgust reaction to the bloody and savage nature of Africans engaging in what Wack unambiguously describes as a dog fight combines with the concept of the native's animality. The native is an object of disgust because animality is necessarily disgusting to a self whose subjectivity rests on the absence of that quality.

Wack continues building comparisons between Congo natives and animals. Writing from the early twentieth century, he states, “Thirty years ago what is now the Congo Free State was a wild tangle of luxuriant tropical growth through which hordes of black savages roamed, fought, and practised their unspeakable barbarities” (268). Although the word “horde” has many definitions, it carries an animalistic connotation, especially when combined with “roamed.” Also, the Congo natives are posited not only as animals in this passage, but as specifically “black savages,” continuing the tradition of presenting words simultaneously to build metonymic bonds even in a text that appeared well after Belgium established herself in the Congo.

Other passages from Wack employ the tone of a disinterested observer: “Like some species of wild animals which instinctively avoid certain districts of the forest at particular seasons, or on account of some unusual phenomena, the black man will

sometimes quit his residence for no apparent reason at all" (225). Although this does not explicitly invite disgust, the repetition here of Congolese animality contributes to the connection between natives, animality, and savagery. This substitution creates narratives in which each aspect of the African qualities or behaviors perceived as anti-civilization builds on the previous to facilitate future disgust reactions.

In some cases, Belgians are even disgusted with the Congolese *lack* of disgust because they perceive this lack as a marker for primitivism. This is evident in Wack's description of the common African custom of blood-brotherhood, which he calls "strangely barbarous" (33). He reports on the ceremony itself:

Two men who are in no way related having agreed to become 'blood-brothers,' i.e., to live in peace and amity for ever after, meet in the open air, in the presence of the chiefs and people, when a small incision is made in the forearm of each 'brother,' sufficiently deep to cause a little blood to flow. Each mutilated one then licks the blood from the other's arm, and thenceforth they are related as brothers. (160)

Not only does such a sketch seem to bathe the Congolese in a metonymic bloodiness that builds further associations between African bodies and objects of disgust, but Wack's account emphasizes how "normal" this behavior is to the natives. This ceremony takes place "in the open air" in front of a large group of people, not behind closed doors or in the shadows; there is nothing objectionable here for the native, which violates the Belgian sense that Western ideals are necessary and fundamental. Because subjectivity is in part predicated on a sense of necessity, such a ceremony demands disgust as the means of continuing the construction of subject positions. In fact, disgust is linked so profoundly

to civilization as a border-patrolling emotion that the absence of disgust becomes a marker for the primitivism. The disgust that a reader might feel at the depiction of two Congolese licking each other's open wounds is a response both to the concept of blood as a noxious substance and the concept of a group of people who lack the "civility" to be disgusted. The disgust seeks to sustain the "civilized" state of a subject by keeping out the "uncivilized."

The words of Leopold himself certainly testify to the construction of metonymic relationships that produce disgust. In the monarch's "Letter from the King of the Belgians," Leopold offers a message meant to inspire anybody whose faith in civilizing enterprises was faltering. In general, the African is depicted as being under a primitive spell of bloodlust that renders only the slightest trace of discernable humanity. The most sharply drawn picture of the natives concerns their wartime behavior:

Wars do not necessarily mean the ruin of the regions in which they rage; our agents do not ignore this fact, so from the day when their effective superiority is affirmed, they feel profoundly reluctant to use force. The wretched negroes, however, who are still under the sole sway of their traditions, have that horrible belief that victory is only decisive when the enemy, fallen beneath their blows, is annihilated. (286)

This image of the barbarian who gleefully bathes in the blood of his enemies would have undoubtedly stirred the popular association between Africa and cannibalism, a practice that the Western world finds particularly disgusting. As visible in Leopold's remarks about the comparative restraint of Belgians in the Congo, that the Congolese have these disgusting traits sets them up as a contrasting image of barbarism by which Belgian

civilization can be defined. Again, this rhetorical positioning is achieved here through the emotion of disgust.

Actually, under the Western gaze, if the sheer number of references is any indicator, the locus of African animality is the practice of cannibalism. For Western morality, cannibalism is one of the utmost cultural taboos, regarded as unthinkable even in cases for which the alternative to cannibalism is certain death. Disgust scholars have interestingly mentioned cannibalism as an example for the contingency of disgust reactions. William Ian Miller describes the cultural construct: "The fact is that with very little exception all animal flesh from slug to human is nourishing; the same is not true for plants, of which relatively few can be digested by humans. Nature breaks down plants into edible and inedible, and culture is distinctly less intrusive in erecting prohibitions among edible plants than it is in erecting them among animals" (46). Because human flesh is capable of providing nourishment, the aversion to cannibalism must come from another source.

One notable "disgusting" element of cannibalism is its incongruence with the Western definition of civilization and its subsequent threat to that order. Attention to this threat is demonstrated by official documents that precede Belgium's entrance into Africa. The General Act of Berlin, the document emerging from the Brussels Conference, mentions cannibalism in its Second Article, stating that Europeans ought to "to raise them [Congolese] by civilisation and bring about the extinction of barbarous customs, such as cannibalism and human sacrifices" (qtd. in Wack 138). The practice functions successfully in this document as grounds for Europe's civilizing mission precisely because cannibalism, here a taboo associated with the likewise unthinkable practice of

human sacrifice, exists outside of that civilization. This outside element's threat of entry is experienced bodily and ideologically as a disgust apparently powerful enough to inspire the support for colonization.

A second related explanation is the link between cannibalism and animality. In *Dinner with a Cannibal*, paleoanthropologist Carole A. Travis-Henikoff offers a definition for the practice: "Cannibalism is the ingestion of others of one's own species and is practiced throughout the animal kingdom, from one-celled organisms to humans" (23). Her emphasis, both in this definition and throughout her book, that cannibalism was and continues to be practiced by animals of all types continually includes humans within the term "animal." Travis-Henikoff's identification of overlapping behaviors between humans and other members of the Animal Kingdom produces tension by problematizing the man/animal binary. The same tension arises for a European witnessing these overlapping behaviors in the colonial era. As the man/animal binary becomes increasingly problematic with growing knowledge of human practices of cannibalism, such a witness responds to re-establish the organizing binary. Through a *disgust* response, a "human" European is able to posit a cannibal as something outside of humanity—something purely animal—that poses a polluting threat to human civilization.

The cannibal-animal connection is performed and sustained in, for instance, Wack describing one native biting into another like a bulldog. The disgust reaction to such a passage, as Nussbaum explains, "expresses a refusal to ingest and thus be contaminated by a potent reminder of one's own mortality and decay-prone animality" (97). Given that disgust is the refusal to ingest and that cannibalism is the literal ingestion of another of one's own species, the emotion is particularly complex in the case of this practice.

Cannibalism poses a dual threat of entry, then, in that a cannibal's behavior will defile socially and the cannibal's literal consumption will defile physically. Being literally ingested by another human being poses a danger to the self because such incorporation quashes the difference necessary for producing the self/other binary. Susan B. Miller describes the disgust reaction to the behavior: "We think of the cannibal's perverse appetite and ability to rob the Other of human identity and consume a human body as mere food" (174). For a Western observer—indeed, under the Western gaze—a cannibal violates the concept that a human is not an animal appropriate for consumption.

As the act of consuming human flesh is "bloody" and "savage" and colonial discourse points to black, African bodies as engaging in that practice, the metonyms of animality, bloodiness, savagery, blackness, and Africanness converge within colonial discourse in the concept of cannibalism. This perhaps accounts for the extent to which cannibalism is cited in texts emerging from Belgium's presence in the Congo. Wack mentions cannibalism no fewer than twenty times, sometimes throwing it in as an appositive when referring to the Congolese, almost presenting the two terms as synonymous. He often seems to equate the practice with Africa itself, as in this representative phrase which notably employs a bodily metaphor: "the very heart of savage and cannibalistic Africa" (2).

Contributing to the concept that disgust involves a bodily threat, the practice of cannibalism is often posited as something that must be "suppressed" in the manner of a bodily illness. Wack mentions the suppression of the practice multiple times: "Cannibalism has long been suppressed by the Congo Government just as murder is suppressed among civilised communities" (161). Although he equates cannibalism with

a morally disgusting phenomenon like murder, the language of suppression conceptualizes cannibalism as a virulent threat to the body. The threat to civilization and culture is met with the visceral response of disgust, and the mind and body meet.

Given the precision with which Wack describes Congolese cannibalism, he undeniably produces a proximity that enables a disgust reaction. His section regarding the Bangalas is a tremendous example:

Not all the cannibal tribes are so repulsive and cruel as the Bangalas. Most of them eat no human flesh but that of their enemies slain in battle. That source of supply will not suffice for the Bangalas, who make up its deficiency with prisoners or slaves. Having broken their victim's limbs, they place him in a pool of water, with his head supported just above its surface so that he may not drown. After having left him in that position for three days (if he survives so long), he is killed and eaten. Another method is to behead the victim, singe all the hair from the body over an ember fire, and then cut it into pieces for cooking. (162)

If my own response in coming upon this description is any indication, the level of detail Wack provides for how the Bangalas prepare meals of human flesh inspires bodily disgust in the presumably Western audience. A reader feels that emotion exactly because Wack has brought the Congolese practice close enough to pose a threat. This speaks to the connection between the visceral and cerebral in Ahmed's conception of emotion. The component of disgust that prompts gagging—the body's attempt to keep out or expel an unsavory substance—is a bodily response to a *figurative* threat of entry mediated by cultural elements aligned with the mind. Cultural *and* physical proximity combine to inspire disgust, and the mind/body binary is challenged.

Disgust also plays a role in discourse relating to the Congo Reform movement, which emerged after the brutality in Africa came to light. E. D. Morel, a leading voice in this movement, penned his work *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* to promote awareness of the Leopold's enterprising ambitions and their questionable actualization. Morel himself insists that he does not need to do much to make the situation disgusting: "I detest sensationalism, and this appalling Congo business is replete with so many elements of horror that the reader may well be spared anything beyond the enumeration of facts, which in themselves are sufficiently repulsive without any attempt at 'piling on the agony'" (33). All he must do, then, is share the details as they are to inspire the emotion that will move his readership toward subjectivity.

Because he considers trade capabilities as a marker for civilization, Morel begins with economics to build metonymic relationships that pave the way for disgust. The backwards economic system set up by Belgian officials in the Congo was "a system as immoral in conception as it is barbarous in execution, and disastrous to European prestige in its ultimate effects" (xii). He mentions that the Belgian conquest of the Congo is in part dangerous because it threatens "European prestige," a conspicuous byproduct of subjectivity. That Leopold and his associates carried out "barbarous" practices under a European flag damages that subjectivity by aligning Europe with such acts, collapsing the civilized/primitive binary.

Indeed, Morel himself is a subject-in-becoming in part through his emotional response to the activity in the Congo. His very ability to locate barbarism and savagery within Belgians facilitates this movement toward subjectivity, allowing him a speech position to "speak" Belgian barbarism into existence. In *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*,

Morel continually shifts the colonial discourse by locating subhumanity within the Belgians, not the "Arabs" or Congolese. He ends his preface, for instance, by upholding the savagery of the earlier slave trade while situating the Belgians' slave trade as higher on the scale of depravity: "The difference between the two evils is that the latter [Belgian] is more destructive of human life and human happiness, and more demoralising in its cumulative effects than the former was, even at the height of its power" (xvii). All of the references to "Arab" bloodthirstiness and savagery made in the conversation that preceded Belgium's entry into the Congo are thus repeated, and the substitution enables further subject-building disgust. This disgust is explicitly mentioned when Morel discusses the campaign to eliminate the Arab slave trade. "If the extermination of the Arabs had been followed by a decent native policy, it would perhaps have been justified, notwithstanding the fearful havoc and *disgusting* incidents with which the process was accompanied [emphasis added]" (23-4). For Morel, and perhaps his readers, the disgusting feature in this colonial framework is the manner in which the Belgians conducted themselves. Indeed, the Congo State poses the sort of threat that merits disgust, as Morel implies with the metaphor of suppression: "We must go on fighting it [the Congo State] until the diseases it has introduced to Africa and the virus with which it has temporarily saturated a portion of European thought are utterly destroyed" (101). The disease of Belgian practice in the Congo demands a disgust response, lest it invade the body of Europe.

Just as with the slave-traders, Morel draws comparisons between the Congolese and the Belgians. He continually—and remarkably—affirms the humanity of the Africans, though his descriptions certainly still uphold organizing binaries.

They are happy, these people, in their primitive way. Life goes on with much the same monotony as at home. An occasional affray between villages will come as an exciting diversion, accompanied by a good deal more sound and fury than bloodshed... In those native communities, there are good men and bad, just as at home—good according to their lights, bad according to their individual characters, just as at home. Their lights are not our lights, but who shall say which bring the greatest happiness? (34)

He allows the Congolese individuality, declaring that the natives have their own systems of life that are not unlike Western notions of civilization. Hochschild makes the point that this description fits Rousseau's Noble Savage: "in describing traditional African societies he focuses on what was peaceful and gentle and ignores any brutal aspects—which occasionally included, for example, long before the Force Publique made it the order of the day, cutting off the hands of one's dead enemies" (210). Although Morel "writes" the Africans in this way, and in so doing appropriates them colonially, this appropriation achieves an interesting effect—or affect. While the Congolese are certainly posited as below the West, only human "in their primitive way," Morel's description is instructive when it is read against the bloodiness with which he aligns the Belgian agents. Whereas the natives reportedly do not engage in notable bloodshed, Morel's descriptions of Leopold's colonial officers as "rapacious and callous strangers" (160) and of their behavior as "the game of murder and outrage" (110) indicate that they even enjoy violence. This propensity for brutality contributes to disgust responses.

Hochschild's attention to the Congo practice of cutting off hands intersects in another way with Morel's text. Morel writes, "One of the most atrocious features of the

persistent warfare of which year in year out the Congo territories are the scene, is the mutilation both of the dead and of the living which goes on under it, and of which ocular demonstration is given in this volume” (110). Interspersed within his condemnations of Belgian colonial practices are photographs, the subjects of which range from important European figures to images of day-to-day life in the Congo. Some portions of this visual rhetoric offer vivid depictions of the brutality practiced in Africa, and these images contribute powerfully to disgust reactions within the reader. Two photographs in particular can be read as disgusting (see fig. 1 and fig. 2).



NATIVES OF THE NSONGO DISTRICT (ABIR CONCESSION)

(With hands of two of their countrymen, Lingomo and Bolengo, murdered by rubber sours in May, 1904. The white men are Mr. Stannard and Mr. Harris, of the Congo Belolo Mission at Baringa. See letter from Mr. Stannard in the Appendix.)

Fig. 1. A photograph of Congolese holding severed hands (Morel 48).

Morel's attention in the book to descriptions of severed hands informs these images. He quotes a Swedish missionary at length: "When I crossed the stream, I saw some dead

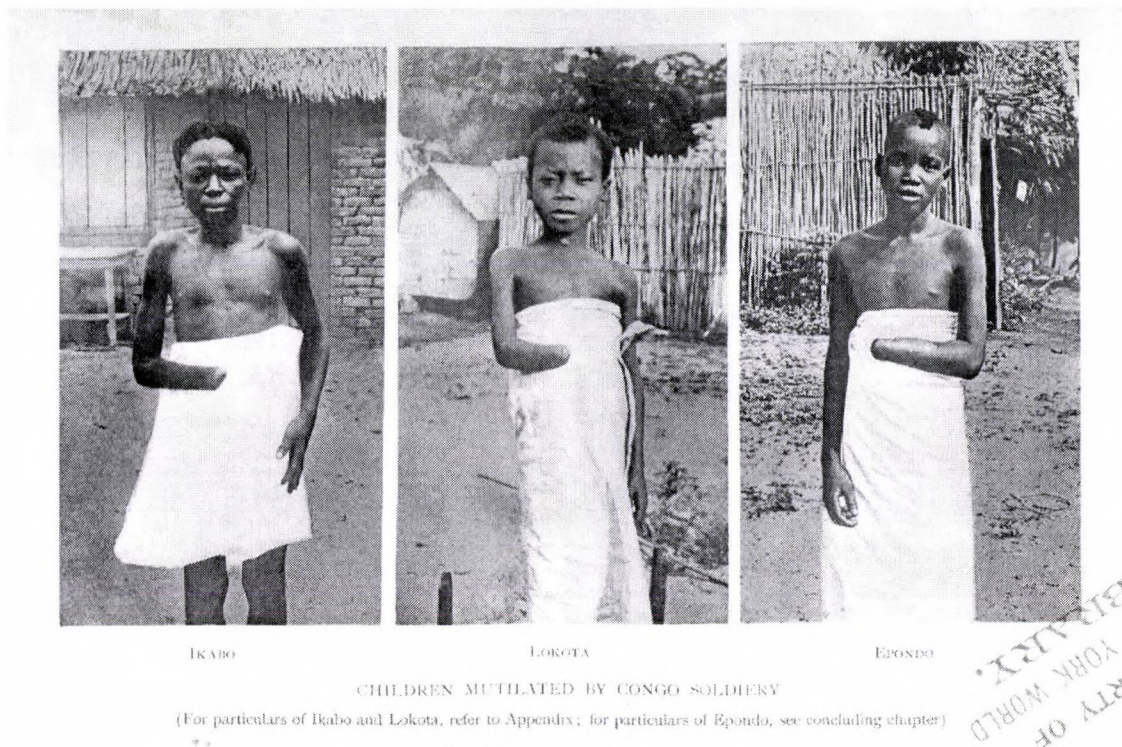


Fig. 2. A photograph of mutilated Congolese children (Morel 112).

bodies hanging down from branches in the water. As I turned my face away from the horrible sight, one of the native corporals who was following us down said, 'Oh, that is nothing; a few days ago I returned from a fight, and I brought the white man 160 hands'" (111). In order not to waste cartridges, those in the Congo were required to produce a severed hand for each used cartridge to ensure the bullet served a purpose—generally, the "necessary" death of a native. This practice is widely described in Congo Reform literature and came to represent Leopold's perceived tyranny. These stark photographs offered by Morel includes many notable components, not the least of which being that the Congolese holding severed hands are flanked by white men. The mutilation of children featured in the second photograph enhances disgust at the colonial practice because it betrays the Europeans' breaking another taboo, violence toward children. This visual rhetoric brings the subject matter tremendously close, enhancing the proximity achieved

by written descriptions. With these photographs, Morel brings the brutality close enough to his readers to provoke disgust.

Morel's text also marks cannibalism's re-emergence in Congo Reform discourse, this time aligned decisively with Belgian State officials. Morel notes that the Belgian agents had the same disregard for humanity that makes the cannibal so frightening, the ability to rob "subjects" of their humanness in viewing them as food. For the agent, the Congo native is not food, but a stepping stone toward Leopold's economic advancement, in a process Morel describes as full of "cruel avariciousness, the callous indifference to human life, the odious hypocrisy..." (28). Here, the Belgians inspire moral disgust, as their hypocrisy is odious. Later in his work, Morel cites cannibalism more directly. Although he does not claim that the Belgians literally cannibalized anybody, he consistently asserts that State officials recruited cannibals and allowed their practices to continue under the Belgian flag. He mentions this in reference to stories emerging from the Congo: "One heard of numerous combats; of cannibal Bangalas in the employ of the State who feasted upon the bodies of natives slain in these encounters" (17).

The image of cannibals feasting would be disgusting to Morel's readership, and further examples he offers go into much more detail. "The Congo State employed thousands of cannibal auxiliaries, and thousands of auxiliaries fought on the side of the Arabs. The Arabs fought for their independence, their ivory markets, and to keep their bodies from *post mortem* desecration at the teeth of the cannibal troops opposed to them" (104). Here, Morel presents a more specific image of cannibals—importantly those employed by Belgians—sinking their teeth into the dead bodies of Arabs. This follows the same pattern as descriptions of cannibalism in other texts from this period, with one

transformative addition: the Belgians are implicitly responsible for the carnage, and the metonymic relationship between cannibalism, bloodiness, savagery, and primitivism extends to include Belgium. Because of this association and the importance of substitution for disgust reactions, Belgium itself becomes disgusting. Again, those who experience this emotion contribute to their subjectivity in identifying an object of disgust.

For colonial discourse, the disgust that draws organizing boundaries is ultimately about relationships. In this passage describing pre-colonial Africa, Wack lists cannibalism among the barbaric practices of the Congo native, linking it directly to concepts of blackness or darkness:

For unknown centuries Central Africa had been people with many millions of savage, semi-savage, and barbarian black men, hidden from all civilising influence. Their social condition varied. Many were cannibals, some were living in a rude state of primitive tribal order, others were at incessant war with hostile tribes, all were living in the gloom of an interminable night of barbaric existence.

(64)

Cannibalism is one powerful marker for a "barbaric existence," thrown together here with other damning associations. In the book *From Communism to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation*, Maggie Kilgour identifies "cultural cannibalism," a metaphoric taking in of the other that she attaches to the colonizers who purport to be disgusted by literal cannibalism. She writes, "This strategy of self-definition against a projected alien group is a version of 'colonial discourse,' the construction of the savage cannibal as antithesis of civilized man used as justification for cultural cannibalism" (83).

In this framework, the Belgians "consumed" Africans by constructing the Congolese cannibal as an animal "alien" against which a Belgian appeared a normal, natural human.

This construction is demonstrated by Wack's above passage and the relationships he draws between terms like warring, savage, barbarian, black, primitive, and gloomy. Important to building the Other as a container for these connected concepts is that the metonymic relationships provide for the very substitution integral to disgust responses. When cannibalism is presented as a morally noxious behavior closely linked with polluting substances like blood or decaying human flesh, and that practice is a ready metonym for blackness, primitivism, and savagery, then the whole of the African embodying these terms demands a disgust response. The emotion and these metonymic relationships continually reinforce and continue the perpetual journey toward subjectivity and a subject position.

Given how disgust functions within this discourse as a "negative" emotion, it seems incongruous that another prevalent emotion featured in colonial texts is love. However, love functions in a similar manner, a point not lost on disgust scholars. William Ian Miller stresses how both disgust and desire operate toward the same goal: discerning "the bounds of the other" in order to determine in what manner the subject and object should be in relationship together (50). This is visible in the relationship between disgust and proximity, that disgust is a *pushing away* that necessarily results from an initial *pulling closer*. This pull and push is not like the manner in which love—its mirror image—functions to draw boundaries. A closer look at love, then, can enhance our understandings of emotion in Belgian Congo discourse.

Ideal Belgians and Colonial Love: Investments in the Failure of Return

In a cove at its upper extremity, where it leaves the river, there lives a tribe of Wa-nunu, who immediately on seeing the flotilla advancing, disported themselves along their sandy shore most ferociously, judging by their manoeuvres. But, poor souls, how much we were misjudged! Even had they kept up the fierce play till doomsday we would not have had aught of unfriendliness for them. Such love as we possessed for them was simply immeasurable. – Henry Morton Stanley

Who we are and who we become depends, in part, on whom we love. – Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon

A narrative of loss is crucial to the work of national love: this national ideal is presented as all the more ideal through the failure of other others to approximate this ideal. – Sara Ahmed

This first passage, from Stanley's account of the establishment of the Congo Free State, is only a small part of one of colonial discourse's most recursive rhetorical themes: love. Given the campaign to end the slave trade in the Congo, Belgian involvement in Africa was predicated on its monarch's professions of love from the very beginning, especially his insistence that the Congo Free State was "the work of material and moral regeneration" (286-87). Leopold's love was historically expressed toward civilization as a whole and, by extension, toward the Congolese to whom he claimed he would bring that civilization. This rhetorical maneuver forged power relationships that enabled both Belgium's entrance into the Congo and her sustained colonial movement.

On the surface, disgust and love seem to be two incompatible emotions. In traditional conceptions, the former involves a strong bodily revulsion and the latter an equally strong affection and desire. However, within Ahmed's framework of relational emotions and sustained affective investments, disgust and love operate similarly to

identify objects of emotion and, in so doing, allow for emerging subjects. Close attention to this emotion, then, in the colonial discourse of the Belgian Congo offers new and instructive ways of understanding the intersecting relationships within the discourse.

Just as disgust scholarship has followed a varied theoretical path since the works of Darwin, writings on love have followed many themes spread across multiple disciplines. Many of these themes are identifiable in Darwin's *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*, for example, which ultimately forwards a view of love as an emotion that has evolved to serve human biological needs. He draws distinctions between maternal and romantic love, describing how each serves evolution's crucial purpose, the continuation of the species. This view persists today in some scholarship. Ada Lampert's *The Evolution of Love* (1997) notes that human sexuality "has become separated from the evolutionary context in which it was selected" (3) and presumably endeavors to resituate the practice and its corresponding emotion within a biological frame.

A hundred and fifty years ago, Darwin also identified a quality of love that each subsequent scholar seems to grapple with: "Although the emotion of love, for instance that of a mother for her infant, is one of the strongest of which the mind is capable, it can hardly be said to have any proper or peculiar means of expression; and this is intelligible, as it has not habitually led to any special line of action" (212-13). While love is naturalized here as a "universal" emotion, its material reality is manifested in a nearly inexhaustible number of ways.

This is perhaps the reason that much scholarship on the emotion seeks to establish taxonomies of love; where researchers cannot fully "explain" love, they frequently rest on

identifying the numerous categories of love. This is the route taken by social psychologists, who began serious research on love in the 1970s. Scholars like C. Hendrick and S. Hendrick and J. A. Lee produced lists of love typologies and styles ranging from selfless and friendly love to practical and maniacal love (Fehr 226). That scholars frequently attempt to elucidate love by categorizing and naming it attests to how powerfully naturalized this emotion is in the Western cultural tradition. After all, within the Western framework, an essential component of life does not demand deeper critical engagement. Stanley's proclamation of "immeasurable love" for the Congolese (2: 4), for instance, would fall under the reductive label of universality.

The same theoretical difficulty of an intensely personal and mystifying experience of love paved the way for a cognitive view of the emotion, which in a way "unlocks" love for study. Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon utilize this approach in *A General Theory of Love*. They write, "Emotional experience, in all its resplendent complexity, cannot emerge *ex vacuo*: it must originate in dynamic neural systems humming with physiologic machinations as specific and patterned as they are intricate" (5). Although love may be experienced within the body, love's origins are seen in this tradition as wholly cognitive. While this perspective further contributes to the mind/body binary, it also offers a window into measuring and ordering the otherwise inexplicable emotion. The explanation that cognitivists provide for love centers on the concept of limbic revision, that continued interaction with what Lewis, Amini and Lannon call "Attractors" strengthens certain neural connections. According to these theorists, "This astounding legacy of our combined status as mammals and neural beings is limbic revision: the power to remodel the emotional parts of people we love, as our Attractors

activate certain limbic pathways, and the brain's inexorable memory mechanism reinforces them" (144). Love is the result of a long-term relationship between two people in which these cerebral modifications have occurred. Interestingly, cognitive theories have included disgust in their conceptions of love. In this framework, the emotion's pathogen link developed to deter sexual contact between close family members.

The notion that an experience of love shapes both the lover and the loved—that giving and receiving love makes us “who we are”—is not far from some current emotion theorists’ views on love and subjectivity. However, these conceptions notably leave the cognitivist view behind. In *The Empire of Love*, Elizabeth A. Povinelli discusses the experience of love situated in government as freeing and constraining. Within her investigation, she examines what she calls the subject-in-love. Within Western cultural understandings, love is sometimes described as diminishing to the self—“I *lost myself* in love.” However, as Povinelli affirms, love is at the same time seen as a process that can produce the self and an individual's sovereignty: “The subject-in-love is like the self-governing subject insofar as both are ideologically oriented to the fantasy of the foundational event. ... But the foundational event of the subject-in-love is thought to happen through a relay with another subject. ... In your gaze I become a new person, as you do in mine” (187-88). The concepts of sovereignty and subjectivity are related because a subject position enables the “freedom” to speak, move, and enact change in the world. The necessity of an other in the love relationship relates to Ahmed's view that emotions emerge relationally, to which I will return later. Ultimately, Povinelli explains, the subject-in-love within a context of modern liberal government maintains a Platonic and perhaps liberal humanist notion of the self. This intersects with Leopold’s historical

moment; during Belgian colonial involvement in Africa, the Belgian government in Europe was the site of increasing tension between the Catholic Church and the emerging “modern” government marked by focus on individual liberty. For Povinelli, this liberty relates to the intimacy of love: an experience of this emotion unlocks a distilled self, a self that the lover has “always truly been” (191). In this way, love is an experience in which modern selves are lost and surface again—“I *found myself* in love.”

Povinelli's insistence that naming and being “ideologically oriented” to love as a foundational event is also related to Alain Badiou's notion of truth-events in *Ethics*. In this work, Badiou argues that subjects emerge through the naming of and faithfulness to an event: “I shall call ‘truth’ (*a* truth) the real process of a fidelity to an event: that which this fidelity *produces* in the situation” (42). Badiou actually identifies the circumstance of having fallen in love as a powerful example of such an event. Because the experience of love cannot be “proven” as verifiable data, lovers in a way create the event by naming it and remaining faithful to it. A subject of love “is *not* the ‘loving’ subject described by classical moralists... [W]hat I am talking about has no ‘natural’ preexistence. The lovers as such enter into the composition of *one* loving subject, who *exceeds* them both” (43). For Badiou and recent emotion theorists, love—like subjectivity—does not occur naturally in the world, but is constructed through a cultural or individual belief in its existence. This view does not deny the visceral reality of love; it only highlights that this bodily experience is mediated by other factors.

Ahmed's conception of love in her chapter “In the Name of Love” deals chiefly with the emotion's potential for producing national unity. In so doing, she intersects with Badiou almost immediately: “Love, that is, reproduces the collective as ideal through

producing a particular kind of subject whose allegiance to the ideal makes it an ideal in the first place" (123). Like a truth-event, a love ideal cannot be definitively proven, only demonstrated through faithful adherence. This fidelity to a national ideal is visible in the segment of Leopold's address, composed after a decade of colonial involvement, in which he describes the completion of a railway in the Congo:

The creation of that fresh means of communication...will connect closely the Congo with the mother country, which will prompt Europe (whose eyes follow us) to take a benevolent and generous interest in all our labors, which will convey to our progress a more rapid and decisive impetus, and which will soon introduce into the vast region of the Congo all the blessings of Christian civilization. (288)

Here, the monarch indicates his view that Belgium—the gendered “mother country”—is an ideal not only for Congolese, but for other European powers.

Importantly, Ahmed theorizes that love functions in relationship to an ideal perceived as a loveable object. Ahmed continues with a structuralist move, citing the "restricted domain of loveable subjects": because a loveable object necessarily exists in relation to an unlovable object, when a subject emerges through naming an loveable ideal, the subject is aligned with ideality of its object—"through the imperative to *idealise some objects and not others*, [the object's] ideality 'returns' to me" (129). For the Belgian Congo, Leopold's assertion that he loves both civilization and the Congolese in their potential for civilization aligns him with the civilized ideal. He not only emerges as a subject who gazes upon an object and deems it loveable; his subject position is aligned with the quality of its object as ideal. For instance, Leopold is transformed into one of the

“upholders of manly tradition and pioneers of progress” when he identifies this ideal in his colonial agents (285).

However, an important distinction is that the subject's quality of ideality is futural. The subject holds potential to become the ideal by identifying with it, but Ahmed's definition of identification includes built-in difference:

So identification is the desire to take a place where one is not yet. As such, *identification expands the space of the subject*: it is a form of love that tells the subject what it could become in the intensity of its direction towards another (love as 'towardness'). Identification involves making likeness rather than being alike; the subject becomes 'like' the object or other only in the future. (126)

The sameness that a subject purports to desire with the ideal object is deferred indefinitely through the subject's continued identification with the love object. In fact, that sameness *must* be deferred because subjectivity is predicated on difference. Such difference is necessary to continue the subject/object relationship.

Indeed, Ahmed's conception of the emotion explains this deferral. When the object of love does not return the love or meet the ideal, the subject does not simply abandon the object. Rather, expressions of sorrow or anguish can act as an evidence of the love, viewed even as an increase of the original emotion. As Ahmed writes, "Even though love is a demand for reciprocity, it is also an emotion that lives with the failure of that demand often through an intensification of its affect (so, if you do not love me back, I may love you more as the pain of that non-loving is a sign of what it means not to have this love)" (130). Distress at the lack of return is an explanation for the need to continue the love—the ultimate loss, after all, would be unbearable. This is why, according to

Ahmed, "*The failure of return extends one's investment*" (131). The love object is maintained because it is deferred, which in turn maintains the difference necessary for the subject position.

In his essay "Of Mimicry and Men," Homi Bhabha identifies difference as crucial to continued colonial involvement, further complicating Ahmed's conception of love and its role in continually-emerging subjectivity. Because difference is necessary to continue the colonial relationship, colonists attach themselves to "a reformed, recognizable Other *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (86). Within the colonial framework, Bhabha sees colonizers' proclamations of love as part of a widespread farce that ensures the continuation of colonialism. Although Leopold declares his love for the Congolese and his desire for sameness, his subject position—and his ivory and rubber enterprise—is only continued through perceiving that the Africans fail to meet the love ideal. As he avows in his address, the Congolese continue to "grappl[e] with sanguinary customs that date back thousands of years" (285). Returning to Bhabha, to ensure that any legitimate understanding of and adherence to the colonizer's ideal is not produced, "[the] success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure" (86).

Although Ahmed does not explicitly claim that subjects deliberately identify inappropriate objects, her notion of how love functions is directly related to Bhabha in her insistence that love becomes an investment in the failure of return. Ahmed specifically discusses British immigration and the expectation that immigrants will meet the national ideal and assimilate: "A crucial risk posed by migrant cultures is defined as their failure to become British, narrated as their failure to love the culture of the host

nation. The failure here is the failure of migrants to 'return' the love of the nation through gratitude" (137). Ahmed's interpretation of workings of immigration relates instructively to the Belgian Congo and colonialism as a whole. The time spent by colonizers—in what is usually conceived of as the benevolent mission of civilization—produces what Ahmed calls an affective quality, what makes the Congolese "loveable." Their failure to return that love through gratitude enacts for the Belgian subject an injury that can be seen as a deep expression of that love and an explanation for its continuation.

This framework can also produce and reproduce power relationships that enable the continuation of a subject position. For the subject who is co-constituted by the naming of a love object, loving an object who consistently fails to return love can be seen as an act of benevolence. As Ahmed explains, "In fact, 'to love the abject' is close to the liberal politics of charity, one that usually makes the loving subject feel better for having loved and given love to someone presumed to be unloved, but which sustains the relations of power that compel the charitable love to be shown in this way" (141). The self-congratulatory tone in some European texts surrounding the Belgian Congo, most notably Leopold's address to his agents, verifies that the love for Africans felt by colonizers was indeed seen as charity. The monarch's very claim of "benevolence" (286) in this document posits Congolese as inherently in need of such charitable attention. Understood here as a state of "being civilized," the sameness continually deferred in the Belgian-Congolese love relationship would apparently fulfill what the West perceives as the Congolese need for assistance. This attitude contributes to the power relationships that continue the European ideal of civilization and enable both the persistent subjugation of Africans and the extension of colonial involvement.

As with disgust, love is not always explicitly named in these colonial texts. However, even when implicit, the emotion functions nonetheless as an organizing frame. Within discourse surrounding the Belgian Congo, Leopold and his agents invested in an ideal object of love without the intention of Congolese success in achieving the ideal. This process of identification and the deferral of sameness through a failure of return begins with Leopold constructing a national ideal for Belgium in which love silently operates: the Western Christian ideal of civilization. Again, as Leopold himself mentions to his agents, the Congolese stand to gain “blessings” of Christian culture through their interactions with Belgium (288).

The Christian narrative of the time emphasizes the injunction of Christ to love one’s neighbor, marked by the importance of demonstrating charitable kindness toward those considered “less fortunate.” The Western Christian model is also profoundly linked to virtues like commitment and restraint, which emphasize “duty” as an ideal. In this framework, a sense of duty is offered as evidence of love, as devoted labor is theoretically carried out on behalf of others in connection to the higher calling of “God’s work.” To be ideally Belgian, then, was to be ideally civilized, restrained, dutiful, and loving, traits codified by New Testament instruction as well as Leopold’s insistence that his colonial agents represent “living evidence of these higher principles” (286).

To draw again from Spurr’s writing on rhetorical tropes in colonization, colonizers in the nineteenth century appeal repeatedly to this Christian model through the language of “Christian benevolence” in colonial campaigns. The resulting self-idealization returns to Ahmed’s explanation of how a national group aligns itself with ideality through identifying an ideal. As Spurr explains, “This rhetoric [of self-

idealization] is deployed on behalf of a collective subjectivity which idealizes itself variously in the name of civilization, humanity, science, progress, etc., so that the repeated affirmation of such values becomes in itself a means of gaining power and mastery” (Spurr). Also, the prominence of love and duty in this narrative offers a tandem benefit: the ready connection between all enterprise—even strict economic enterprise—and love means that nearly all colonial activity can be cast as loving, and the recurring appeal to “God’s work” offers the colonizing nation nearly free reign in spreading civilization.

Beginning with his initial campaign to end the Arab slave trade in the Congo and continuing well past the first stirrings of the British Congo Reform movement, Leopold and his colonial agents forwarded the Western Christian model as Belgium’s national ideal. In doing this, he created a space for a collective Belgian subjectivity—as Ahmed would insist, he utilized love to align individuals with that Belgian collective. In texts from the time, the monarch continually affirms love and benevolence as the markers for Belgium’s civilizing mission in Africa. His “Letter from the King of the Belgians” epitomizes this rhetorical maneuver.

Leopold begins and ends his letter with images of love: “To those upholders of manly traditions and pioneers of progress who survive, I desire to address some words which my heart dictates to me” (285); “I thank our agents for all their efforts, and I reiterate the expression of my royal affection” (288). Later in the address, he calls upon the apparently shared values of Belgian society at large, stating, “Our refined society attaches to human life (and with reason) a value unknown to barbarous communities” (286). The collective ideal he calls upon here involves a recognition and respect for

human life as inherently valuable, a virtue included in Western notions of Christianity.

By later invoking Belgium's "philanthropic influence"—literally the love of people—Leopold also connects qualities like honor, commitment, and benevolence to the Belgian state itself. This is evident in his description of the men who hail from Belgium to work in the Congo.

I am pleased to think that our agents, nearly all of whom are volunteers drawn from the ranks of the Belgian army, have always present in their minds a strong sense of the career of honour in which they are engaged, and are animated with a pure feeling of patriotism; not sparing their own blood, they will the more spare the blood of the natives, who will see in them the all-powerful protectors of their lives and their property, benevolent teachers of whom they have so great a need.

(286)

This passage offers many insights into the Belgian ideal. That the Congo agents emerge mostly from the army—itself a metonym for nation—shows how intimately tied this civilizing mission is to "Belgianness." This connection is strengthened further by Leopold drawing a relationship between benevolence and patriotism; being a strong, patriotic Belgian means, in part, enacting restraint through sparing Congolese blood, protecting life and property, and demonstrating civilization through generosity and goodwill. He also succeeds in describing even acts of war carried out by these officers as acts of love: while they do not spare their own blood, they are reluctant to spill "native" blood. The ultimate subtext of Leopold's address is that the mission to 'civilize' the Congo natives is a selfless mission motivated by love, that greatest of Christian ideals.

Through these rhetorics of love, Leopold ties the Belgian ideal to the nation's very participation in this colonizing mission.

Writers like Stanley and Wack further conflate the Christian love, civilization, and the colonial mission in their work. Both enlisted by Leopold, they continually describe Belgian involvement in the Congo as the honorable labor of a compassionate national collective. Writing after the genesis of the Congo Reform movement, Wack provides an historical overview of Leopold's appeal to other nations to help bring an end to the Arab slave trade in the Congo. Wack mentions European religious leaders who added their voices to Leopold's, casting each as a man—they are all men—devoted to liberating the African continent from primitivism. One representative example is of Cardinal Lavigerie: "It was his appeal to the peoples of the Christian world which witnessed the first organised work of Leopold II., and it is this prelate's indefatigable industry, and his love for these savage souls of Africa, which has largely carried that work to its present fruition" (131). The theoretical understanding of love as the central motivation for involvement in Africa is crucial here.

Also, the "Christian" world to which Wack refers in this passage is undoubtedly meant to describe Western civilization, which reveals how closely linked are Christianity and the very concept of civilization at that time. Wack also connects the language of religion and political ideals like liberty and freedom. This is evident in his curiously gendered description of the loving mission: "All religions combined in the motherhood of the human race and, now thoroughly alive to the principle of human liberty, lent their support to the great cause of African civilisation" (130). Despite the implied religious plurality, Wack identifies only Christianity, again affirming the intimate relationship

between Christian ideals and the ideals of Western civilization. Additionally, Leopold sits squarely at the center of Wack's historical overview; in this discourse, Belgium and its monarch thus exemplify these ideals through their apparent early attention to the plight of "uncivilized" Africa.

Stanley, another key component of Leopold's colonial campaign, prefaces his two-volume *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State* with a brief overview of colonial goals and intentions, highlighting the Congo Free State's philanthropic foundations: "I now commit my work to the public, in the hope that it will effect a happy change for Africa, and give a greater impetus to the true civilising influences which are seen in the advancement of commerce and in the vitality of Christian missions" (1: xv). The ongoing importance here of missionaries bringing civilization to the Congo attests again to Christian love as a foundation for colonization and the basis for the colonial ideal. Stanley's text is punctuated by frequent references to duty, recalling the Western Christian work ethic and ultimately positing colonial involvement as consecrated: "Duty is our law, rule and guide... We are here charged to perform a task which I believe is a sacred one" (1: 152).

Stanley offers greater insight into the components of the ideal through his elated sketch of his "favourite ideal" Congo station, Equator Station. He writes,

Here was a well-governed community of soldier-labourers, impregnable and unassailable by its discipline, and the mutual dependence of one upon another; the chiefs cool-headed, zealous, and prudent, but not too militarily stiff to chill the advances of the aborigines. They possessed sufficient *bonhomie* to be appreciated for their cordiality, yet just distant enough to repress vulgar

familiarity and prevent infraction of the social distinctions that must ever exist between educated intelligence, governed by Christian morality, and unsophisticated barbarism, too light-minded even to become the slaves to savage passion, or the partisans in factious strife among the natives. (2: 72)

This station's ideality is predicated on a few key features. Images of labor and discipline recall the colonial emphasis on duty, while "cool-headed," "prudent," and "cordiality" affirm the necessity of restraint.

Importantly, Stanley includes the concept of social hierarchy under the umbrella term "Christian morality." Crucial to establishing an ideal is identifying those who do not meet the ideal, that they might offer a contrasting image against which that ideal is defined and strengthened. Because subjectivity demands difference, the Belgian alignment with this Christian civilized ideal "relies on the existence of others who have failed that ideal" (Ahmed 124). For Stanley's example of the ideal station, the foil needed is not simply "barbarism," but also relative stupidity and ignorance. These contrasting images involve people who lack even the substance to be overtaken by emotion.

Leopold is more specific, describing the Congolese themselves in terms of their as-of-yet failure to meet the ideal demonstrated by Belgian colonial agents. Set against the Belgian ideal of restraint, "[t]he wretched negroes, however, who are still under the sole sway of their traditions, have that horrible belief that victory is only decisive when the enemy, fallen beneath their blows, is annihilated" (286). Here, the marker for primitivism is again a murderous lack of restraint, an image of barbarity necessary for continuing the Western majority view. However, as love is at its base a desire for integration, crucial to continued colonial involvement in a framework of love is the

affirmation of Congolese potential to meet the ideal. As Leopold avows, “Their primitive nature will not resist indefinitely the pressing appeals of Christian culture” (287). Given enough exposure to Belgium’s civilizing influence, the Africans will be able to integrate into that civilization. Until then, their failure to return the colonial love investment through gratitude and adherence to the Western concept of civilization allows for sustained colonial involvement.

The Congolese are not the only groups who help rhetorically to create the ideal by failing it. In his travel writing, Stanley references “Europeans” who do not meet the Belgian standard of Christian civility, though their precise nationalities are unstated:

Unfledged Europeans fresh from their homes, brimful of intolerable conceits, and indifferent to aught else save what submits to their own prejudices, are not as a rule the best material to work with for civilisation of the African. As the European will not relax his austerity, but will very readily explode his unspeakable passions, the aboriginal native does not care to venture into familiar life with the irascible being. (1: 517)

The faults Stanley identifies are matters of attitude and character, highlighting a certain moral sensibility in the ideal. Here, the European is overly serious, irritable, unrelatable, and prejudiced, all of which are incompatible with the Christian ideal. Also, the importance of restraint is evident in the failing Europeans’ propensity for “explod[ing]” in “unspeakable passions.”

At times, Stanley even demonstrates how some Europeans are further from the civilized ideal than Congolese. While explaining the Africans’ efficient method of woodcutting, he laments: “What a moral lesson for vapid-minded white men might be

drawn from these efforts of untutored blacks to get through their tasks!” (2: 9-10). Duty and competence in work are aligned with Christian values in their description as a “moral” lesson. Further, Stanley explains that any Westerner who does not believe in Africans’ potential for civilized development fails the love ideal:

[Civilisation] feigns to forget by what process England, Gaul, and Belge were redeemed from barbarism; and because at this late hour there still emerges into light the great heart of Africa with its countless millions without the slightest veneer of artificialism over man’s natural state, it thoughtlessly exclaims that the African savages are irreclaimable... (2: 373)

These members of Western civilization fall short through what Stanley calls thoughtlessness, but more importantly, they fail through their unwillingness to identify with Africans and welcome those Africans into civilization. Bearing witness to these and other failures aligns Stanley as an author—and each of his readers—with ideality.

This rhetorical movement operates in Wack’s text through his connecting Leopold expressly with a love ideal. Wack stresses that, while “the great bulk of civilised mankind, too busy to regard [accounts of the slave-trade in the Congo], rested content in the delusion that the iniquitous traffic was a thing of the past” (197), the monarch stands alone in his enthusiastic efforts to draw international attention to the practice. Simply being “civilised,” then, is not enough to meet this ideal; loving attention to the needs of others and a willingness to act are required as an extension of that civilized state. Other unnamed Western people apparently fail this ideal through their lack of compassion and motivation. That the love ideal is marked by action is particularly important in this colonial framework because continued involvement in the Congo becomes a marker for

feelings of love that presumably inspire that action. In this way, the colonial enterprise itself becomes the material love investment.

Because, as Bhabha insists, these “love” investments are merely farcical gestures in which the proclaimed desire to integrate is counter to the actual desire for difference, colonial involvement includes a seemingly incompatible *denial of* and *investment in* difference. Spurr discusses the rhetorical move:

Members of a colonizing class will insist on their racial difference from the colonized as a way of legitimizing their own position in the colonial community. But at the same time they will insist, paradoxically, on the colonized people’s essential identity with them—both as preparation for the domestication of the colonized and as a moral and philosophical precondition for the civilizing mission. (7)

This pattern relates to Ahmed’s conception of identification with the love object—for Belgium, the Congo—and ongoing demonstrations for how the object has failed to return that investment—here, to assimilate fully into Western “civilization.” Leopold and other colonial agents enact this recursive process as a way of maintaining difference to move toward a Western subjectivity predicated on that difference. Indeed, even the writings from the Congo Reform Association draw attention to the ways the Africans have not yet “achieved civilization,” at the same time demonstrating how Leopold has failed the Western ideal.

More than any other author I have researched, Stanley in particular affirms the fundamental sameness of all humanity while still directing attention to the sharp contrast between Europeans and Africans. Stanley continually references “human nature,” a set of

universal behaviors shared by all people regardless of ethnicity. This echoes how nineteenth-century Europeans naturalized Western cultural conventions as the necessary mode of existence, an important component to the colonial message of compulsory cultural assimilation. Because this naturalization lays the foundation for the love ideal, the “human nature” trope contributes to the ironic rhetoric of love.

Stanley takes time to explain how all people are primarily untrustworthy in their proclamations of friendship (1: 376), how all people will only work when exact compensation is specified beforehand (1: 471-72), and even how Europeans and Africans are equally affected by strong weather (1: 210-11). Of the Congolese, he writes, “Whatever progress we may expect of them can only be made in its own good time. Man, of no matter what colour he is, is a slow creature, dull and incapable frequently of judging what is good for himself, or unhesitatingly accepting another’s judgment of what is best for him” (1: 53). That the Congolese—according to Stanley—still cannot recognize their deep need for the civilizing example of Belgian agents is paradoxical evidence of their humanity and thus their inherent potential to be civilized.

As I have noted, Stanley is caustically critical of the Europeans in the Congo who, despite their presence there, deem themselves too distinguished to try and communicate effectively with the Africans. However, he uses this circumstance as a platform for denying difference through his related insistence that, given proper loving attention, communication *is* possible. He writes, “But let the strange white man relax those stiff, pallid features; let there enter into those chill, icy eyes, the light of life and joy, of humour, friendship, pleasure, and the communication between man and man is electric in its suddenness” (1: 248).

Read in isolation, these denunciations of meaningful racial difference seem incompatible with the drive toward subjectivity, but each such example is subsequently overwhelmed by reaffirmations of essential, permanent difference. These are sometimes covert and sometimes readily evident, but each achieves the same effect: keeping the African at arm's length to ensure the potential for Western colonial subjectivity. This is achieved in part through visual rhetorics and the sketches of Africans appearing throughout Stanley's manuscript.

For example, he describes the Congolese desire to take on European styles of clothing, on one level insisting on the Africans' genuine potential for integration while on another drawing sharp attention to difference.

Since this period [of ceremonial visits] my views have been confirmed by larger experience, and I have seen many thousands of dark Africa's sons who would not feel it to be a derogation of their dignity to wear the cast-off costumes of the pale children of Europe, but would put themselves to some little trouble to gather enough raw produce to give in legitimate exchange for them, that they may wear them rightfully and nobly. (1: 131)

Here, Stanley sets the "dark" against the "pale." These words have greater significance in light of the fact that this passage is divided on the page by a sketch of a Congolese chicken seller (see fig. 3).

Set against a description of how many Africans are eager to assimilate with Western traditions of dress, the image of two dark, half-naked bodies is jarring. This illustration is representative of the many sketches in *The Congo and the Founding of its*



Fig. 3. A sketch of two Congolese (Stanley 1:131).

Free State, which commonly depict “native” customs and appearances. Other images include examples of variations in physical appearance and clothing between Congolese tribes, which emphasizes for Stanley’s Western readership the persisting differences between Africans and Westerners. By offering these sketches, Stanley presents Congolese to his audience as a literal object for the Western subject’s gaze, which I will explain in more detail shortly.

Even in his descriptions of Belgian and Congolese interactions which are free of explicit value judgments, Stanley continually refers to skin color and appearance as an almost necessary adjective attached to bodies. The seemingly innocuous markers “white” and “black” appear every few paragraphs in his 1,000-page writing. He occasionally uses

terms like “bronze-bodied” and “coloured,” which are not uncommon for discourse of the colonial era. However, that they fit colonial-era cultural conventions is all the more a testament to the unequivocal importance of racialized difference for organizing Western culture at that time and, arguably, continuing in different contexts today.

One term in particular emerges from Stanley’s writing to affirm that, to draw from Bhabha, the Congolese can ever only be almost the same, but not quite, instead becoming “Europeanised negro[es]” (1: 292). Regardless the extent to which an African adheres to Western standards of civilization, this “achievement” will only be offered as an adjective attached to the colonizers’ perception of that African’s essential identity of blackness. These repetitions of difference further not only Western subjectivity-through-difference, but also the privilege that accompanies European whiteness in this construct. This occurs because, by continually highlighting racial difference, the Western observer enacts a *gaze*, that feature crucial to Lacanian subjectivity. As Spurr explains—interpreting Lacan—the gaze is “an active instrument of construction, order, and arrangement” (15) through which “the world is radically transformed into an object of possession” (27). When the world is an object for observation, the witness is constructed as the subject. This ability to write meaning on the world through enacting a gaze is tied powerfully to notions of agency. In this colonial framework, the Congolese is systematically denied that agency.

The gulf between the stated intentions and the material reality of Belgian colonization was not lost on the participants of the Britain’s Congo Reform movement. The concept of a love ideal appears again in these writings; the authors draw attention to the ways in which colonial agents have individually failed the loving ideal of Western

civilization, making broader connections to colonial leadership and, ultimately, the Belgian crown. Morel's *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* demonstrates this trend, and the text is notable because it seems to be written in direct conversation with Leopold's public speeches at the time. The reformist begins many of his chapters with direct quotes from Leopold's "Letter from the King of the Belgians," sarcastically returning at least a dozen times to the monarch's particular assertion that Belgium's work in the Congo was meant for the "material and moral regeneration" of the Congolese (287). That the Belgians have failed to meet their own proclaimed ideal of loving, civilized Europeans is evident in Morel's many descriptions of the colonial engagement as "evil" (xvi), "the most vulgar swindle" (86), and "a heartwrenching story of odious brutality" (242). Presented alongside Leopold's declarations of Christian love and philanthropic brotherhood, these indictments are peppered throughout the text for an overall message of Belgian hypocrisy, a characteristic in stark contrast to the love ideal: "Stripped naked of its trappings, the policy of King Leopold stands naked before the world, a loathsome thing... Never before has hypocrisy been so successful" (89).

While Morel asserts that Belgians collectively fail the civilized Western ideal because most Belgians "are absolutely indifferent to the African undertaking of their Sovereign" (62), he offers Britain as the nation that *does* meet the ideal. Not only does Morel claim that the British have a "unanimity of feeling" regarding colonial brutality, but he insists that, "Britain in taking the lead in protesting against that condition of affairs, is animated by no selfish motives" (xvi). The British are selflessly motivated by a love of humanity, a quality befitting the Christian ideal.

Also, as part of his Congo Reform writing, Morel specifically addresses how Belgian colonial agents have tarnished the Christian name. A prominent example of this is Morel's insistence that the only people interested in blocking the various testimonies he offers would be:

those who are directly or indirectly interested in concealing the truth, and acting as 'devils'—a term used in law, I believe, to indicate a paid collaborator—to a 'Government' which has befouled Christendom in tropical Africa, and has caused the very name of 'civilisation' in its application to the races of Africa, to stink in the nostrils of every honest man. (228)

While criticizing Leopold, he follows the monarch's earlier pattern of linking Christianity and civilization. In so doing, Morel connects "ideal" Western civilization with the Christian narrative of love. The Congo Reform Association is aligned with this love ideal through reformers' ability to locate both the ideal itself and those who have failed it. Love is again a powerful means of enacting authority and control over an Other, producing hierarchical self/other and subject/object relationships that move reformers toward Western subjectivity.

The rhetorical movement of love ideals also appears in the wave of writings published after reformers mounted allegations against Leopold and his colonial agents. The monarch and the authors he recruits—Wack and Stanley—respond through demonstrations of how members of the Congo Reform Association fail the Western Christian ideal. This is partly visible in Leopold's conversations with the American news media, the arena he selected for his counter-campaign. In a *New York Times* interview from 1906, Leopold addresses the accusations: "I do not deny that there have been cases

of misjudgment on the part of Congo officials...I do deny that every effort, as far as possible, has not been made to stop the ill-treatment of natives, not only by white people, but by natives themselves” (“King Leopold”). Here, Leopold directs attention away from the colonial agents and toward the Congolese, who apparently also brutalized one another. This claim of Congolese failure to adhere to a Western ideal of civilized restraint acts as evidence for the necessity of further colonial involvement.

Perhaps more significantly, Leopold makes additional connections between this failure and *his critics themselves*, drawing on a biblical parable to explain: “The Scripture parable about the beam and the mote is of as much significance to-day as nineteen centuries ago” (“King Leopold”). The parable he cites, appearing in the New Testament gospel of Matthew, instructs Christians not to judge others because such judgments often expose hypocrisy. His passing reference reveals Leopold’s expectation that his audience is well-acquainted with the biblical narrative. Part of his underlying message, then, is that his readership belongs within the Christian ideal. For an American *New York Times* reader in 1906, the likely effect of this interpellation would be identification with Leopold as a Western Christian subject who has been wronged by critics like Casement and Morel. The audience would presumably—and ironically—join the monarch in passing judgment on those in the Congo Reform movement as “failed” Christians. Leopold both scolds his detractors and further aligns himself with Christian ideality in following sections of the interview:

It would be more philanthropic to strengthen our hands, more for the benefit of civilization for all white persons to stand united than for some to abuse us, which certainly does not augment the respect it is good for the African native to have for

the white race. It would be of more interest to civilization to show the natives that Christians have good feelings toward their neighbors. Our God says we must all have Christian fellowship one for another. Certainly this example is not being shown the blacks by those white men who attack the Congo so maliciously.

(“King Leopold”)

Not only does the discord of criticism violate the ideals of Christianity and civilization—two concepts conflated in Leopold’s construction—but it apparently demonstrates how the monarch’s critics are “less philanthropic,” or less loving. Rhetorically casting dissension as counter to civilization and Christian goodwill places Congo Reformists squarely beneath Leopold’s ideal. Aligning these faultfinders with hypocrisy and ill will posits them as subordinate through their inability to meet this ideal. The end goal is to reduce them to contrasting images of deficiency, silencing their voices and limiting their agency.

Emotion theorists have connected the concept of agency not only to love and love ideals, but also to related emotions like sympathy, empathy, pity, and compassion, each of which plays a substantial role in Belgian colonial involvement and its subsequent criticism. In the interests of contextualizing the emotions circulating in these texts, the notion of “culturally-appropriate” emotional responses is important here. Just as disgust was expected in the late nineteenth century as a response to descriptions of cannibalism or other “animalistic” practices, love-related sentiments like sympathy, empathy, compassion, and pity were culturally-appropriate responses to the suffering of others. Colonial texts emphasizing the apparent humanity of the Congolese are a way of depicting African “suffering”; from a Western perspective at the time, their as-of-yet

unfulfilled potential for civilization would be considered pitiable, a suffering the Congolese may not even be aware they are enduring.

To return to Jaggar's assertion that emotions are value-laden, seemingly positive emotional responses like this become problematic in their involvement in the distribution of cultural value and prestige. In fact, these emotions are considered culturally appropriate precisely *because* they reiterate the culture's dominant patterns of privilege. In *Fruits of Sorrow*, emotion scholar Elizabeth Spelman explains that the suffering of others undergoes a "commodification" in the field of advertising: "People who buy and wear a certain brand of clothing are people with compassion for the oppressed" (10). This description is germane to Belgian colonization because, while Westerners did not make literal purchases, expressions of sympathy for the civilizing mission operate in a similar manner. Because these emotions, like disgust, align the "feeler" with a subject position through identifying a differential object, Congolese suffering becomes in this context a commodity for a Western subject position; that is, recognition of and response to African suffering is exchanged for subjectivity. Importantly, this subjectivity continues the same pattern of othering and maintains the subordinate position of the Congolese. In this recursive pattern, emotions like sympathy, empathy, pity, and compassion for the colonized ensure the colonizer/colonized power relationship.

Along with emotion theorists, postcolonial scholars draw attention to how a "positive" emotion like sympathy performs "aboveness" and control. Spurr describes this rhetorical movement: "But even where the Western writer declares sympathy with the colonized, the conditions which make the writer's work possible require a commanding, controlling gaze. The sympathetic humanitarian eye is no less a product of deeply held

colonialist values, and no less authoritative in the mastery of its object, than the surveying and policing eye” (20). Spurr’s use of the term “gaze” here echoes the dual I/eye of subjectivity; through bearing witness to the colonized as an object of sympathy, a Western writer—and by extension a reader—constructs and enacts a privileged subject position over the colonized.

The help that the subject of these emotions can offer the “needy” object varies. For example, expressions of solidarity through empathy are sometimes offered in place of material aid. Megan Boler calls this “passive empathy,” an emotion which “produces no action toward justice but situates the powerful Western eye/I as the judging subject, never called upon to cast her gaze at her own reflection” (161). Through the emotion, the Western subject avoids any critical engagement with the wider discourse that may be the original source of the object’s suffering—here, the discourse of Western subjectivity. Instead, the emotion continues the cultural status-quo. When emotions like pity and sympathy “move” their subjects to offer *material* aid, like bringing charges against the Belgian government to bring an end to colonial involvement, the proclaimed inspiration for such action is still the emotion itself. In this way, even a material response is part of the love-related rhetorical maneuver that reiterates the drive toward the “aboveness” of a subject position.

Emotions like sympathy are explicitly expressed and identified in the texts that support Belgian colonization. Wack describes the stirrings of anti-Arab sentiment that began this involvement as “[a] great wave of sympathy for all enslaved races [that] had spread throughout the civilised world” (130). The initial colonial drive, then, is borne of an emotional response that produces the subject/object difference and establishes that

relationship's hierarchy.

While this rhetorical pattern is manifested powerfully in the campaign for colonial involvement, attention to emotions like compassion is especially crucial to an analysis of Morel's later Congo Reform campaign. In fact, many scholars cite this as the first humanitarian organization, marking the beginning of movements meant to encourage action in part through raising awareness of suffering and inviting emotional responses. Morel was a journalist before his involvement in the Congo Reform Association, and in his writings for this movement he attempts to inspire legal and political action against Belgian leadership, whom he holds responsible for colonial brutality. His method for eliciting this action is to compile and present proof of specific instances of cruelty, through both official economic documents and eyewitness accounts. The expected response to the apparent hypocrisy of the "Christianizing" mission would have been not only moral outrage, but also a mixture of pity and sympathy for the Congolese. Spelman explains the effects these emotions would have their African objects: "On the one hand, compassion tends to organize the resources of the compassionate person in a way that can be enormously consoling and practically helpful to the sufferer. But compassion, like other forms of caring, may also reinforce the very patterns of economic and social subordination responsible for such suffering" (7). For Morel's Western audience, the experience of, say, compassion would contribute to the same pattern of Western subjectivity through its recognition of the African object. Because an Other is still appropriated, this is in some ways a subtle continuation of the original colonization he so passionately criticizes. Those emotions materialize between the Morel's audience and the

Congolese to align that audience with “aboveness” and Africans with “belowness,” producing the difference necessary for a subject position.

This intersects instructively with traditional practices of journalistic representation. In *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, Morel's role is not simply “journalist”; that is, his rhetorical situation is not just the transmission of information for information's sake, but for the explicit purpose of inspiring action against Belgian colonization. Despite this, Morel's writing can be read as a work of journalism in that he claims traditional “objectivity”: “These are facts, and they are not got over by calling a man who points them out a ‘sentimentalist’” (100). Parallels between this writing and Western traditional journalism create a window for analyzing Morel's text through notions of the representation of suffering. Spurr reflects on the conventions of “reporting” on the anguish of others. While he admits that the media can potentially inspire a “practical response” through appeals in a time of turmoil or disaster, Spurr maintains that “the very artfulness of this appeal, the images and techniques on which it relies, allows for a certain nonidentification on the part of the audience, and perhaps even allows that audience to take some satisfaction in the image of suffering as it belongs to the other” (52). The moral indignation that Morel's audience would undoubtedly feel in response to his reports on Congolese agony is not the only factor producing satisfaction in this framework; the simultaneous experience of a “positive” response like pity or sympathy also produces a sense of pleasure through the subject's very ability to extend related compassion. The object of those emotions, after all, is posited as subordinate through “needing help” in the first place.

That Morel's text is meant to communicate Congolese suffering is evident given

his extensive eyewitness reports and images. However, he eliminates any doubt as to this purpose of Congo Reform by offering the following quote from a 1902 *Times* article: “the sufferings of which the picture is given to the world in ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ [sic] are as nothing to those which [Morel] represents to be the habitual accompaniments of the acquisition of rubber and ivory by the Belgian Companies” (qtd. in Morel 127). Because *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was at that time credited with humanizing African slaves to affect social change in the United States just a few decades earlier, this comparison of Morel’s rhetoric to Harriet Beacher Stowe’s illustrates the impact his writings had on their readership in the early twentieth century. (Interestingly, in *Fruits of Sorrow*, Spelman also addresses *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in terms of its problematic potential to continue the existing American power relationships between races.)

A strong component of Morel’s portrayal of African suffering is the collection of photographs of Congolese. These visual images serve a similar purpose to Stanley’s sketch of a chicken seller. Photographs of brutalized Congolese produce what Spurr calls “nonidentification” by implicitly reminding the audience of the differences between themselves and the Africans. Examples of these images can be found in the previous discussion of disgust, as they serve the dual—paradoxical—purpose of inspiring both disgust and love, the latter through pity and sympathy. Indeed, each of these emotions produces Western identities through demonstrating difference.

In addition to visual rhetorics, Morel presents narrative explanations of some of his photographs in the first appendix to *King Leopold’s Rule in Africa*, entitled “Mutilations.” Regarding the photograph appearing on page 46 of this thesis, he describes the specific situations of two of the mutilated children. Morel explains that Ikabo, the

child appearing on the far right, sustained injuries from colonial gunfire that left him with a limp obviously not visible in the image itself. In describing Lokota, the child pictured in the center, Morel chronicles the manner in which the Congolese had his hand severed: when Lokota was fleeing during an attack from colonial sentries, “[an agent] pursued and knocked the baby down with the butt of his rifle, and cut off its hand” (377). Morel’s descriptions emphasize the youth of the pictured children, a rhetorical choice that would inspire emotions like sympathy, pity, and compassion in his Western audience. Significantly, these emotions likely emerge alongside a sense of nonidentification: the images communicate *difference* by presenting racially-marked children dressed in what would be considered primitive clothing—a single white sheet wrapped around them—all against the unfamiliar backdrop of the Congo. The sympathy considered culturally appropriate for Morel’s Western reader would maintain difference through positing the object of the emotion as an Other, a contrasting image of inferiority through the comparatively worse conditions that inspire sympathy or pity.

To return to the guiding premises of emotion studies, when an emotion like love and its residual sentiments emerge between subjects and objects, those emotions constitute the very boundaries between those subjects and objects. This process is intimately connected to Western subjectivity in the enactment and maintenance of difference. Though subjectivity remains futural, the consistent experience and performance of these emotions is part of what keeps a subject position ever on the horizon for Wack, Stanley, Morel, and Leopold themselves, as well as for their Western readers.

Invaluable to any analysis of emotional rhetorics is consideration of the interplay

between different emotions. Love and disgust cannot be critically explored as isolated phenomena; rather, the West's denial of African "humanity" evident in rhetorics of disgust must be understood alongside affirmations of human nature that transcend race, a pattern in rhetorics of love. These paradoxes reveal just how intricate is the emotional framework for colonization.

Conclusion: Understanding Leopold's Postcolonial Legacy

It is important to indicate here that even if emotions have been subordinated to other faculties, they have still remained at the centre of intellectual history. [...] This is not surprising: what is relegated to the margins is often, as we know from deconstruction, right at the centre of thought itself.

- Sara Ahmed

By 1908, Leopold's international standing was so tarnished that the Belgian government compelled him to sell the Congo Free State to Belgium. He died just one year later, feeling abandoned by an ungrateful nation: "All that I have done for my country, I have done without my country" (qtd. in Emerson 265). In place of gratitude, however, the monarch had amassed a vast fortune; Hochschild cites the Belgian scholar Jules Marchal, who estimates that Leopold's personal profit from the Congo exceeded the modern-day equivalent of \$1 billion (277). This illustrates a significant benefit of subjectivity, one strongly articulated in colonial relationships: in the colonizer/colonized construction, the relative privilege of a subject position directs social, economic, and political resources toward the colonizer. My attention throughout this research to the concept of subjectivity is not meant to detract from these material benefits. Rather, I see the subject position as the *primary* benefit of colonization through which other advantages originate.

As I read over this thesis, I am struck by the many opportunities for future research. One such area is the exploration of other emotions in these colonial rhetorics. My earnest hope in this research is that I have not given the impression that disgust and love are the only two emotions at work in these discourses, or even the two most

prevalent. In fact, the entire spectrum of emotion is represented in this historical context. Expanding scholarly attention to this host of sentiments could further illustrate the recursive nature of these rhetorical patterns, how each emotion relates to countless other emotions to build a larger grid of affective investments.

For instance, in discussing initial campaigns for colonial involvement, Morel writes that, although humanitarian pronouncements surpassed envy in this instance, “international jealousies contributed very largely to the Berlin Conference of 1885” (3). An examination of greed and envy could reveal how European powers at the time were economic subjects, especially given that the Berlin Conference culminated in European leadership recognizing the Congo Free State based on the extension of respective free trade rights in the new colony.

As rhetorics of love function in part through expressions of loss when that love is not returned, grief could be another fruitful area of study. Leopold’s “Letter from the King of the Belgians” contains the monarch’s expressions of grief: “The agents of the Congo Free State have in recent times been severely tried. Their ranks have been exposed to cruel and repeated blows of fate. Identifying myself with the unanimous regret of such painful losses, I am anxious to pay a token of gratitude to all who have gallantly sacrificed their lives in the performance of their duty” (285). Here, the Belgian leader communicates a mixture of sorrow, regret, and gratitude, each an opening for further investigation.

Shame also has a powerful presence in discourses surrounding the Belgian Congo. In earlier writing I have done on the Congo Free State, I briefly explain the role of shame in Leopold’s address to his agents in the colony. He presents his audience with an image

of Africans' realization of their "shameful" behavior from Leopold's address: "The example of the white officer and wholesome military discipline gradually inspire in them a horror of the human trophies of which they previously had made their boast" (286). In this passage, Leopold portrays Congolese shame for an exclusively European audience, which illustrates that shame in colonial rhetorics is meant to affect the witness of shaming as much as object of shame. Additionally, some European witnesses to—and even participants in—Belgian colonial brutality express shame. Morel's offers this account from a British missionary, who describes a Belgian colonial agent forcing Congolese labor: "The former white man (I feel ashamed of my colour every time I think of him) would stand at the door of the store to receive the rubber from the poor trembling wretches..." (183).

My decision to focus on disgust and love was the result of my early impression in this research that their affective rhetorics interact uniquely with one another as seemingly incompatible emotions. That these emotions are irreconcilable is precisely what enables the continual drive. The ongoing paradox in the disgust-love relationship between Europeans and Africans in the Congo mirrors a broader rhetorical strategy of colonization: the paradoxical desire for and aversion to the colonial object's assimilation with the colonizer. Because difference from something or someone external from the self is the condition of possibility for a subject in the Lacanian model, the stated colonial goal of "civilizing" is necessarily incompatible with the unstated goal of differential identity and a subject position. This sustained difference continually composes subjectivity for a Western colonial power.

Also important as I end this research is the danger that my writing could

reproduce a reductive image of the Congo Free State, and Leopold himself, as a one-dimensional evil. In her own scholarship from the 1960s, Slade demonstrates a similar sensitivity through her discussion of the disparate treatment of the Congo Free State's history. While Belgian textbooks at the time presented the circumstance through the positive lens of philanthropy, elsewhere in the world Leopold was portrayed as a soulless, selfish tyrant. Slade writes, "There is a certain degree of truth in both presentations; the reality is far more complex than partisans of either view are ready to admit" (ix). To avoid recognizing this complexity would be to fall short of 'authentic' critical engagement. Interestingly, the tradition Slade identifies of taking up a narrative of colonial leaders as evil attests to the same rhetorical patterns theorized by Ahmed: a subject-in-becoming locates contrasting images and assigns them lower value to enact and sustain the privileges of a subject position.

My impression is that the emotional rhetorics I identify in the Congo are still operating to organize meaning, distribute value, and compose Western subjectivity in American culture today. This postcolonial understanding is the expansion I am most interested in pursuing. The leading question I anticipate is of the manner in which these rhetorics are manifested differently to continue serving the same political, social, and economic interests as their colonial predecessors. For instance, recurrent media representations of black males committing violent crimes could be seen as building metonymic relationships between blackness, violence, and criminality. Because our culturally-appropriate response for criminality is disgust, these representations could align black bodies with that emotion. Regarding love, narratives of colorblindness and the current neoconservative trend of denying or erasing difference could be read as the stated

desire for racial integration, which interacts fascinatingly with the liberal move of reiterating difference by “celebrating” multiculturalism. I hope that such scholarship can further elucidate emotion’s role in constructing and reproducing social meaning and, ultimately, disrupt the oppressive structures we have inherited from the colonial era.

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