

Congo Cases: The Stories of Human Rights History

That human rights history constitutes an identifiable genre becomes apparent when we consider the growing body of work that either tries to tell the history of the human rights movement or examines particular historical events through a human rights lens.¹ The human rights lens frames the historiographical project as an exposition of crimes against humanity.² Human rights history uses the frame of crimes against humanity to analyze contemporary history where it might be instrumental in making the case for legal prosecution, or, alternatively, to revisit events from the deeper past and renarrativize them through its criteria.³ The two centers of gravity (histories of the human rights movement and histories of crimes against humanity) reveal divergent ideas of what human rights history is, but they also work in synergy to highlight an emphasis on narrative, which characterizes both. My focus is on the latter type of human rights history (histories of crimes against humanity), with texts about the Congo as my particular example. I contend that human rights history is shaped by a *story of reading* in which the author takes evidence previously ignored or misconstrued but pertaining to well-known events and uses the evidence to renarrativize the events, providing a new story with a human rights–inflected moral center. This process of identifying crimes against humanity by narrating a discovery made through reading ultimately serves the larger enterprise of legitimating the history of the human rights movement by arguing for its capacity to create a broad constituency of people who can see past wrongs in a new light and who are empowered by this recognition to participate in the effort to prevent the repetition of such wrongs.

Stories of reading, instances in which the author refers to his or her own act of reading, illuminate the ways in which reading is a form of experience. Jonathan Culler defines “stories of reading” as our coming to awareness of an agency that lies in the text itself. We experience reading as if the text has the power to act on us, to transform us, yet

it proves no easier to say what is in *the* reader’s or *a* reader’s experience than what is in the text: “experience” is divided and deferred—already behind us as something to be recovered, yet still before us as something to be produced. The result is not a new foundation but *stories of reading*, and these stories reinstate *the text as an agent* with definite qualities or properties, since this yields more precise and dramatic narratives as well as creating a possibility of learning that lets one celebrate great works.⁴

The boundaries between text and reader are blurred, since it is only in reading that both come to life; and, as reading is an experience over time, it can never be fixed. Instead, the story of reading is incorporated in the form of the text. The human rights history refers to reading, asking us to imagine someone else's reading while we ourselves are reading. In this imaginative act, we see ("constitute" is Culler's word) the text as an agent acting upon the reader. Thus our access to the text's agency is highly mediated. Furthermore, it is this kind of layering that takes up much of the energy of human rights history and where its potential to bring the reader to awareness (its "possibility of learning") lies.

Culler's terminology gives us a fresh approach with which to examine the instrumental uses of narrative in human rights discourse. In our stories of reading, we constitute the text as an agent that has wrought change upon us and given us experience. Moreover, Culler deliberately calls this a "reinstatement" of agency, hinting at the infinitely renewable passage to new stories of reading at each occasion of reading. Stories of reading have an empowering effect, giving the reader of human rights history a sense of expansiveness, which comes from the recognition these texts ask us to give. This recognition is often duplicated by the actors in these histories, who themselves undergo a recognition/conversion experience for us to see. In texts of human rights history, therefore, we might find accounts of the authors' stories of reading, moments when they recognize something new in a familiar narrative that enables them to recast the entire narrative in a different light. In addition, we might also find the representation of the moral awakening of the key actors. The recognition by the author of what he or she already knew is a key narrativizing moment for human rights, one that seeks to cast atrocity as a truth denied and now urgently foregrounded in order to create a delayed but forceful response.

Furthermore, human rights history as a genre distinguishes itself from the human rights report. Unlike the report, it does not claim to be the first to expose abuses. Instead it revisits an already known history and tells it differently.⁵ As "history," such texts have the advantage of more extended hindsight than a human rights report, but this is not the only difference. A human rights report, like human rights history, seeks to shift our sense of scale; something unimportant becomes important. The report does this so as to create an awareness of emergency. By making us conscious that we have misread the past, human rights history provides instead the satisfaction of having set things right, affirming our participation in this change by our act of reading, and situating the experience of reading as an end in itself.

As I have noted, the impact of reading is foregrounded by the story of reading dramatized within the text of human rights history. The author must tell us of his own reading experience, making form into content, as Hayden White explains:

I move from the consideration of history as an object, a content, the form of which is to be perceived by the historian and converted into narrative, to that in which the form provided, the narrative actually produced, becomes a content, an object of reflection on the basis of which a truth about history-in-general can be asserted on rational grounds. And this raises the problem of the possible content of that truth and the form its affirmation must take.⁶

White famously reverses our assumptions of how historical narrative is constituted. We do not glide from reality to narrative but travel through story first. He urges us to see narrative as the form of history, its content, thus enabling us to reflect on the truth of “history-in-general” as a subsequent step. As Edward Said put it, “Facts do not at all speak for themselves, but require a socially acceptable narrative to absorb, sustain, and circulate them.”⁷ Such framing and narrativizing of events is constantly being renewed. The emplotting function of the historian negotiates forms of stories as instruments which mediate the process of arriving at historical understanding. White insists that “every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to moralize the events of which it treats.”⁸ Human rights history as a genre is able to revise and retell familiar stories because its main motivation lies in the remoralizing, emplotting function rather than the exposition of new facts. To turn to Said once again, “where are facts if not embedded in history, and then reconstituted and recovered by human agents stirred by some perceived or desired or hoped-for historical narrative whose future aim is to restore justice to the dispossessed?”⁹

This sketch of human rights history as a genre is, of course, provisional, and what follows here is an analysis of three texts, of which only the first, Adam Hochschild’s *King Leopold’s Ghost*, is paradigmatic. The other two, Bryan Mealer’s *All Things Must Fight to Live: Stories of War and Deliverance in Congo* and Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja’s *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People’s History*, both come up short of the narrow focus on crimes against humanity.¹⁰ But they do show us a lot about how stories of reading condition the form of human rights history. All three texts are part of a cluster of books about the Congo that began appearing in the mid- to late 1990s and reflect a resurgent interest in the history of Central Africa after the 1994 Rwanda genocide and its deeply destabilizing consequences for the entire region. My three examples attempt to recast the Congo’s history by resisting the persistent construction of the Congo as the “heart of darkness,” with Hochschild and Mealer making explicit references to Joseph Conrad’s novel. For Nzongola-Ntalaja, the Congo as “heart of darkness” is one of the underpinnings of imperial history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that must be cast aside by shifting the focus to the Congolese people as historical agents.¹¹ Hochschild interprets the “heart of darkness” theme as the story of the moral conversion of the witness. Mealer, who unlike the other two is a journalist rather than a historian, demonstrates his awareness of the narrative conventions of writing about the Congo by imitating several of them (including the adaptation of *Heart of Darkness* into a story of war in the film *Apocalypse Now*), confirming the centrality of renarrativizing to human rights discourse.

In my examination of these texts, I delineate three types of emplotment for human rights that are not intended as an exhaustive typology but rather as a preliminary mapping. Each of the three types of plot presents a different construction of the heroic. The first type is the moral crusade which is temporarily thwarted but holds strong promise of fulfillment in the future; the second is the witness of a lone journalist or rapporteur who tells of a seemingly unending and unassimilable series of horrors but positions himself as a redeemer witness struggling to create a vision of hope; and the third is the collective story of a democratization movement which constructs a heroic people whose efforts also fall short but must be sustained.

All three types of emplotment put emphasis on what the story moves toward, on the kind of closure it proposes, despite the setbacks that are part of the historical account of events. In human rights history, there is an a priori investment in the progressive narrative of human rights as a movement. The closure of the narrated events often takes the form of a setback that is perceived as having contributed to previous misreadings of these events but is now pegged against the larger progressive narrative. The key questions, therefore, become: how big is the setback of the moral crusade in relation to the pace of human rights progress? How permanent is the sense of failure in the rapporteur's despairing witness? How long do the people have to wait for democracy? Moreover, emplotment is also implicated in the imagination of place. This is perhaps most glaring in the case of the rapporteur who enters the Congo as an outsider with a distinct sense of arriving at a topos called the "heart of darkness" and then leaves it behind to give witness to an audience that perceives itself as distant and different. By contrast to the rapporteur, Hochschild emphasizes his research in European archives, and Nzongola-Ntalaja is a Congolese activist and historian. Insofar as all three texts respond to the "heart of darkness" motif, they must confront the disjuncture it creates between two places that posit distinct and irreconcilable narrative possibilities. Conrad's novel dramatizes the idea that a lie fractures the historical, retrospective narrative of the civilizing mission. His protagonist, Marlow, tells one story to his listeners on the *Nellie* and another to Kurtz's Intended. The narrator in turn frames this lie, the double story, making it seem permanent, a static feature of the reality itself. Exposing the lie is the narrator's motivation for telling Marlow's story, but by repeating and failing to explain it, the story launches the lie anew. Human rights history thus can be said to be haunted by a permanent doubling: the version appropriate back home and the version discovered in the field, or the library. Negotiating this doubling, returning to the blind spot of the lie and exposing it, is a productive gesture that seems infinitely renewable. In what follows, I examine in turn the three texts of Hochschild, Mealer, and Nzongola-Ntalaja and posit my own stories of reading in an attempt to elucidate how the genre of human rights history works.

The Moral Crusade: Revelation and Concealment

In her review of *King Leopold's Ghost*, Michiko Kakutani summarizes Adam Hochschild's contribution to the literature on late nineteenth-century Congo with the succinct "Kurtz wasn't fiction," thus highlighting Hochschild's defense of Conrad's historical evidence.¹² The irony of a historian defending the evidence deployed by a novelist should not be lost on us, yet this reversal of authority is less surprising than it seems, as the borders between narrative history and the historical novel have always been porous. A modernist text that foregrounds ambiguities of meaning and troubles our sense of the real, *Heart of Darkness*, however, has been read not for its historical reference but for its groundbreaking style, achieving its cultural influence as a tale of interiority for which the novel's setting serves as metaphor.¹³ On the basis of such a reading, Achebe rejected the novel as racist, arguing that it treated the African experience as background, its people as a prop.¹⁴ The return to the real signaled by Hochschild's reading of the novel has had a wide influence and has created a shift in pedagogy, changing how the novel is read in the college classroom.¹⁵ This turn to the

historical probably does little to satisfy Achebe's objections, however, as it still fails to show Africans as historical actors, even as it puts the spotlight on the evil deeds of imperialism and its discourse.

In *King Leopold's Ghost*, Hochschild's story of reading goes as follows. He recounts how he first read about the death of millions in a text in which Mark Twain was cited as a participant in the movement to eradicate slave labor in the Belgian Congo. In a direct address to his reader, Hochschild admits his embarrassment at his ignorance of Congo's history despite the widely published nature of these facts and his own firsthand knowledge of the Congo. He had visited Congo in 1961 to interview a CIA agent about the role of the United States in Patrice Lumumba's assassination.¹⁶ In this story of reading, Hochschild minimizes the value of his travel experience and privileges his role as a researcher of the archive instead. Furthermore, by casting doubt on one's ability to know the Congo by going there, he makes an ironic reference to the inscrutability of the "heart of darkness" as an actual place. His deepening understanding of the Congo's history gelled when he realized that he already knew the Congo's history from Conrad's novel.¹⁷ Thus his recognition took the form of a reinterpretation of the novel, which he had read before as Freudian allegory, hence "fiction," and now suddenly recognized as history.¹⁸ The Congo as "heart of darkness" is placed urgently in front of us as that which we have forgotten. Although it acquires a past, it has a static quality, reappearing in a similar guise, one in whose darkness we now recognize our complicity.

But even the recognition of our complicity that Hochschild foists on us is not new, since Kurtz as a character confronted us with it and we (like Hochschild) have encountered him before, although we have repeatedly mystified him to mean other things. The already-told is available for reanimation in a new narrative because it is haunted by the uncanny specter of complicity, which draws us back to it. Hochschild warns us that we are living the consequences of the "great forgetting" of Congo's colonial history.¹⁹ His text, however, exhibits a paradox typical of human rights histories. Although he can point to a number of other prior texts that contain the facts of his narrative, he claims to be telling the story against the pressures of forgetting. The bibliography of scholarly works from which Hochschild draws legitimates his effort, while at the same time he presents this body of work as constituting a forgotten history. *King Leopold's Ghost* is a synthesis, but more importantly a retelling, a reinflection of previously told stories.²⁰ It is situated in a chain of stories that take on a pattern of revelation and concealment, the identification of which becomes Hochschild's task.

Hochschild's account pits ambitious imperialists, Leopold and the explorer Henry Morton Stanley, against the crusaders of conscience, most prominent among them Edmund Morel and Roger Casement, to tell the story of what he calls the "first great international human rights movement of the twentieth century."²¹ His narrative is composed of finely crafted portraits of individual actors that assess their moral caliber, ambition, and capacity for leadership. Stanley is first sketched sympathetically, made unfamiliar to the reader by reference to his real name (John Rowlands), Welsh origins as an abandoned "bastard" child, and his ability to rise beyond his limited means. Stanley's capacity to reinvent himself, however, leads Hochschild to defamiliarize him

once again. He deconstructs the heroic explorer by confronting us with the instrumental role Stanley played in helping Leopold establish his exploitative and violent hold over the Congo. Hochschild repeatedly contrasts Stanley's tolerance for violently subjugating Africans to the awakened conscience of the witnesses to this abuse, the moral crusaders of what eventually amounted to the Congo Reform Movement.

Stanley and Leopold both are affected by the failure of the ethos of domesticity and sentimentality. Hochschild identifies Charles Dickens's influence in Stanley's early sentimental narratives of himself, which capture the sense of shame he was fleeing.²² Leopold is portrayed as seeking refuge from an unhappy marriage in his imperialist ambitions. Unlike his cousin Victoria, who symbolized domestic sentimental values, Leopold's royal household was emotionally dysfunctional. By characterizing Stanley and Leopold in terms of the failure of the domestic and the sentimental, Hochschild displays his own awareness of how genre becomes content. The moral crusade, like the imperial adventure, provides a contrast to the domestic, but it takes its protagonists reluctantly away from the hearth. It is a sacrifice of the ordinary life in order to safeguard its values for others. Edmund Morel, an ordinary man with "an ailing mother and a wife and growing family to support," radically redirects the trajectory of his own life when confronted by evil. He comes to exercise a high degree of moral influence, bringing to light the exceptional nature of the "ordinary."²³

In what amounts to yet another story of reading, Hochschild discovers the phrase "crimes against humanity" in the writings of George Washington Williams.²⁴ An African American who was at various points a soldier, a minister, a lawyer, and, most importantly for Hochschild, a "pioneer among American historians in the use of nontraditional sources," Williams was one of the first to raise the alarm about Leopold in an *Open Letter* addressed to the monarch and published in 1890.²⁵ Having gone up the Congo River and discovered that the colony described by Stanley as exemplary was far from that, Williams outlined an indictment of Leopold's policies. To demonstrate how thorough Williams was, Hochschild gives a detailed synopsis of the pamphlet, reproducing its salient points as a list that takes up two pages of his own text. The list brings to light what was once known and then concealed, so that Morel a few years later had to rediscover the same facts.²⁶ Williams used the phrase "crimes against humanity" (the phrase that "seems plucked from the Nuremberg trials") in a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State.²⁷ Hochschild turns to Williams not to discover the facts about the abuses but to link the type of reporting that Williams was doing to the moral lens of "crimes against humanity." Because of Williams's standing as the first to decry Leopold's abuses, his use of the phrase puts the entire campaign against Leopold under the umbrella of this term. It is Hochschild's recognition of this convergence that makes his text paradigmatic of the discourse of human rights history.

When Hochschild talks about Williams's outrage at the abuses he witnessed, he does not hesitate to assert that "Williams's concern was human rights."²⁸ The term does not seem anachronistic to him, and by applying the label "human rights" he is interpreting Williams's actions. Hochschild's interpretation is what the reader wants from his text. Reading *King Leopold's Ghost* provokes a powerful identification with those who protested the horrors, and only secondarily and as repetition does it teach

us that such horrors occurred. It tells us the story of a moral crusade, the Congo Reform Movement, and is itself a moral crusade for a particular type of historical practice that seeks to apply a human rights lens to the past's "crimes against humanity."

The paradigmatic heroes of Hochschild's human rights history, Edmund Morel, Roger Casement, and Jules Marchal, are portrayed as readers. The book begins with Hochschild's account of how Morel intuited that atrocities were occurring by wondering about the evidence that was in plain sight on the docks of Antwerp, but which no one else seemed to be probing. If ships were bringing valuable cargo from the Congo and only taking back "officers, firearms and ammunition" to Africa, then, Morel concluded, no trade was taking place.²⁹ Deeper into Hochschild's text, we learn that Morel came to scrutinize the activity on the docks after examining the accounts. By carefully reading the numbers, he concluded that the figures he compiled for his employer, the Liverpool firm Elder Dempster, and the figures published by the *État Indépendant du Congo* were discrepant.³⁰ To understand what the difference in figures was telling him, Morel scrutinized the activity on the docks, which he now saw as evidence of slave labor in plain sight. The shipments of ammunition from Antwerp back to the Congo could only mean that extreme coercion was taking place. Morel linked two places, two geographies, and different moral orders by reading the books. Without his ability to make a narrative out of double entry accounting, the visual evidence would not have been intelligible.

The value of the Congo Reform Movement, Hochschild concludes, was to "put a remarkable amount of information on the historical record" and to create a "tradition," or as he explains, "a way of seeing the world, a human capacity for outrage at pain inflicted on another human being."³¹ We as readers of Hochschild now locate ourselves in that "tradition," and we are beneficiaries of the historical record, which is there to be mined over and over. Both of these objectives (creating a historical record and a "way of seeing the world") propose a long-term effort in which a dynamic of revelation and concealment plays itself out. Hochschild's history can be read as a chronological account of one witness after another coming forth with his revelatory story of reading, only to have it be forgotten or somehow hidden from view until it is rediscovered by a later figure to become his story of reading and revelation.

Hochschild's narrative of Casement's contribution to this chain of stories follows the pattern of revelation and concealment. But Casement was primarily the reader of his own text, at once revealing and concealing what he discovered in his negotiation of different genres of writing. Casement transformed the language of his diary, in which "his horror pulses through the cryptic pages," into the "formal and sober" language of his report, inventing in the process, according to Hochschild, the style of the human rights report of the future.³² The historian after Casement, who can read both the diary and the report, is privy to another revelation: how Casement shaped the rhetoric of his testimony. Casement's place in this chain of stories is also important because of his encounter with Conrad in the Congo. Hochschild suggests that Casement's stories "see[m] to have darkened Conrad's vision of colonialism in Africa."³³ In a letter that is often quoted, Conrad said of Casement: "He could tell you things! Things I have tried to forget, things I never did know."³⁴ The contradictory impulses

of revelation and concealment are apparent in Conrad's statement, as is their willfulness. Those things "I never did know" could be either things he literally never knew about or the things he did not want to know about. The phrase does not resolve this ambiguity for the reader; it does not tell us whether the speaker embraces his new knowledge. For Conrad, the ambivalence marks Europe's pervasive complicity in the violence of imperialism in Africa. As Hochschild reminds us, "Conrad said it best, 'All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz.'" ³⁵ But it is telling that Hochschild associates the Conradian sensibility of at once noting and denying moral unease not with modernist aesthetics but with Conrad's experiential difficulty processing what he saw and heard in the Congo. By contrast to Conrad, Hochschild navigates the same territory with moral assurance. Differences between the two texts are hard to ignore. The awakening experienced by the witnesses to atrocity is rendered by Hochschild as a form of heroism, whereas Conrad exhibits less confidence in the meaning of Marlow's experience. His frame narrative with two endings is a conceit which repeats the pattern of revelation and concealment: the frame reveals the lie, but the lie still succeeds in hiding its substance, since the revelation amounts to the fact that a lie was told without providing an explanation of Kurtz's experience.

Hochschild further illustrates the pattern of revelation and concealment with the example of the Commission of Inquiry Report from 1905, a report produced for Leopold to dispel Morel's and Casement's accusations, but which instead strongly corroborated them. Although "couched in bland and bureaucratic language," the report's evidence was explicit and, even more importantly, was drawn from interviews with Congolese. ³⁶ The archive with the Congolese's testimony was inaccessible to scholars until the 1980s. The African witnesses are not quoted directly in the report, which summarized the findings, transmitting them in "generalities." ³⁷ So whereas the pressure exerted by the Congo Reform Movement prompted the production of the report and the creation of an archive that would not otherwise have been available, the exclusion of the Congolese's direct witnessing in the report silenced their voices, which remained hidden away in the archive awaiting rediscovery.

The Belgian diplomat and historian Jules Marchal did the most significant archival work underpinning Hochschild's history. The beginning of his story follows a familiar pattern. Posted at the Belgian embassy for Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in the 1970s, Marchal saw a reference in a Liberian newspaper to the millions of Congolese dead at the beginning of the century. ³⁸ At first, as a Belgian official, he sought to deny this statistic as defamatory, but as he looked more closely into the evidence, he became aware that the official record had been distorted. Thus Marchal's commitment to this project begins as a story of reading that led him to work on recovering and recreating the record of the atrocities. Because Marchal's archival work uncovered interviews with Congolese, he helped bring into play in this chain of stories their voices. His reading of the Liberian paper showed once again how the truth was in plain sight in one domain, circulating as an uncontested fact in an African newspaper, while hidden in another, cast out of view in the European archive. Marchal had to wait eight years to gain access to the records collected for the Commission of Inquiry Report.

Belgium's identity as a historical victim of the Germans placed the country's history beyond scrutiny and facilitated the forgetting of the truth about its imperial

rule.³⁹ By contrast, the Congolese remember the turn of the century as “the overwhelming,” a powerfully allusive term that intimates a different kind of erasure.⁴⁰ The moral crusades of Morel and Casement and, later, Marchal also aimed at an overwhelming of sorts but fell short of creating a lasting urgency about the issue. Hochschild, moreover, links an African forgetting to the lack of recognition of the Congo Reform Movement. The poverty of the African collective memory of the atrocities is a consequence of the more culpable forgetting by the European and American publics of the Congo Reform Movement and what it revealed about Belgian rule. Hochschild’s narration of Marchal’s efforts to reconstitute the historical record turns Marchal into the crusader for the African memory of the period. Marchal’s significance in the chain of stories also lies beyond *King Leopold’s Ghost*. Hochschild was instrumental in the publication of an abridged translation of another of Marchal’s works related to the history of atrocity in the Congo, *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts*, which examines the period from 1910 to 1945 and the extraction of palm oil. The analogous titles of Hochschild’s and Marchal’s (translated) work link the two texts, reversing our sense of their order of publication, since we now identify *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts* as coming after Hochschild.⁴¹ Once again the dynamic of revelation and concealment is foregrounded. *Lord Leverhulme’s Ghosts* comes to light as a result of Hochschild’s reading. The text is an exposé of another player in Congo’s colonial history, Leverhulme, who is both new (we had forgotten about him) and familiar, in the mold of Leopold. The chain of stories moves backward, retrieving texts from the past, before it moves forward to expose the new. By making Marchal’s text available in English and in a form more closely analogous to his own text, Hochschild extends the tradition, strengthening his own claim to it by becoming a link in the chain.

The Redeemer Witness

The redeemer witness seeks to salvage the progress narrative, to find evidence of change for the positive. He searches for evidence that will cast aside the topos of the “heart of darkness” and its association with crimes against humanity. The act of witnessing, an “I must see for myself” imperative, is the action. Thus the redeemer witness does not seek to transform, or intervene, but to see and report. Journalists who report on human rights abuses want to “*say something that was true*.”⁴² However, truth alone does not redeem, especially when the “truth” confirms Congo’s regression since independence, an impression which accompanies the image of Congo as static and unchanging. Bryan Mealer plays with this stereotyping language, characterizing Kinshasa as a city that “seemed to have frozen in time and crumbled with the thaw.”⁴³ Stasis moves regressively, whereas we learn from one of Mealer’s translators on the boat trip up the Congo River that “the most important thing is forward progress.”⁴⁴ The literal and metaphorical here travel together, and Mealer’s quest becomes focused on finding signs of progress in the form of “recovery” from the war.⁴⁵

All Things Must Fight to Live stitches together a single narrative out of multiple trips to the Congo which Mealer took from 2003 to 2007, being interrupted by text in italics describing his personal life in the United States in the interludes between trips to the Congo. The personal narrative progresses from romance to marriage to home ownership in spite of the danger of their derailment, due to Mealer’s long

absences and stress as a war reporter. Furthermore, the Congo experience is integrated into this narrative of the self through a fiction of containment. Containment of the war stories, the dark material of Mealer's experience in Congo, is presented explicitly as the book's last gesture:

So I gathered [the stories] up for one last hurrah, and led them down the path to the dark place at the end. And there on the trail sat the box I'd opened so long ago. I folded each story into the collective memory and placed them down inside, then closed the lid. And without looking behind me, I walked off into the trees.⁴⁶

The "dark place at the end" is one more repetition of the "heart of darkness" motif. Stories of this place, although already published during his years as a war journalist, should stay in a "box," under a "lid," at the "dark place in the end" lest they contaminate his determination to be hopeful, as Mealer walks "into the trees," now away from the "dark place." Mealer turns the forest into a metaphor for the personal journey, transformed by its distance from the dark stories sealed in the box and left behind, mimicking the archive.

Conrad's novel enables the coherence of Mealer's personal narrative by serving as a place marker for the unassimilable, represented by Kurtz. Mealer can allude to the "heart of darkness," just as he can allude to Leopold's horrors through Hochschild and to the challenges of the Congo River environment through Stanley. The past revelations of others license his act of concealment, distancing him from his role as war journalist. Mealer faults himself and journalists in general for being unable to make the war in the DRC relevant to the West during this period.⁴⁷ His own presence, his "bootprints" on Congolese soil, have sunk "below the camouflage," the meaning of their traces left for someone else to uncover.⁴⁸

Mealer's war reporting (the first three chapters of the book, which I will contrast with the last two) exhibits the classic problems of ethnographic authority, revealing a text that lies about its own assurance in producing an "objective" account of a static other. His way of narrating events often obscures the influence of his own role in creating the conditions for his witness. The best intentions to be truthful are put at risk by the imperative to follow a script, which despite its rhetoric of overcoming is determined by the opposition that divides the places of anomie and civilization. These very categories (anomie, civilization, war front, home front) are the lens through which the redeemer witness sees, trapping him in their polarities.

Reporting on the war, Mealer systematically borrows from his sources and recasts the narrative from an unattributed point of view as *this is what happened*, especially when it addresses acts of extreme violence. Thus the book's opening recounts the events of the Drodoro massacre on April 3, 2003, from an omniscient perspective.⁴⁹ The gruesome details of the Lema warriors' atrocities are presented from an omniscient point of view, although the reader learns subsequently that the incident occurred before Mealer's first visit to the region, and hence we can assume that he acquired the details from others. Mealer describes acts of cannibalism: "Down the road, survivors kept still in their hiding spots while several warriors opened the chest of a dead man, cut out his heart, and ate, blood streaming down their wrists."⁵⁰ We also learn that "others saw . . . a lone warrior crouched in the road, feasting on the

open organs of a man he'd just killed."⁵¹ Exhibiting yet another kind of doubleness typical of human rights history, Mealer's text feels like a composite, part reporting and part memoir. In a memoirist aside, therefore, he reports that his translator, Johnny, confessed to having witnessed this second incident: "I saw them do it" and "I never believed it was true, but . . ."⁵² Johnny's point of view is the closest surrogate for Mealer himself. The Western discourse about Africa is marked by such disclaimers, in which Western observers disclaim their proximity to violence while soliciting an alternative type of participation through the act of narration, inviting the reader's consumption of the story as "a surrogate for the performance of violence" and a confirmation of mastery.⁵³ The pleasure in such fascination is one manifestation of the mastery over the other enacted through reading. The narrative relies on Johnny not so much as a Congolese subject but as an intermediary who can verify the most atrocious acts without Mealer being sullied.

Events are difficult to assimilate into story, especially in accounts of war in which the norms of behavior are violated. White points out that "narrative becomes a problem only when we wish to give to real events the form of story. It is because real events do not offer themselves as stories that their narrativization is so difficult."⁵⁴ However, despite the impression of immediacy created, Mealer in his war reporting is recounting events that are often transpiring at an elusive distance, especially when the action is in the forest. He turns the resistant real into story by aligning his narrative with what's been said before. Retrieving the terrifying rebel commander "Cobra" from the forest, therefore, echoes the narrative of getting Kurtz out of the forest. Each repetition, however, is anticlimactic. After much tension and fear, "Cobra" emerges, alive and ready to negotiate.

After several years of reporting on the war, Mealer "decided [he] never wanted to see it again, not there anyway, and if [he] continued to pursue this death and decay, then death and decay would forever be [his] memory of Congo."⁵⁵ To change his memory of Congo becomes his goal. In the last two chapters, therefore, he abandons his war reporting in order "to see those places that weren't bleeding or blown to hell . . . to meet people whose lives were moving a little ways forward."⁵⁶ He undertakes two journeys to the interior, one by boat and one by rail (chapters 4 and 5), self-consciously following in the footsteps of Stanley and Leopold, and continuing to make references to Hochschild's history as well as Stanley's travel accounts and Conrad's novel.

The boat journey up the Congo River to Kinsangani enables Mealer to experience Congo at eye level instead of from above, which was how he had experienced it being flown in and out of war zones, escaping back into the helicopter whenever he reached his limit. Ironically, he goes on the river "to finally plant [his] feet on the ground," seeking an intimate eye-level view.⁵⁷ This terrain has returned to the status of the primeval, the unexplored; it is "now uncharted territory."⁵⁸ It conceals the past, and revisiting it is akin to exploring its history: "A journey upriver was like breaching the very vine-choked memory of the land."⁵⁹ The tension between the "vine-choked memory of the land" and "uncharted territory" points to the landscape's ability to conceal. Mealer sets himself up to enter the landscape as if he were the first because, by regressing, the terrain has become similar to what it was when Stanley encountered

it. The Congo seems to erase its own history. The eye-level view is frustratingly opaque, uncharted and unyielding. In this circumstance, Mealer relies on his experience as a reader to guide him. To show us how this works, he describes his translator, Séverin, an electrical engineer by training, reading Hochschild and copiously taking notes during the boat journey, eager to learn the history of the interior and understand the unfamiliar surroundings.

Upon his arrival at Kisangani (the real setting of *Heart of Darkness's* "Inner Station"), Mealer confirms that it "was hardly fiction," echoing Hochschild's gesture of relying on Conrad for a measure of the historical Congo.⁶⁰ Failing to find the progress he is looking for at the end of the boat journey, he rejects the validity of his quest: "I realized I'd risked life and limb looking for something that didn't exist, some modern notion of progress that didn't even apply. Like Buisine had said, there was nothing even before the war. And there was certainly little now."⁶¹ The disappointment and anticlimax, characteristic of the narrative as a whole, are a lapse to the old views about the Congo, the ones that Mealer presumably is trying to disprove. They become an occasion for his renewed effort.

When he undertakes the rail journey, Mealer gives himself a second chance to find the positive, even though it will assume a different guise than progress. The railroad captures most dramatically the imperial, colonial, and postcolonial histories of the Congo. Its construction was a high act of empire that enabled the more efficient exploitation of the Congo, as well as the implementation of colonial rule and discipline. As Mealer experiences it in 2007, the railroad has deteriorated very considerably, and, barely functioning, it is dangerous and unpredictable. Yet he can still describe the train's forward momentum as reenergizing, inspiring a deep desire for arrival: "And just as this was about to happen, as the twitch of despair crawled up my arm, the *Rénové* [the name of the train] blasted her whistle down the tracks, so brash and strong it lifted the top of my skull and brought me back around."⁶² The train, which is carrying refugees returning home from the war, shifts the witness's eye to focus on the emotional reunion of one family. Having done something for "his conscience" by showing a different side of the Congolese, "who only seemed to suffer and bleed in the news," Mealer decides he can now leave.⁶³ Once again the literal and the metaphorical travel together in Mealer's text. The homecoming of one father is symbolic of a restoration that proves the people's endurance. The return home is also the arrival at the destination. In this war-torn country, being able to get back to where you were and pick up the pieces of your life is a kind of success, a bucking of the backward slide.

Despite constantly reminding us of his literary sources, Mealer insists that he tried to write around Conrad's novel. In an interview, he has described his dilemma thus: "I try to make it a point with Congo to try to move past the *Heart of Darkness* references. It's so easy, you know, an instant association. And while I think I had an easier time going up the road [around Livingstone Falls] than Conrad did—I didn't see the bodies chained to poles, or the skeletons on the road—it's a really hard trip. It's really hard, man. I guess it's as hard as you want to make it."⁶⁴ He admits, furthermore, that he had trouble understanding what he had accomplished in his many trips to the Congo: "When I got out of there, I felt that I'd really accomplished

something, though at the same time, I wasn't really sure what I'd accomplished."⁶⁵ His next project, the best-selling *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (co-authored with William Kamkwamba), fulfills his objective to provide an uplifting story about Africa.⁶⁶ *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* reinvents the figure of the male African child lodged in the imagination of the American reading public—through books such as Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone*—as the violent child soldier, recasting him as an ingenious inventor and successful entrepreneur, an American-style hero.⁶⁷ As the Nigerian novelist Chris Abani notes, "William will challenge everything you have thought about Africa, about young people, and about the power of one person to transform a community. This beautifully written book will open your heart and mind."⁶⁸ In this book, Mealer is able to place his redeemer witness not only in relation to Africa but to global warming, and hence present Kamkwamba in the context of an emerging planetarity. Furthermore, on his YouTube posting, Kamkwamba proclaims that the book is a message to Americans telling them they can achieve whatever they set their mind to. An American cliché gives Kamkwamba's story its shape, or "figuration."

In the stories of Congo, by contrast, tragedy was everywhere. Mealer tells of one exception, the successful escape of Séverin, who goes to Belgium to study. There, Mealer tells us, Séverin is "seeing the true world."⁶⁹ The "true," Mealer claims, rather than real world, thus indicating the metropole's moral superiority despite the contradiction that the "true" also reveals the exploitation that this world rests on. Séverin immerses himself in the life of young people in Europe, "where all they seemed concerned about is maximum pleasure," and where they remain willfully ignorant of what is happening in Congo.⁷⁰ He does not feel compelled to tell them. Mealer's complicity with Marlow's lie becomes suddenly transparent, and it is Séverin, as portrayed by Mealer, who takes on Marlow's role as carrier of the lie.

The Democratizing Movement

Mealer also reported on the historic elections of 2006, the country's first in forty years. Resident mostly in Kinshasa during the period running up to the election, Mealer hesitates to be hopeful and prompts his reader to expect political chaos and more violence. After the elections, as I showed above, he searches for the elusive "recovery" by traveling once more to the interior and, failing to find it, plants further doubts in the reader's mind about the success of the elections. Given the complicated logistics of carrying out a fair democratic election in the DRC, Mealer's distanced, impressionistic view provides too few specifics from which to understand the political dynamics of the democratizing process. Published in 2002, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja's history does not take into account the events central to Mealer's narrative, but it gives us rich background to help us appreciate more fully their significance.

Nzongola-Ntalaja's importance is not his function as a native informer but rather his deployment of a different historical sensibility. He aims to make perceptible what Ariella Azoulay calls a "potential history" that "restore[s] within the order of things the polyphony of civil relations and forms of being-together that existed at any moment in history without being solely, let alone exhausted by, the national division."⁷¹ Azoulay appeals to us to imagine a historical practice that opens our view

of the past to the potential held by a heterogeneous group of stakeholders, as opposed to a practice that constructs the past retrospectively, either as the story of the winners or the victims. “Potential history” maps the road not taken but still detectable in retrospect and hence potentially available to be taken anew. Nzongola-Ntalaja appropriates the convention of people’s history to write the story of the Congo as a struggle for democracy whose potential lies at least partly in the continuity of an ongoing effort. His story of reading is a story of reading anticolonial theory, more specifically the work of Amilcar Cabral, and of jettisoning the “heart of darkness” paradigm in order to foreground the historical agency of the Congolese people. Imperialism, Cabral argues, “is the negation of the *historical process* of the dominated people.”⁷² National liberation is not “simple decolonization” but a restoration of the people to their historical role.⁷³ As a people’s history, Nzongola-Ntalaja’s text is not simply writing back to empire. Instead, it envisions a Congolese national narrative addressed to the Congolese as a nation entangled in the global history of empire and its consequences. Congolese citizens are portrayed as rights claimants, struggling for self-determination.

As Nzongola-Ntalaja explains it, the narrative of Congo is one in which the two phases of the struggle against imperialism outlined by Cabral (a struggle against foreign domination followed by one against class domination) are intertwined and continue to run concurrently after independence.⁷⁴ A people’s history restores our understanding of the people as historical agents. This reclamation of agency also enables a critical examination of past events by attributing at least some responsibility for these events to the people. Thus Nzongola-Ntalaja seeks to explain “the failure of the Congolese democracy movement, particularly the culture and class interests of those who have assumed its leadership and the constraints of the international environment,” in hopes of setting forth a better process.⁷⁵

A Congolese political activist and academic historian, Nzongola-Ntalaja develops his view of the people’s struggle in a sustained narrative from “Leopold to Kabila.” Cabral, as Nzongola-Ntalaja explains, argues that “for a dominated people, genuine liberation implies the fact of regaining not only one’s historical personality as a free people but also one’s own initiative as a maker of history.”⁷⁶ “Maker of history” in this context gains a double meaning, referring both to the agency of the people in actual historical circumstance (Cabral’s primary meaning) and to the work of the historian, the making of the historical narrative. Conveying how this secondary meaning of “maker of history” is actualized constitutes Nzongola-Ntalaja’s story of reading. His work intervenes in the imperialist historiography of the Congo, appropriating a human rights discourse in order to convey his point of view as a Congolese political activist.

Human rights are no longer seen through the lens of crimes against humanity but as part of the struggle for “freedom from foreign control and expanded democratic and economic rights.”⁷⁷ Resisting the “crimes against humanity” frame is a significant gesture by the postcolonial historian, which we can appreciate by considering the contrast between the narrative frame of war and that of crimes against humanity. As Ken Harrow points out, “war implicates all its combatants into a generalized hell,” whereas “genocide and crimes against humanity pit evil forces against its victims,”

drawing us (“humanity”) to the side of victims, which can only account inadequately for the complex historical agency of all involved and their entanglement with one other.⁷⁸ The “generalized hell” of war (portrayed by Mealer, in fact) is not useful to Nzongola-Ntalaja either, and he chooses a third path, the struggle for civil, political, and economic rights carried by a democracy movement.

The historian’s authority is dependent on his effectiveness as storyteller, or moralizer; yet, as Said has pointed out, this narrative authority also depends on a power dynamic reflected in a disparate “permission to narrate” among different constituencies. Exposing facts about atrocities does not suffice to constitute a national narrative, if the Congolese do not figure as subjects *and* as historians. As we noted, facts do not speak for themselves but need to be embedded in appropriate vehicles for their dissemination, such as socially acceptable stories that enable their readers’ recognition. Although Nzongola-Ntalaja’s political project of achieving democracy is incomplete, his historiographical project against colonial inscription is realized to the degree that he can successfully seize the “permission to narrate,” which he does by hanging his narrative on human rights discourse. Nzongola-Ntalaja makes gains in rendering to the people their “historical personality” by showing how the long history of Congolese resistance translates into a human rights struggle.

Compared to Hochschild’s or Mealer’s, Nzongola-Ntalaja’s text has a less pronounced metanarrative quality. Yet its framing as a people’s history gestures toward its appropriation of certain recognizable narrative conventions. Writing from a sense of acute crisis during a civil war in the late 1990s, Nzongola-Ntalaja tries to buck the pressure of thinking in apocalyptic terms of the end of the nation and instead brings the story of Congo in line with the larger postcolonial narrative of the African continent, which shows in broad strokes how national independence is followed by neocolonial rule and authoritarian regimes, renewing the struggle for social justice and self-determination. Nzongola-Ntalaja hopes to rescue the Congo’s narrative from incoherence by highlighting a repetitive pattern of events, which helps demonstrate the continuity of the ongoing struggle. Furthermore, repetition falls into the configuration of revelation and concealment. Analysis of one period of history leads to the revelation of its similarity to a previous period, uncovering a whole sequence of concealments that suppressed the Congolese national narrative. Thus the period of 1963–68, which marked the “first major resistance against the postcolonial state,” is understood as a “revival of the mass democratic movement of 1956–1960.” Nzongola-Ntalaja calls 1963–68 the “second independence movement,” this time a struggle against the neocolonial state.⁷⁹ By 1999, when “external forces were financing their war effort in the DRC with revenues from the Congo’s own resources,” we have repetition once more; “the Congo was witnessing history repeat itself. The struggle for democracy had once again become synonymous with the struggle for national liberation.”⁸⁰ The incomplete project of national liberation is sustained through the “afterlives” of its failed efforts, “an imagined but as yet unrealized future.”⁸¹

Repetition also marks the succession of oppressors. Mobutu is the successor to Leopold, “a new king for the Congo, and the true successor of King Leopold as the owner of the country and its resources.”⁸² Because Mobutu owed his longevity in power to external sponsorship, the struggle for democratization was a struggle for

independence from neocolonialism, despite Mobutu's nationalization of most sectors of the economy. Nationalization did not put these resources at the disposal of the people but turned them into Mobutu's private wealth. His regime is presented by Nzongola-Ntalaja as mimicry, a resurrection of Leopold as an African. Nzongola-Ntalaja covers in detail the ways in which Mobutu's regime failed and intensified the "extractive and repressive functions" that linked the former colony to the metropole. The postcolonial state, moreover, "proved inferior to the colonial state [which followed Leopold's death in 1908] in terms of meeting the needs of the population."⁸³ By 1993, the starting point of the current crisis, the economy was destroyed.⁸⁴ In outlining the factors that held Mobutu in power (the security forces, wealth, outside support), Nzongola-Ntalaja also stresses that "no rule is sustainable in the long run without popular legitimacy and support."⁸⁵ He explains the narrative of the declining popular support for Mobutu's regime, which culminates in the emergence of the democratic movement in the mid-1990s.⁸⁶ By emphasizing the upsurge from below, Nzongola-Ntalaja gives the lie to the portrayal of the Congolese people monolithically as victims of colonial and neocolonial rule or the barely human inhabitants of an anomic, regressive, violent "heart of darkness." There is no triumphant ending, however, as Kabila too takes his place in a series of patriarchal oppressors.

Additionally, Nzongola-Ntalaja resists the narrative which turns Patrice Lumumba into a martyr and seeks to make sense of history outside the frame of the "myth of an indefatigable fighter for national liberation and unity," a myth which is counterproductive because it aids the perpetuation of political rule as personality cult.⁸⁷ When discussing the early 1990s, "with so many public services broken down, and so much time spent on finding food or making ends meet," Nzongola-Ntalaja points out that strikes may not have had the same effect as before but "traditional solidarity mechanisms continue to help people survive."⁸⁸ His attention to these "traditional solidarity mechanisms" that have evolved since Leopold's rule enables him to stress continuity once more and delineate a narrative thread that foregrounds the people's historical agency.

White argues that the "true" needs narrative to become "real": "the very distinction between real and imaginary events that is basic to modern discussions of both history and fiction presupposes a notion of reality in which 'the true' is identified with 'the real' only insofar as it can be shown to possess the character of narrativity."⁸⁹ Nzongola-Ntalaja must make the people "real" through narrative in order to establish their "truth" as a nation. The people are made into a character of the historical narrative (like *le peuple* in histories of the French Revolution, for example). They are conceived through the theoretical frame of Cabral, which enables Nzongola-Ntalaja to break down the exceptionalism of the Congo as "heart of darkness" and place it in the larger context of human history.

Conclusion

The three types of stories that I have sketched here provisionally as examples of a distinct genre that I am calling human rights history (the moral crusade, the redeemer witness, and the people's history) share in common a strong sense that, as stories, they must enact their moral point of view. They are written not in a distanced, objective

manner but from a situated and committed perspective, which urges us to reconsider that which is presumably already known. These types of texts thus share an awareness of responding to an existing literature which they invite their reader to reinterpret along the lines of their argument. To make their point, the authors tell their readers their own stories of reading and testify to the transformative experience of reading, inviting their readers in turn to experience their texts in a similar way.

These histories also grapple with uncertain outcomes. For Hochschild, the Congo Reform Movement did not have a large enough impact to stem abuses in the Belgian Congo. Mealer's memoir fails as a transformative narrative of the Congo and concocts a lie of arrival out of a very poignant but singular scene of family reunion. The repeatedly deferred fulfillment of the people's struggle threatens the momentum of Nzongola-Ntalaja's narrative. Keeping the people's agency in view not only for himself but for those outside Congo, who are ever ready to succumb to the conventional representations of it, continues to be a significant challenge ten years after the publication of his history.

Each of these texts also aims to be uplifting, to provide some kind of positive satisfaction for the reader. This effect is not facile but rather a function of *our* stories of reading human rights history. If stories of reading aim at "creating a possibility of learning," then reading in itself should result in a new awareness, which could be characterized as an experience of reconciliation, a balancing of accounts in which different versions of history are compared and realigned, redressing disparities in emphasis. The stories of reading in Hochschild's text, for example, demonstrate that we already knew about the extent of the atrocities in the Congo even though we had overlooked how we had come to this knowledge. We had put it aside in the archive without making further use of it. Hochschild reconciles the imbalance between the magnitude of the atrocities committed and the faltering campaign to eradicate this evil, a campaign which turns out to have been transformative of the way in which we imagine a more just future and act to realize it. By lending itself so easily to repetition, the "heart of darkness" narrative, Mealer shows, is not immutable; it can be updated, its lie reformulated. Nzongola-Ntalaja reconciles the imbalance between the rhetoric of liberation theorists such as Cabral and the bleak postindependence reality of the Congo by downplaying the importance of Lumumba as shaper of Congolese history and foregrounding the heroic resilience of the people. These kinds of textual reconciliations bring into alignment our old reading and our new and go some way toward positing the genre of human rights history as form.

NOTES

1. In the prologue to his own such history, Samuel Moyn gives an overview of this body of work and concludes that it is "recasting world history as raw material for the progressive ascent of international human rights." Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 5. Reza Afshari has critiqued the biases of this literature, showing that the compulsive telling and retelling of the field's origins constitute a fairly obvious enterprise of legitimation that also reflects considerable anxiety. See Reza Afshari, "On Historiography of Human Rights: Reflections on Paul Gordon Lauren's *The Evolution of International Human Rights*," *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2007): 1–67.

2. Crimes against humanity originate in the laws of war and concerns over violations of the laws of humanity. They were first construed “as violations of customary international law,” and the phrase was used, for example, by Great Britain, France, and Russia in 1915 to condemn the Turks in the massacre of Armenians. Their present legal form has been systematically documented after World War II to describe crimes against civilians in war. Jordan J. Paust, “Crimes against Humanity,” in *Encyclopedia of Human Rights*, ed. David P. Forsythe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 421–28.

3. An example of the first type is Emma Gilligan, *Terror in Chechnya: Russia and the Tragedy of Civilians in War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010). The longer retrospective (and more encompassing geography) is deployed by Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007). Kiernan applies genocide to ancient as well as twentieth-century history. The conventional project of world history (an examination of civilization) is reconceived as a study of mass violence. A third type may also be discerned in texts which take a form somewhere between biography and narrative history, such as Eric Metaxas, *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery* (New York: Harper, 2007); or Peter Balakian’s *Black Dog of Fate: An American Son Uncovers His Armenian Past* (New York: Broadway, 1998), in which “uncovering” involves a “story of reading,” a trope which is the focus of my analysis below.

4. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982): 82; emphasis added.

5. Gilligan, *Terror in Chechnya*, provides a fine example. Divided into two parts, “The Crimes” and “The Response,” her book takes on a form which reflects not only what happened but what could/should happen in the framework of international human rights law. Gilligan explicitly indicates that she is writing in a particular key (“tragedy”) and draws our attention to her focus on atrocities against civilians and how these constitute war crimes. Using international legal criteria as her lens, she reinvents the narrative of the second Chechen war (1999–2005) as a story of crimes against humanity.

6. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 93.

7. Edward W. Said, “Permission to Narrate,” in *The Politics of Disposition: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969–1994* (New York: Pantheon, 1994), 254.

8. Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 14.

9. Said, “Permission,” 267.

10. Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1999); Bryan Mealer, *All Things Must Fight to Live: Stories of War and Deliverance in Congo* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008); and Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People’s History* (London: Zed, 2002).

11. Nzongola-Ntalaja is not alone in this effort. See Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa,” in *Heart of Darkness: A Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Paul B. Armstrong, 4th ed. (New York: Norton, 2006), 336–49. Achebe’s angry response to Conrad’s novel is standard college reading. See also V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), which is a key text in the theoretical and cultural deconstruction of the “heart of darkness” motif. Mudimbe’s work as a Congolese novelist further addresses this dynamic.

12. Michiko Kakutani, "Genocide with Spin Control: Kurtz Wasn't Fiction," *New York Times*, September 1, 1998.
13. See, for example, the influential reading in F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (New York: Doubleday, 1954), 196–97; as well as Ian Watt, "Impressionism and Symbolism in *Heart of Darkness*," in Armstrong, ed., *Heart of Darkness*, 349–65; and Peter Brooks, "An Unreadable Report: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," in *ibid.*, 376–86.
14. See Achebe, "Image of Africa," 339.
15. For example, see the greatly expanded "Backgrounds and Contexts" section in Armstrong, ed., *Heart of Darkness*.
16. Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 3.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, 292.
20. The secondhand nature of Hochschild's narrative, both a function of his insistence on using Conrad's text as a frame and his use of mostly already published accounts and known archival material, has been noted widely by his reviewers; yet it does not detract from the high regard accorded to his work, especially for its narrative style. Kakutani, for example, praises Hochschild for his use of known sources, which he "has stitched together into a vivid, novelistic narrative that makes the reader acutely aware of the magnitude of the horror perpetrated by King Leopold and his minions." She notes his "tightly controlled anger" and the power it gives the narrative and repeats, as her closing remarks, that Hochschild, "like other historians before him," wants to ensure that Leopold's crimes are not forgotten. Kakutani, "Genocide with Spin Control." See also Rebecca Clay, "King Leopold's Ghost: A Review," *Wilson Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (1999): 103–4. Clay notes that Hochschild "transforms" history into a "page turner." Another reviewer also feels compelled to stress the narrative superiority of the text as a means of defending it against charges of unoriginality. Thus he says, "Hochschild's reliance on an exhaustive array of previous works on this subject does not make his book any less a 'must read.'" Jacques Louis Hymans, "King Leopold's Ghost: A Review," *History* 27, no. 2 (1999): 82. Sue William Silverman describes Hochschild as the "strong moral center in his work," privileging his voice over the material itself. With Hochschild's example, the work of human rights history seems to lie in the reinflection of known narratives. See Sue William Silverman, "Interview with Adam Hochschild," *Fourth Genre* 2, no. 2 (2000): 203–18. For a dissenting review, see Angus Mitchell, "King Leopold's Ghost," *History Today* 49 (August 1999): 52. Mitchell raises problems with Hochschild's use of his sources.
21. Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 2.
22. *Ibid.*, 24.
23. *Ibid.*, 1.
24. *Ibid.*, 112.
25. *Ibid.*, 104.
26. *Ibid.*, 109–11.
27. *Ibid.*, 112.
28. *Ibid.*, 109.
29. *Ibid.*, 2.
30. *Ibid.*, 179.
31. *Ibid.*, 304–5.
32. *Ibid.*, 202–3.

33. He repeats the claim also made by Conrad scholars that Casement's story about Van Kerckhoven may have been the prototype for Conrad's Kurtz. *Ibid.*, 197.
34. Cited in *ibid.*, 197.
35. *Ibid.*, 283.
36. *Ibid.*, 251.
37. *Ibid.*, 255.
38. *Ibid.*, 297.
39. *Ibid.*, 296.
40. *Ibid.*, 300.
41. The book was first published as Jules Marchal, *Travail forcé pour l'huile de palme de Lord Leverhulme*, vol. 3, *L'histoire du Congo: 1910–1945* (Borgloon: Bellings, 2001).
42. James Dawes, *That the World May Know: Bearing Witness to Atrocity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 166; emphasis in original.
43. Brian Mealer, *All Things Must Fight to Live: Stories of War and Deliverance in Congo* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 53.
44. *Ibid.*, 199.
45. *Ibid.*, 150.
46. *Ibid.*, 296.
47. *Ibid.*, 94.
48. *Ibid.*, xiv.
49. These events are recounted in Gerard Prunier's authoritative history of central Africa since the Rwanda genocide. See Gerard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 291–92.
50. Mealer, *All Things*, 2.
51. *Ibid.*, 33.
52. *Ibid.*, 38–39. Human Rights Watch reported acts of cannibalism in Ituri in 2003. See “‘Covered in Blood’: Ethnically Targeted Violence in Northeastern DR Congo,” *Human Rights Watch* 15, no. 11 (2003): 1–57. Mealer acknowledges the author of this report, Anneke Van Woudenberg, but does not mention the report itself. It is interesting to note how differently HRW handles the reporting of cannibalism. First, they caution that the press tends to sensationalize these acts while underreporting the horrific and massive killings that happened on a much larger scale. Moreover, HRW tries to frame its report of these acts by explaining how they become possible in a time of war. These acts were “part of a larger political and ritual context,” historically not unique to Congo, and they are evidence of the toll that years of “constant threat” take on human beings who seek whatever means to survive they can. Mealer, *All Things*, 213.
53. Eleni Coundouriotis, *Claiming History: Colonialism, Ethnography, and the Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 54.
54. White, *Content of the Form*, 4.
55. Mealer, *All Things*, 150.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*, 159.
58. *Ibid.*, 153.
59. *Ibid.*, 152.
60. *Ibid.*, 204.
61. *Ibid.*, 218.

62. “Rénové,” the adjective form of “to modernize” or “to restore,” is used in the masculine form in French, yet Mealer must refer to the train as “she,” following English idiom. *Ibid.*, 280.
63. *Ibid.*, 150.
64. Frank Bures, “Bryan Mealer: War and Deliverance in Congo,” *World Hum*, http://www.worldhum.com/features/travel-interviews/bryan_mealer_war_and_deliverance_in_congo_20080610 (accessed December 8, 2009).
65. *Ibid.*
66. Bryan Mealer and William Kamkwamba, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope* (New York: Morrow, 2009).
67. Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), was promoted by Starbucks in its book program and sold in all its cafes.
68. See <http://www.amazon.com/Boy-Who-Harnessed-Wind-Electricity/dp/product-description/0061730335> (accessed May 27, 2011).
69. Mealer, *All Things*, 294.
70. *Ibid.*
71. Ariella Azoulay, “Potential History: Photographic Documents from Mandatory Palestine,” undated exhibition brochure in author’s personal collection.
72. Amílcar Cabral, *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches*, ed. Africa Information Service (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), 14.
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85. *Ibid.*, 165.
86. *Ibid.*
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