Unfinished Histories

Fraiture, Pierre-Philippe

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Unfinished Histories: Empire and Postcolonial Resonance in Central Africa and Belgium.

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Sarah Arens is a British Academy postdoctoral fellow (2019–2023) at the University of Liverpool with a project entitled ‘Constructing a Geopolitics of Nationhood: The Belgian Scientific and Cultural Colonial Project (1830–1958)’, which investigates the role of natural sciences and their exhibition through museums and world fairs as a pathway to better understanding the ideologies that fuelled Belgian colonialism and the resistance against it. She is also an assistant professor in French and the editor of the Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies.

Robert Burroughs is professor and head of English at Leeds Beckett University. His books include Travel Writing and Atrocities (2011), The Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade (2015), and African Testimony in the Movement for Congo Reform (2018). A previous recipient of funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Leverhulme Trust (Early Career Fellowship), and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, he is currently a Leverhulme Trust Research Fellow.

Bambi Ceuppens holds a PhD in social anthropology from the University of St Andrews in Scotland. She is a senior researcher and curator of contemporary African Art at the Royal Museum for Central Africa and a lecturer at KASK – School of Arts (Ghent) and Sint Lucas School of Arts (Antwerp). She has curated the exhibition Indépendance! Congolese Stories about Congolese independence (RMCA, 2010 - 2011) and co-curated the exhibition Congo Art Works: Popular Painting with Sammy Baloji (Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, 2016); Congo Art Works: Popular Painting with Sammy Baloji and Valentin Diaconov (Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, 2017); Congo Stars with Sammy Baloji, Gunther Holler-Schuster, Fiston Mwanza Mujila & Barbara Steiner (Kunsthaus Graz, Austria, 2018 - 2019; Kunsthalle Tübingen, Germany, 2019). Her research focuses on autochtony, Belgian-Congolese colonial history and cultural heritage, Congolese art and culture, Congolese in Belgium, decoloniality and representations of Africa(ns).
Matthias De Groof is a professor in film studies and visual cultures at the University of Antwerp, and a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Amsterdam. He is interested in aesthetics as politics of forms and practices that contribute to the restoration of broken world views, while he also studies failing processes of decolonisation. He has held fellowship appointments at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts as a Fulbright scholar, at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies with Kone Foundation, at the University of Bayreuth’s Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and at the Waseda University in Tokyo. His works include an edited book on Lumumba in the Arts (Leuven University Press, 2022), which reached a list of the top 100 ‘books to escape the news’ (LitHub) and the films Under The White Mask (2020), Palimpsest of the Africa Museum (2019), Lobi Kuna (2018), Diorama (2018), and Jerusalem, the Adulterous Wife (2008), among others.

Pierre-Philippe Fraiture is professor of French studies at the University of Warwick, where he teaches postcolonial literatures. He is a member of the European Research Council-funded project Philosophy and Genres: Creating a Textual Basis for African Philosophy. His most recent publications include Past Imperfect: Time and African Decolonization, 1945–1960 (Liverpool University Press, 2021), The Mudimbe Reader (Virginia University Press, ed. with Daniel Orrells, 2016), and VY Mudimbe: Undisciplined Africanism (Liverpool University Press, 2013). He is currently working on the notion of extractivism in Congolese art and literature.

Catherine Gilbert is currently a New Castle University Academic Track Fellow in the School of Modern Languages at Newcastle University, having recently completed a two-year Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship at Ghent University, Belgium (2018–2020). Her project, ‘Genocide Commemoration in the Rwandan Diaspora’, investigates the impact of place and displacement on commemorative practices within diasporic communities. More broadly, her research interests span postcolonial African literatures and cultures, with a particular focus on cultural memory, trauma and narrative. Her first monograph, From Surviving to Living: Voice, Trauma and Witness in Rwandan Women’s Writing (Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2018), received the SAGE Memory Studies Journal and Memory Studies Association Outstanding First Book Award in 2019. She has recently co-edited, with Kate McLoughlin and Niall Munro, the volume On Commemoration: Global Reflections upon Remembering War (Peter Lang, 2020).
Chantal Gishoma is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Bayreuth in the European Research Council-funded project Philosophy and Genres: Creating a Textual Basis for African Philosophy. She is a researcher in African literature, specialising in Rwandan language and literature. Her thesis, defended at the Sorbonne nouvelle-Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, as well as her various publications, focus on the poetic work of the Rwandan poet and philosophers, Alexis Kagame, translation in literature, and radio theatre.

Hannah Grayson is a lecturer in French and francophone studies at the University of Stirling. Her research focuses on so-called crisis and its aftermath in ‘French-language’ African literature, and her current book project on Tierno Monénembo investigates his fictional depictions of débrouillardise. She has worked extensively on the testimonies of people who lived through the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. She was recently awarded British Academy funding for a project on decolonising discourses of resilience in the Arts and Humanities.

Dónal Hassett is lecturer in French at University College Cork. He holds a doctorate in history from the European University Institute in Florence. His first book, Mobilizing Memory: The Great War and the Language of Politics in Colonial Algeria, 1918–1939, was published by Oxford University Press in 2019. He was recently awarded an Irish Research Council New Foundations Research Grant for a project on the decolonisation of Irish public heritage.

Sky Herington holds a bachelor’s degree in French and philosophy from the University of Oxford and an MA in comparative literature from the École Normale Supérieure of Lyon. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Warwick, where she teaches postcolonial literature. Her thesis (submitted in September 2022) focuses on embodiment and performances of power in Sony Labou Tansi’s plays. She was awarded the Theatre and Performance Research Association Postgraduate Essay Prize (2020).

Nicki Hitchcott is professor of French at the University of St Andrews. She is a specialist in postcolonial literatures in French, particularly African fiction. From 2015 to 2018, Nicki led the AHRC-funded project, ‘Rwandan Stories of Change’ in partnership with NGO the Aegis Trust and the Genocide Archive of Rwanda. Her most recent publications include three books on Rwanda: a monograph, Rwanda Genocide Stories: Fiction Since 1994 (Liverpool University Press, 2015) and two co-edited volumes, Rwanda Since 1994: Stories of Change (Liverpool University Press, 2019) and After the Genocide in Rwanda: Stories of Violence, Change and Reconciliation (I. B. Tauris, 2019).
Yvette Hutchison is a professor in Theatre and Performance Studies in SCAPVC, University of Warwick. Her research focuses on anglophone African theatre, history and narratives of memory, and how intercultural performance practices are challenged by ongoing postcolonial issues. She is associate editor of the South African Theatre Journal and the African Theatre series. Her Leverhulme project Performing Memory: Theatricalising identity in contemporary South Africa in 2012 culminated in her monograph South African Performance and Archives of Memory (Manchester University Press, 2013). From 2015 to 2017 she had AHRC funding to develop mobile app technology to create a virtual network of African women creative practitioners and other interested parties, resulting in the African Womens’ Playwright Network (AWPN.org). Her latest publications include the co-edited African Theatre: Contemporary Dance (James Currey, 2018) and Contemporary Plays by African Women (Methuen, 2019).


Maëline Le Lay specialises in African literatures. Her current research focuses on performing arts and literature of the Great Lakes Region (DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi). She also investigates the colonial history of theatre and literature written and performed in the former Belgian, British and French empires. She is a researcher at the CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research), affiliated at the THALIM research centre (Paris Sorbonne nouvelle). She was affiliated at IFRA-Nairobi (French Institute for Research in Africa) in 2018-2021.

Reuben Loffman teaches history at Queen Mary University of London and his research has largely focused on missionaries in the DR Congo. His first book, Church, State, and Colonialism in Southeastern Congo, 1890–1962 (Palgrave, 2019), explored the relationship between Belgian administrators and the Catholic Church from the vantage point of a local case study, that of Kongolo.
The book argues that Church-state relations did not run seamlessly as Crawford Young (1965) suggested but, instead, the two institutions were competitive collaborators. His next project explores the turbulent relationship between the United States and the Congo in the colonial period and primarily through the lens of American Protestant missionaries, such as the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians.

Caroline Williamson Sinalo is lecturer in world languages at University College Cork and author of *Rwanda after Genocide: Gender, Identity and Posttraumatic Growth* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) and co-author of *Transmitting Memories in Rwanda: From a Survivor Parent to the next Generation* (Brill, 2022). Williamson Sinalo’s research focuses on conflict and violence in Africa’s Great Lakes region, and has been supported by the AHRC, the Aegis Trust, the Irish Research Council, the Government of Ireland, and Enterprise Ireland.