

Confronting “dark” colonial pasts: a historical analysis of practices of representation in Belgian and Congolese schools, 1945–2015

Denise Bentrovato^{a,b} and Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse^{b,*}

^aDepartment of Humanities Education, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa;

^bDepartment of History, University of Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

*Correspondence to: Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse. Email: karel.vannieuwenhuyse@kuleuven.be

ABSTRACT

Over half a century since the last wave of political decolonisation, the handling of “dark” colonial histories remains topical. Influenced by the postcolonial turn, this study aims to examine, from a novel historical and comparative perspective, evolving textbook representations of Belgian colonialism and its legacy in Belgian and Congolese school history education since 1945. Its diachronic and synchronic narrative analysis identifies continuity and change, and convergences and divergences, in perspectives, emphases, and silences in textbook narratives. Pinpointing the influence of colonialism and postcolonial discourse on educational practices of representation, the study explores the sometimes contradictory influences on these practices of politics, academic historiography, popular historical culture, and processes of educationalisation. The analysis illuminates parallel shifts in the two countries from triumphalist colonialist ideologies towards more critical postcolonial perspectives. In relation to educational practices of representation, often aimed at socialising citizens into worldviews sanctioned by the political dispensation of the time, the traces of these shifts have reflected dominant societal discourses while being largely at odds with historiographical advances. These dynamics are evidence of a slow process of decolonisation of existing power structures and knowledge systems which only gradually gave way to a postcolonial world still in the making.

KEYWORDS: History of history education; textbook analysis; colonial history of Belgium and Congo; memory practices; educationalisation processes; colonialism and postcolonialism

Introduction

Colonialism and the wave of political decolonisation that swept across the globe half a century ago have left profound marks on societies around the world, fundamentally shaping memories, identities, worldviews, and structures and institutions which persist into the present. The near-ubiquity of the colonial past and its impact in the present day confront ex-colonisers and the formerly colonised alike with the challenge of coming to terms with this past and its societal reverberations. After decolonisation, we find ourselves in a *post-colonial* world, that is, a world after colonialism. This development prompts us to wonder about the extent to which a *postcolonial* world has emerged – that is, a world marked by a mindset able to exercise critical distance from colonial and Eurocentric worldviews and from binary oppositions between former colonisers and the once-colonised.¹

The rise of postcolonial studies in the 1970s and 1980s has lent particular momentum to the increasing calls for a thoroughgoing decolonisation of societies and their canons of

knowledge. The work conducted in this field has sought to analyse structures of thought, epistemologies of knowledge, and categories of representation. In so doing, it has challenged national and Eurocentric perspectives on the imperial past and its legacy by repudiating binary models of colonial origins.² The cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall, for instance, deconstructed narratives of “the West and the Rest” and the “regime of truth” they claimed to represent, identifying their consolidation of existing power relations via “other[ing]” of non-Western civilisations and judgement of other societies in accordance with criteria of evaluation privileging the “West” above the “Rest”.³ In the field of historiography, New Imperial History has similarly challenged Eurocentric views on the imperial past by drawing attention to multiple entanglements between colonisers and colonised, thus transcending a nation-state perspective and illuminating the transnational and intercultural dimensions of colonial history.⁴ At the same time, expanding studies in post-colonial memory politics have critically examined practices of foregrounding and silencing and of inclusion and exclusion in the dominant collective memory as expressed via popular historical culture and public discursive arenas.⁵

Embedded in this scholarship and discursive field, this article considers the extent to which the postcolonial perspectives increasingly prominent in academia have trickled through school history education, an influential factor in the historical socialisation of successive generations. It does so by examining, from a novel historical and comparative perspective, images of Belgian colonialism and its legacy in Belgian and Congolese school history textbooks and related curricula produced since 1945, and contextualises them by considering broader societal and political dynamics and processes of educationalisation. The study thus complements previous research on Belgian and Congolese colonial and post-colonial history education and on history of education more broadly, work conducted by scholars including Denise Benvato,⁶ Jan Briffaerts,⁷ Antoon De Baets,⁸ Raf De Keyser,⁹ Marc Depaepe,¹⁰ Augustin Odimba Omakoko,¹¹ Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse,¹² Benoit Verhaegen,¹³ and Honoré Vinck.¹⁴ Its particular concern is addressing a notable imbalance in historical research on this subject, consisting in the predominance of Belgian over Congolese perspectives.

Locating these media in their specific historical context, this study aims to identify and explain continuity and change, and convergences and divergences, in perspectives, emphases, and silences in textbook narratives, pinpointing the ramifications of colonialism and echoes of postcolonial discourse across time and space. It seeks to establish the extent to which the paternalistic and patriotic discourses and related educational aims ubiquitous in interbellum-era Belgium persisted after the Second World War or instead fell into disfavour in the context of increasing international critique of colonialism and processes of democratisation in education. The era following Congo’s decolonisation coincided chronologically with growing social protest discourses in Belgium related to social justice aims. This research considers whether, in this atmosphere, a more critical postcolonial stance towards the Belgian-Congolese colonial past emerged, or whether it remained suppressed by a desire to obscure uncomfortable memories. Alongside this, we consider whether the Belgian coloniser, acting within the typical framework of transfer of educational structures and content, applied similar history education policies and practices in the colony as in the metropolis, or whether fundamental differences developed at that time and subsequently, and, if so, why. Furthering this line of enquiry, we explore the degree to which political decolonisation found entry into Congolese history education in the shape of a severe critique of Belgian colonial actions.

Via these questions, we situate the research findings within broader discussions of concomitant historical developments in education, academic historiography, and politics and

cultures of memory, and related debates around intertwined processes of educationalisation. This type of systematic and in-depth case study, conducted on one topic within one school subject (in this case history), promises to enrich our understanding of the workings of the educationalisation processes which enact young people's induction into socially desirable or societally required norms and values.¹⁵ We additionally stand to gain knowledge around how these processes interact with developments in society at large, and to increase our understanding of possible contradictions that emerge as they unfold.

Data and methodology

This study's primary historical sources are history textbooks. Rooted in national cultures of memory and in broad educationalisation processes aimed at orienting citizens towards particular attitudes and worldviews, they have traditionally functioned as powerful mechanisms of identity and citizenship formation. As such, textbooks may act as barometers of dominant societal discourses.¹⁶ Importantly, their authors' agency unfolds within specific power systems, mirroring the views and visions of those setting the discursive agenda and foregrounding types of knowledge targeted to the promotion of an expression of citizenship regarded as desirable by influential groups. Textbooks, including those analysed here, may thus also illuminate power relations between contemporary or erstwhile colonisers and colonised.

The source analysis presented in this study draws on two datasets, from Belgium and Congo respectively. The Belgian dataset includes all history curricula for the final two years of secondary education, whose history syllabus extensively covers nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial history, alongside a representative selection of textbooks for the same school years produced between 1945 and 2015.¹⁷ The sample, totalling 20 widely used textbook series issued in multiple revised editions,¹⁸ encompasses textbooks used in state or private schools in both Flemish and Francophone secondary education.¹⁹ Contrary to practices in numerous other European countries, Belgium's governments have historically abstained from regulating the production and distribution of textbooks, an attitude stemming from the enshrinement of freedom of education as one of the cornerstones of the ultra-liberal Belgian constitution. Authors' and publishers' liberty in interpreting the set curricula became particularly extensive after the 1980s, following the end of a practice of textbook approval by an "Improvement Council" within the main state and private educational networks which also designed the curricula.²⁰

The Congolese sample includes a broader spectrum of curricula and textbooks, encompassing both primary and secondary schooling. The reason for this decision is threefold. First, colonialism features extensively as a topic at various stages throughout education; second, difficulties with the availability and accessibility of sources necessitated the extension of the sample beyond upper secondary school textbooks; third, secondary education in Congo, unlike primary schooling, has historically been the preserve of the fortunate few. Alongside all curricula set by the educational authorities of the time, the Congolese sample includes relevant historical sections taken from a selection of the dozens of colonial textbooks that were produced, primarily by Belgian missionaries, for use in Congolese elementary schools and which were collected and translated by Honoré Vinck, himself a Belgian missionary.²¹ It also includes a selection of 16 post-colonial history textbooks written, mainly by local authors, between 1960 and 2013 and sanctioned by the state for use in upper primary and secondary school education in independent Congo. As a complement to the analysis of post-

colonial history textbooks, the research reviews six state-approved civics textbooks dealing with national history.²²

The investigation proceeds by diachronic and synchronic content and narrative analysis. One principal focus is to understand educational representations in context by identifying parallels between the accounts of the Belgian–Congolese colonial past presented in the two countries’ history classrooms and predominant representations of this past in national memory cultures and in national and international academic historiography. This enables us to identify, compare, and contrast emerging and shifting themes, voices, emphases, and interpretations around the countries’ shared colonial history, and in this way to potentially cast light on broader educational developments and related educationalisation processes in the colonial and post-colonial eras. Within this framework, the analysis seeks to identify manifestations of colonial or postcolonial perspectives in representations embedded in educational discourses and practices. It does this by exploring the various positions adopted by textbooks in both countries in relation to historiographical and societal controversies on colonialism.

The analysis considers textbooks’ positions on debates around the causes and effects of colonisation and around the continuities and changes marking key historical junctures: the transfer of the Congo Free State, which had been a private possession of the Belgian king Leopold II since the Berlin conference of 1884–1885, to the Belgian state in 1908, and Congo’s transition from colonial rule to the independence it attained in 1960. Attitudes towards two specific historical controversies within these debates take particular prominence in the analysis. The first of these relates to Leopold II’s rule in the Congo Free State. A latent controversy emerged into the light in the mid-1980s with Daniël Vangroenweghe’s book *Red Rubber: Leopold II and his Congo*,²³ and was refuelled in the late 1990s by Adam Hochschild’s worldwide bestseller *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. The heated debates around the latter publication, which characterised Leopold’s colonial rule as a “(black) holocaust” that took the lives of an estimated 10 million Congolese, were rekindled by Peter Bates’ 2004 documentary *White King, Red Rubber, Black Death*.²⁴ The second of these controversies centres on the murder of Congo’s first Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, in 1961, in the country’s immediate post-independence period. The controversy arose after the publication in 1999 of *The Assassination of Lumumba* by the Flemish sociologist Ludo De Witte, who, drawing on new archival research, argued that Lumumba’s murder took place on the orders of the Belgian authorities. The discussions following the publication led to the establishment of a Parliamentary Enquiry Commission which, in 2001, concluded that, at the very least, a “moral responsibility” for the murder fell on the Belgian authorities of the time.²⁵

Belgian and Congolese textbooks compared: mapping discursive divergences and convergences across time and space

The historical analysis of Belgian and Congolese textbooks we conducted identified a number of stages in coverage of the Belgian–Congolese colonial past in these two countries’ educational media in the course of the seven decades under examination. Accordingly, we organised the analysis around three principal periods: the late colonial era between 1945 and 1960; the immediate post-colonial decennium of the 1960s; and the later post-colonial era from the 1970s onwards.

Triumphalism and apologetics in the metropolis and its colony (1940s–1950s)

The 1940s and 1950s marked the final two decades of Belgian colonial rule in Congo. The analysis found striking similarity in the textbook accounts circulating in Belgium and in its colony during this period and in the extent of contemporaneous reverberations of colonialism in the school subject of history. During this era, history textbooks in the two territories espoused a Eurocentric perspective on colonialism and a Western focus emphasising white agency and triumphalism and lauding colonialism's alleged civilising mission. In so doing, they mirrored dominant societal discourses and supported particular educationalisation processes.

Fostering patriotism in Belgium

In Belgium, the promotion of patriotism had been a key aim of history education since the country's establishment as a nation-state in 1830. The end of the Second World War and the subsequent unfolding of democratisation processes set the context for revisiting the purposes of education. Considered, especially under socialist ministers of education, as potential social levellers, schools were tasked with preparing young people from all social classes to function effectively in a democratic, equal, and global society.²⁶ Reflecting these aspirations, the history curriculum committees of both public and private educational networks expressed the intent to subsume Belgian national history into the study of global history and to prioritise the promotion of global citizenship over patriotism.²⁷ In practice, alongside a shift towards Western (rather than global) history, the study of national history – loyalist and royalist in emphasis – continued to occupy an important place in school curricula.²⁸ These dynamics unfolded remarkable and contradictory effects on representations of the colonial past in history curricula and textbooks. On the one hand, in line with the expectations set by a more global understanding of citizenship, history education explored modern imperialism in increasingly critical ways.²⁹ On the other, textbook chapters critically engaging with the global phenomenon of modern imperialism excluded the history of Belgian colonialism in Congo, which continued to appear primarily, and extensively, as part of national history in an era which considered Congo the “Tenth Belgian Province”.³⁰

Curricular outlines and textbook accounts relating to Congo commenced with the arrival of the Belgians, thus erasing the earlier history of a territory that had been populated for millennia. All textbooks, mostly written by academics, took a favourable, even laudatory view towards the Belgian presence in Congo, justifying the colonial enterprise by emphasising the self-proclaimed “civilising mission” of the Belgian colonisers and missionaries and representing them as heroic pioneers. They portrayed colonialism as “a blessing for the Congolese people” which had brought peace, freedom from the Arab slave trade, and civilisation, and progress through its many accomplishments in healthcare, education, trade, industry, agriculture, transport and the expansion of Christianity.³¹ The textbooks especially exalted “the brilliant Leopold II” and his “brave agents”,³² minimising their personal economic gains and the abuses related to the rubber and ivory trades. The Flemish Catholic textbook *Cultuurgetijden* (1960), for instance, only vaguely hinted that “things [had] occurred that could not bear the light of day”.³³ The textbooks appeared particularly concerned to counter the “continuous and unjust” foreign attacks against Leopold II which had eventually forced the king to hand over his colony to Belgium in 1908.³⁴ They omitted all reference to the continued subjugation of the indigenous population and its enduring exploitation and abuse by large companies during the Belgian state's subsequent rule, and to local protests against the abuses.³⁵ The limelight cast on the colonisers

complemented the scant mention of the indigenous Congolese population, who appeared at best as mere passive objects of colonialist agency.

Colonial textbooks in Belgium evidenced what De Baets calls a “colonialist triumphalism”³⁶ and an underlying Eurocentric and ethnocentric narrative of Belgian and Western superiority. Our situated analysis demonstrates that the dominant curricular and textbook representations of the Belgian–Congolese past in private and public education networks alike were largely aligned with the most prevalent accounts within both collective memory and academic historiography, a consensus which transcended the contemporary ideological tensions between Catholics and non-Catholics. Educational media reproduced the rhetoric of societally circulating historical representations that also pervaded Belgian academic historiography, which exalted Belgian Congo as a model colony and which evinced the influence on this sphere of a form of Leopoldian cult which, according to Vanthemsche, after the monarch’s death “became a new tool in the forging of a lively Belgian patriotism”.³⁷ In a degree of contradiction to broader educational policies emphasising global citizenship, history education itself, in espousing this cult and its purpose, thus largely remained a channel of choice in post-World War Two Belgium for nurturing citizens whose patriotism had the corollary of an assumption that the colonised were “other” and essentially inferior.

Socialising Congolese subjects into the colonial order

In Congo, education had been central to a colonial project in which, to speak with Depaepe, “[c]hurch, state and industry all served the transcendent civilising mission, to the greater good and glory of the Belgian nation”.³⁸ Inherently paternalistic, patronising, and utilitarian educational policies and practices characterised a fundamentally oppressive system aimed at establishing and perpetuating colonial power through the disciplinarisation, evangelisation, and moralisation of the indigenous masses. Depaepe speaks of a “pedagogical attitude of tutelage” which sought to instil practical skills, a firm work ethic, religious morality, and a sense of racial inferiority, and tacitly discouraged the development of a critical and emancipated local intelligentsia capable of challenging the colonial order.³⁹ The Second World War, and the rise of a socialist-liberal government in Belgium between 1954 and 1958, set the context for various reforms, including a growing governmental role in education which challenged the historical dominance of Catholic missions, the expansion of educational access, the “metropolisation” of curricula, and more concerted efforts to train a local elite of *évolués* aligned to Western norms and values. The paternalistic essence of colonial education and of educationalisation aims, however, remained fundamentally intact, eventually contributing to the rise of radical anti-colonial nationalism under the leadership of disillusioned and alienated elites.⁴⁰

Against this backdrop, colonial textbooks in 1940s and 1950s Congo reiterated the “grammar of educationalisation” dominant in the metropolitan centre, echoing the ethnocentric and triumphalist apologia for colonialism that long characterised Belgian historiography and history education.⁴¹ This was a function of the fact that, during this period, Belgian institutions took leading roles in producing the history of Congo, or, rather, the history of “the Whites” in Congo; notable among them was the Brussels-based Royal Belgian Colonial Institute, whose narratives went forth from the triumphalist perspective of the coloniser.⁴² Similarly, the authors of school textbooks were predominantly Belgian, many of them missionaries stationed in the colonised territory. Colonial policy documents, including school curricula, reflected the remit of history teaching in Congo to legitimate and consolidate the

colonial order and loyalise the local population,⁴³ emphasising “the progress of civilisation and the direct merits of the civic authorities and the religious missions”.⁴⁴

In line with colonial curricular requirements, and in contrast to the silence on this era characterising Belgian history education, colonial textbooks used in Congo in the 1940s and 1950s included discussions of the pre-colonial past, which they invariably depicted as a dark era marked by “fear, misery and the [sic] death”⁴⁵ at the hands of indigenous “wild people, excelling in all kind of evils”⁴⁶ and “the Arabs” and their “terrifying” slave trade.⁴⁷ Textbooks further emphasised the merits and the selfless sacrifices of the merciful, courageous, and determined “Whites” in the “liberation of the Blacks” from these two evils.⁴⁸ They encouraged Congolese children to offer praise and gratitude to the state, and the Whites in general, for “saving” Congo⁴⁹ and for bringing civilisation and progress, notably through their “impressive” developmental work⁵⁰ in the course of which “many Whites and [their] workers died”.⁵¹ The pervasive nature of these discourses may serve to support and explain Briffaerts’ findings around educated colonial subjects, the so-called *évolués*. Alienated from “barbaric” local customs and traditions and assimilated to a colonial ideology aligned with Western norms and values, the *évolués* internalised the view of pre-colonial Congo as a cultureless space; as Briffaert observes, they thus, upon their emancipation, regarded it as natural and a call of duty for them to step into the “civilising” role vacated by the departing colonisers.⁵²

In these accounts, which echoed contemporaneous Belgian textbooks, King Leopold II appeared as a bountiful civiliser-in-chief. The schoolbook *Mambi ma botangi II* (1955), for instance, deemed him to have inspired “the good-minded Belgians to save the Blacks of Congo” and to have “put his heart, his intelligence, and his money in the maintenance of Congo”.⁵³ The one exception our analysis recorded to the general silence on the notorious abuses marking Leopold’s reign in the Congo Free State is a textbook published in the colony before the 1940s by, *nota bene*, an English Baptist missionary society. Even this publication, however, downplayed the abuses’ gravity by declaring them the acts of a few “evil people” that should not overshadow the many merits of “the Whites”.⁵⁴ In contrast to their Belgian counterparts, Congo’s colonial textbooks generally omitted explanation of the colony’s transfer to Belgium following an international outcry over the abuses. At best, they vaguely depicted it as a voluntary handover on Leopold II’s part, as in the textbook *Botondoli mambi ma nse* (1944), whose author, the Belgian Scheut missionary, teacher, and school inspector Octaaf Van Hullebusch, asserted that the king “offered” Congo to Belgium in 1908. It is a claim once again framed by hagiography, with Leopold II lauded for having “reigned over the Congo from Europe with great wisdom during 24 years”, for which “[t]he whole world [had] congratulated him”.⁵⁵

A tentative transitional phase in the immediate post-colonial decennium (1960s)

The analysis identified the 1960s as a turning point, inaugurating a new, transitional phase in textbook accounts in the two countries. The political context marking this phase was the declaration of Congo’s independence on 30 June 1960 and the country’s subsequent descent into chaos in the context of an army mutiny against colonial officers and of Lumumba’s assassination. It was further characterised by the rise to power in 1965 of the army chief Mobutu, who, with the support of Belgium and other western countries against the backdrop of the Cold War, eventually established a kleptocratic dictatorship that survived for three decades.⁵⁶ Belgian and Congolese textbooks reflected the political events in a gradual shift in their representations of Belgian–Congolese colonial history. Here, a divergence commenced,

with textbooks in both countries substantially departing from an academic historiography that had begun to critique Belgian colonialism; in so doing, they mirrored the apparent struggles of two post-colonial societies to adapt to the new political dispensation.

Educational amnesia as a mirror of Belgian post-colonial malaise

Belgian history textbooks produced during the first decade of Congolese independence gradually moved away from blatant triumphalism and towards a form of amnesia, reflecting wider societal disillusionment and post-colonial malaise within Belgian society after Congo's decolonisation.⁵⁷ Against the backdrop of that process' troubled course, and in some contradiction to curricula continuing to reference Belgian colonialism as a topic for national history, the attention these textbooks paid to colonial history dwindled.⁵⁸

From 1963 onwards, textbook accounts of Belgian colonialism continued to ignore Congo's pre-colonial past and edit out the years of Belgian rule between 1908 and 1960. They instead turned renewed focus to the era of Leopold's rule in the Congo Free State between 1885 and 1908, while also introducing the more recent topic of Congo's decolonisation. In the context of both topics, the new textbooks remained uncritical of Belgian actions and continued to adopt a largely biased and one-sided ethnocentric narrative. Their account of the Congo Free State remained embedded in the hagiographical tradition which exalted Leopold II and the civilising achievements of the Whites. The triumphalist account of the 1940s and 1950s, however, slowly made way for more equivocal and less exultant perspectives on the colonial enterprise.⁵⁹ A comparison of successive editions of *Historia* is revealing of this gradual yet significant shift. Whereas the 1963 edition had claimed that "despite some drawbacks, Belgian paternalism in Congo was a blessing for the Congolese people",⁶⁰ a later edition, produced in 1969, was less enthusiastic, arguing that "despite the many drawbacks, Belgian paternalism in Congo yielded a surplus for the Congolese people".⁶¹

Similarly, Belgian textbooks produced in the immediate aftermath of Congo's independence did not critique Belgium's role in the then recent decolonisation process, instead blaming Congo's chaotic and violent decolonisation primarily on the Congolese themselves. Their highlighting of alleged Congolese atrocities against the Whites in 1959 and 1960 came with a concomitant silence on the many Congolese lives also lost. In line with the dominant public discourse in Belgian society, the textbooks depicted Lumumba in particular as a friend of communists and "a first-rate demagogue" with primary responsibility for the post-colonial violence and chaos.⁶²

In partially turning away from the national colonial past while remaining essentially uncritical of it, Belgian textbooks diverged from academic historiography, which had begun to distance itself from the triumphalist and hagiographical discourse that had long characterised its output on colonialism⁶³ – although it seemed unable to leave behind the exclusively Eurocentric perspective engendered by the tenacious narrative of "the West and the Rest".⁶⁴ The influence of the prominent Belgian historian Jean Stengers was key in this development, yet remained unable to permeate history textbook accounts of the Belgian-Congolese past at this time. That this should be so, despite the fact that textbook authors were mostly academic historians, might stem from a view of history curricula and textbooks as intended not to introduce students to the most recent state of historiography, but still to foster national pride.

Contrary to the unchallenging tone of their representations of the Belgian-Congolese colonial past, at this time Belgian textbooks began including increasingly unflattering accounts of modern imperialism in general, prompted by a growing critical societal spirit that demanded education nurture politically literate citizens prepared to stand up for social justice, democracy, and human rights. In this context, textbooks' continued predominant silence on the specific abuses of the Belgian colonial past bears striking witness once again to the persistently patriotic aims of national education.⁶⁵ A telling instance is the textbook produced in the 1960s by a group of influential left-wing history educators and public education inspectors who, partly influenced by UNESCO, sought to end the hegemony of historicist and Eurocentric paradigms,⁶⁶ proposed a "planetary" view on history and aimed to place history education in the service of the present. *Sprekend Verleden* [Telling Past] adopted a strongly condemnatory stance towards a past its authors considered comparable to slavery and absolutism. Enacting what critics, such as the Dutch historian Maarten Brands, have labelled a "hunt for the wrong past",⁶⁷ *Sprekend Verleden* emphasised that colonialism had brought "the African negro ... into the European economic order, without yielding him many material and social benefits".⁶⁸ Despite this apparently radical break with imperialist historical tradition, specific engagement with the Belgian case, here too, remained a step too far. The textbook addressed the national experience with colonialism separately and less critically, illustrating the mounting tension between the conflicting expectations on education to raise simultaneously critical and patriotic citizens.

Remnants of colonial discourse in Congo

In the wake of independence, Congo sought, relatively successfully, to democratise education by considerably expanding access and by enshrining in law equality and non-discrimination in education. Reforms to curricula, partly with UNESCO support, aimed primarily to decolonise education and make it more locally relevant and liberating by providing its content with a Congolese and African voice and orientation.⁶⁹ These reforms unfolded in the context of a radical change in political discourse, and consequently in educationalisation objectives, towards a nationalist and anti-colonial narrative. The discursive rupture found expression in the famous speech given by Congo's first Prime Minister, Lumumba, on the day of the official handover of power on 30 June 1960. The speech underscored the "heroic" struggle through which Congolese people had "liberated" themselves from "humiliating slavery" and a "regime of injustice, oppression and exploitation".⁷⁰ Shortly before being assassinated in 1961, Lumumba articulated the need to "re-write our true history" and to "proceed to a mental decolonisation because the people have been falsely indoctrinated for 80 years".⁷¹ These imperatives, and immediate calls to decolonise education, notwithstanding, early post-colonial textbooks retained a predominantly Eurocentric content and a triumphalist and apologetic colonial rhetoric. This stemmed partly from the fact that, for the most part, Belgians were still writing the textbooks, as the legacy of paternalistic colonial educational policies meant a belated beginning to training for professional historians in the former colony.

Histoire du Congo, written by the Belgian Jesuit G. Beel and produced by the Namur-based educational publisher Wesmael-Charlier in 1963, offers illuminating examples of the remnants of Belgian hagiographical colonial discourse in early post-colonial textbooks in Congo. This textbook justified Belgian occupation of Congolese territory as an act of altruistic pacification against "merciless" tribal chiefs and "the Arab peril".⁷² It also continued to emphasise colonial socio-economic achievements, terming railway construction, for instance, a "grand project" of "capital importance" to opening the country to civilisation

and commerce. Congolese workers forced into labour on the project and abused were cynically deemed to have “offer[ed] their services”, and Europeans once again preceded Africans in the author’s commemoration of the enterprise’s human cost.⁷³ Leopold II appeared in the textbook as a “civilising” “benefactor” and “illustrious founder of Congo”. While acknowledging the abuses of the period, the book exculpated the Belgian king, placing responsibility at the feet of “some” unscrupulous “agents”.⁷⁴ Similarly, it failed to elaborate on the events that led to the annexation of the Congo Free State by Belgium: its author merely asserted that Leopold “ardently longed to give it to his country”.⁷⁵

Concerning decolonisation, *Regards sur l’Histoire*, a textbook published in the 1960s by the Kinshasa-based Centre de Recherches Pédagogiques – founded in 1959 by the Scheut missionaries and one of Congo’s most prominent educational publishers to this day – echoed contemporaneous Belgian textbook accounts in primarily focusing on Congolese violence committed against the “Whites” during the “riots” of 1959; it similarly suppressed the violent nature of the colonial response by referring, as did *Histoire du Congo*, to “calm [being] restored”. *Regards sur l’Histoire* further typified the paternalism of colonial discourse in justifying the belatedness of Belgium’s reforms towards decolonisation in terms of “prudence” in the interest of internal stability. In a similar vein, and employing tropes from the discourse of parent-child relationships, it blamed Congo’s post-colonial instability on the “rush[ing] and dash[ing]” of reckless Congolese politicians acting in defiance of the Belgian king Baudouin’s admonitions to caution.⁷⁶

A modest discursive shift, however, eventually became apparent at this stage, echoing, in amplified ways, tentative developments in Belgium. It manifested, *inter alia*, in *Histoire de Notre Pays*, a primary school textbook published in the early 1960s and reissued in 1970 by the Kinshasa-based Bureau de l’Enseignement Catholique, another educational publisher established in the 1950s. The author was the Belgian Noëlla De Roover, the former coordinator of government-sponsored Catholic schools in the western Kasai under Mobutu.⁷⁷ Notwithstanding its ongoing emphasis on the “advantages” bestowed on Congo through Belgian investments and sacrifices,⁷⁸ the book included a more critical perspective on the colonial enterprise, with brief references to the metropolis’ self-interest, the economic exploitation and racial discrimination suffered by the population, Belgium’s insufficient efforts to form local cadres, and its contribution to fuelling political and social tensions.⁷⁹ It also hinted at the deadly police response to dissatisfied Congolese protesters in 1959. Additionally, this textbook diverged from others in highlighting local agency, pointing to the active “help of the population” in achievements attained in the colonial period.⁸⁰ Pursuing the stated aim of encouraging Congolese pupils to be “proud of our ancestors” and learn “how our country became great and powerful”,⁸¹ its author spoke of the “magnificent services” rendered by the “Congolese army” in guaranteeing peace and order and of Congolese victories, notably against Arab slave traders, while also acknowledging the hundreds of lives lost, primarily among Africans, in infrastructural developmental efforts.⁸² These emerging critical, nationalist representations point towards a shift in the desired type of future citizen in the focus of the educational efforts thus pursued. The persistence evidenced by the remnants of colonial discourse with which these incipient representations were contemporaneous speaks of the gradual and difficult nature of the decolonisation process.

Divergent representations amid increasing critique (1970s–present day)

As the section above explains, and despite enduring struggles, representations of the colonial era were beginning to diverge. The successor to the period of tentative post-colonial

readjustment was a more marked shift in textbook discourse from the 1970s onwards. At this time, depictions of the colonial past became increasingly critical, although viewpoints remained narrow in many instances. While this was taking place, perspectives in Belgium and Congo grew likewise divergent, with Belgian curricula and textbooks leaving straightforward patriotic nationalism behind and adhering to a Eurocentric perspective, while Congolese curricula and textbooks turned to a pronounced anti-colonial stance with a nationalist flavour.

Belgium: in a groundswell of social criticism, the cautious “hunt for a wrong past”

In Belgium, rising demands for education to further facilitate democratisation and raise critical global citizens led in 1970 to a major reform: the introduction of what was known as “Reformed Secondary Education” promoted comprehensive education and the establishment of comprehensive schools bringing together all existing study branches in one institution. The reform aimed to accommodate increasing student numbers, which were rising particularly markedly among pupils from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds; it also sought to respond to calls articulated by UNESCO and the Council of Europe for education to devote itself to promoting democratic and Enlightenment values such as respect for human rights, diversity, freedom, and equality, rather than to cultivating patriotism.⁸³ The reform was non-mandatory. Schools that chose to implement it nevertheless had to adopt new history curricula. Following the example of countries such as England, Wales, Sweden, and Italy, Belgium’s educational networks, still in charge of designing their own curricula, reoriented history education towards a “global perspective” by more effectively integrating national history into the study of “global” – in fact still primarily Western European – history. This development signalled a significant break in the treatment of the Belgian–Congolese colonial past, as it removed the topic from its former context within Belgian national history and located it within the broader topic of nineteenth-century Western imperialism. Within this setting, the “black pages” of history represented by colonialism and slavery became the central targets of what has been called a “hunt for a wrong past”.⁸⁴ In line with the new curriculum and pursuant to the view developed by left-wing educators and inspectors in the 1960s, mainstream history textbooks now also took a critical stance towards colonialism as a general phenomenon. *Janus* (1977), for example, associated colonisation with “territorial robbery, economic exploitation, oppression and humiliation”.⁸⁵ Similarly, *Historische Units* (1975) explained that “[c]olonisation offered European powers a new area for action and competition”, with the task of “[c]ivilising barbarians ... invoked as an excuse”.⁸⁶

Whereas this previously marginal discourse found broad acceptance among textbook authors, the tone on Belgian colonialism in particular again remained distinctly moderate, with even less attention devoted to Congo than in preceding decades. Representation of Belgium’s colonial effort as a successful *mission civilisatrice* was ongoing, as was the assignation of responsibility for Congo’s turbulent decolonisation and ensuing chaos exclusively to the Congolese. These textbooks omitted any reference to Belgian and, more broadly, Western involvement in the violent events that befell Congo after 1960, including Lumumba’s assassination and the establishment of Mobutu’s dictatorship. Instead, they justified Belgian military interventions in 1960 and 1964 as humanitarian missions aimed at freeing white hostages from Congolese rebels. In this way, in unison with existing representations within popular historical culture as analysed, for instance, by Bambi Ceuppens,⁸⁷ the textbooks continued to embrace an ethnocentric and monoperspectivist approach which disregarded Congolese voices and experiences and denied the inherent injustice of the colonial project. The dominant collective memory and the accompanying “regime of truth” did not

fundamentally change. Again, this account contrasted sharply with academic historiography,⁸⁸ whose critical stance was manifest in several historiographical contributions published by Belgian scholars such as Jean Stengers, Jean-Luc Vellut, and Daniël Vangroenweghe,⁸⁹ and further international scholarship.⁹⁰ The fact that, from the 1970s onward, the writing of school textbooks mainly passed from the hands of academics into those of history teachers further widened the gulf between textbooks – and by extension educational practice – and contemporary academic historiography.⁹¹ In principally relying on previous textbook accounts when drafting new ones, textbook authors perpetuated the status quo and essentially obstructed the application of a critical postcolonial approach.⁹²

It took until the 1990s for Belgian textbooks to become more attentive to and critical of their country's colonial actions. This change coincided with another educational reform, designed in response to the growing competition between schools using and omitting the Reformed Secondary Education reform. In 1990, following the regionalisation of education policy in 1989,⁹³ both the Flemish and Francophone communities introduced a “unified” type of education, now mandatory for all schools, alongside the issuance of new standards for each subject which emphasised skills and attitudes rather than specific knowledge or topics. In history, both the Flemish and Francophone sets of standards, still in use today and forming the basis for curriculum design by Belgian educational networks, prioritise the promotion of critical thinking over the pure impartation of factual knowledge. Unlike those of previous decades, the curricula arising from this approach therefore do not impose specific, canonical knowledge upon teachers or textbook authors. The objectives articulated in the new standards seek, in line with developments in other Western countries, to introduce students to the academic discipline of history and its distinct scientific approach centred on the critical analysis of historical sources, while also nurturing citizenship through the promotion of values such as democracy, human rights, liberty and equality, and critical participation in society. Critical citizenship was thus, alongside the introduction of students to the academic discipline, one of the foundations to this reform.⁹⁴

The textbooks produced within the context of these substantial policy changes remained largely silent on Congo's history before colonialism and the period of Belgian rule. Conversely, and against the backdrop of the broader societal controversies that emerged around the turn of the millennium, there was increased emphasis on the regime of King Leopold II, the decolonisation process, and the murder of Lumumba.⁹⁵ In relation to Leopold's rule in Congo, the 2001 edition of *Historia* (not to be confused with the textbook series of the same name from the 1950s and 1960s), for instance, characterised the Congo Free State period as one of the darkest chapters in the history of modern imperialism and of Belgium, and referenced the Belgian king as “the villain of the piece”.⁹⁶ For the first time, Belgian textbooks paid special attention to condemning the consequences of Leopold's rule for the indigenous population and depicted the enquiry commission that had been established by the king to examine the allegations of widespread abuses as setting out to deceive international public opinion.

By contrast, the textbook accounts of the more recent assassination of Lumumba featured much more restraint and considerably less criticism of the role played by Belgians and the Belgian government. The textbooks framed the assassination within concise outlines of the Congolese decolonisation process, including reference to the Congolese army mutiny against the former Belgian colonisers and the national crisis ensuing from the secession of the rich Katanga and South Kasai provinces which preceded the murder. In contrast to earlier textbooks, several authors recognised the economic interests of the Belgian government and

mining companies as one of the factors leading to Belgian military interventions in the context of these crises in 1960 and 1964. Further, the textbooks, for instance *Historia* (2009), put a Cold War frame around the conflict between the Congolese president Kasavubu, “supported by the West”, and the prime minister Lumumba, “supported by the Soviet Union”,⁹⁷ describing Lumumba’s assassination as the final outcome of this internal political conflict. In a typically vague account, *Storia* (2002) asserted that “Lumumba, too progressive for American and Belgian standards, die[d] in mysterious circumstances”.⁹⁸ Echoing these words while giving the impression of Belgian non-involvement, *Memo* (2004) placed the murder in the context of a bloody civil war that broke out “[a]fter the official leaving of the Belgians”, within which “the popular left-wing nationalist Patrice Lumumba ... was assassinated in unclear circumstances”.⁹⁹ The wording used around the murder in these two textbooks is striking for its ambivalence, its struggle with pinning down the facts: While *Storia*’s description of the “circumstances” of the death heavily implies foul play in the ominous adjective “mysterious” while retaining the neutral “die[d]”, *Memo* speaks openly of a political murder (in the sense of “assassination” as the murder of a significant figure) yet in its reference to “unclear circumstances” obscures any path to categorising the act or assigning responsibility. The 2008 edition of the Francophone textbook *Construire l’Histoire* failed to mention the assassination altogether, a silence particularly remarkable – and illustrative of the gulf between history textbooks and the academic discipline – in the context of the new knowledge about the murder that emerged from De Witte’s *The Assassination of Lumumba* of 1999 and the subsequent investigation by the Parliamentary Enquiry Commission, details of which were made public before the new textbooks’ issuance.¹⁰⁰

More generally, Belgian textbooks have not taken adequate account of broader historiographical insights offered by foreign scholars, mainly from the United States and Congo,¹⁰¹ and do not appear to have embraced novel perspectives arising from several studies on the Belgian–Congolese colonial past published in the New Imperial History international research tradition in the last decade.¹⁰² Overall, an ethnocentric, and primarily white and Western perspective, has continued to pervade Belgian textbooks, defying calls for the introduction of critical thinking and democratic perspectives in history education. Textbooks have also clung to a Eurocentric “regime of truth”. Although some space for Congolese voices and sources began to emerge after the turn of the millennium, the depiction of the Congolese as passive victims without agency persists. Thus far, little space has opened up for a transnational, reciprocal, and intercultural perspective which, in line with new trends in academic historiography, would highlight the links between colonies and their metropolitan centres, the reciprocities of their encounters, mutual influences and representations, cultural and social interconnections, and migration. Exceptions appear in a minority of progressive textbooks, notably *Passages* (2009) and *FuturHist* (2010), written by Belgian academics with the explicit aim of creating a bridge between secondary education and academic historiography.¹⁰³ Within these publications, research chapters on “The African Myth”¹⁰⁴ and the “Views on the Black Man (19th Century–1945)”,¹⁰⁵ which both consider the how and why of Europeans’ fascination with black Africa as well as Africans’ response to this “negrophilia”, reflect the influence of New Imperial History and the related attempt to transcend Eurocentrism.

The limited effect of recent historiographical developments on textbook accounts of the colonial era in this latest phase reflects representations of this period in mainstream Belgian popular historical culture, in which a mildly critical consensus on the Belgian “dark pages” appears to have emerged since the dawn of the twenty-first century, especially concerning the rubber trade and Lumumba’s assassination. At the same time, there is a tendency to place

these “dark pages” in an international perspective which emphasises that other European countries made the same mistakes and attempt to brighten them up by highlighting colonial merits in fields such as education, infrastructure, and healthcare. Overall, the notion that the colonial past has been dealt with and that the discussion can be ticked off and left behind dominates the popular discourse.¹⁰⁶ As a result, there is no real public debate on the future of Belgium’s colonial heritage, very little attention to postcolonial debates in other countries, and no awareness of the major differences between the Belgian colonial self-image and representations from abroad which frequently censure Belgium as the worst pupil in the colonial or imperialist “classroom”.¹⁰⁷

Congo: the path to a patriotic citizenry from Eurocentrism to anti-colonial nationalism

In Congo, broad reforms towards educational democratisation and decolonisation timidly initiated in the 1960s found momentum in subsequent decades, notably under Mobutu’s rule in the 1970s and 1980s. Simultaneously, severe mismanagement and its rapidly deleterious effects on educational quality *de facto* counteracted the state rhetoric of emancipatory and liberating pedagogy.¹⁰⁸ In this context, and in contrast to Belgian developments, Congo’s process of political and cultural decolonisation has seen the rise of nationalist (and Africanist) education and curricula which have emerged vocally in the establishment of an anti-colonial textbook discourse. This discourse reflects both the official memory promoted by the state in the name of nation-building and an incipient national, and largely nationalist, Congolese historiography. Commencing in the 1970s, the central mission of the teaching of Congolese history, as expressed in state policies, shifted towards forging a patriotic citizenry by educating young Congolese about their fatherland’s “prestigious” and “glorious” past and heroes.¹⁰⁹ This change can be read as a function of the overarching transformation in discourse and policy that characterised the political context of education reform in Congo. Under Mobutu, it occurred in the context of a broader “cultural revolution” aimed, in a country now renamed Zaire as a symbol of its break with the colonial past, at decolonising Congolese minds, countering longstanding “alienation, and neo-colonialism”¹¹⁰ and ultimately attaining “total independence”.¹¹¹ This revolution found expression in the replacement of statues of illustrious Belgian figures such as King Leopold II with monuments honouring national independence heroes, notably Lumumba. Its aims likewise underpinned initiatives whose objective was to rewrite and teach Congo’s history in line with Mobutu’s official ideology of “authentic Zairian nationalism”, or “Authenticity”. Centred on a cult of the ancient past, the re-valorisation of local tradition over colonial influences at the heart of this new philosophy appeared in the national Congolese historiography emergent in this period.¹¹² A related concomitant of the reform was the co-opting of the education sector, including universities, by Mobutu’s autocratic regime, which strictly monitored historiography and textbook production by local authors in accordance with its interests.¹¹³

The effects of the educational reforms and related discursive shifts inaugurated by Mobutu have been long-lived and survived the demise of this regime in the 1990s. As the analysis presented below demonstrates, the changed political context did not significantly affect textbook representations of Belgian colonialism; they remained largely unchanged despite curricular revisions introduced in 1997 at primary level and in 2005 at secondary level to the end of further “decolonising” the subject and adopting a “globalist, African and Congolese perspective on history”.¹¹⁴ Indeed, various approved history textbooks currently used in Congo’s classrooms are reissues from the Mobutu era, relaunched on account of their supposedly high quality and popularity among teachers. They evidently continue to strongly influence current textbook authors. A partial explanation for this state of stagnation lies in the

longstanding crisis of both national education and historiography, which have been affected by the persistent politicisation of knowledge and by chronic poverty and political instability.

Overall, the textbooks produced in the former Belgian colony between the 1970s and the present day differ emphatically from earlier works, a divergence partially rooted in the combination of a rhetoric of national pride with a discourse of victimhood in their representations of colonialism. Three features are illustrative of this noticeable rhetorical and representational shift. First, these textbooks devote ample space to pre-colonial kingdoms and empires. The various editions of the primary school textbook *Histoire 6^e primaire* (1971, 1981, 2004) praise their ancient organisation, their “marvellous” civilisation, and their “splendour” and “richness”, further highlighting local agency by affirming that “Congolese labour has been the ideal instrument through which our country has been built”.¹¹⁵ Along analogous lines, the Zairian primary school textbook *Histoire du Zaïre, 5^{ème} primaire* (1975) explicitly debunks colonial views by labelling as false the belief “that it was the foreigners who had taught us how to build cities and to organise a country” and asserting that “[t]he first Europeans to set foot in Zaïre were very surprised to see everything that our grandparents had achieved”.¹¹⁶

Second, Zairian textbooks from the Mobutu era and their successors are highly critical of Belgium’s colonial rule in Congo. Notwithstanding their general acknowledgement of the colonial era’s “undeniable benefits”, they stress and vigorously condemn the “grave” abuses that marked this era, including occupation, oppression, exploitation, plundering, discrimination, and domination.¹¹⁷ Espousing a political-economy view of colonialism, they highlight the economic base of the colonial project and the opportunism of colonial developmental efforts whose ultimate agenda was to promote “convenient exploitation of the colony”.¹¹⁸ Relatedly, Congo’s post-colonial textbooks have paid increasing attention to the “Red Rubber” abuses, including “forced labour, corporal mutilations, camps of hostages, [and the] whip”.¹¹⁹ The recent secondary school textbook *Histoire: 2^{ème} année secondaire* (2010) goes to particular lengths to denounce the “crimes against humanity” that marked the “Leopoldian regime”. Its authors echo critical Belgian textbook accounts that emerged in the wake of Hochschild’s *King Leopold’s Ghost*, describing the Leopoldian era as “without a doubt one of the darkest pages in the history of our country”.¹²⁰ Dispensing with the ambiguous narratives of earlier Congolese textbooks, *Histoire 6^{ème} année secondaire* (2009), currently in use, deems Leopold’s transferral an act “not charitable”, but incited by mounting debts and international pressure over the reported abuses.¹²¹

Third, post-colonial textbooks bestow substantial, and apparently increasing, attention on local anti-colonial resistance and “the rise of Congolese nationalism” within the context of decolonisation, topics which have risen to powerful prominence within Congolese historiography. *Histoire 6^{ème} année secondaire* (2009), for instance, includes descriptions of the anti-colonial resistance conducted by traditional authorities, communities, soldiers of the colonial army, religious and social movements, and, finally, by political parties in Congo.¹²² In contrast to earlier textbooks, these publications particularly celebrate the patriotic resistance led by the “martyrs” of the independence struggle. The choice of words used in several Zairian textbooks to describe the violent events of 1959 is striking, with descriptors including “merciless” and “brutal” applied to the insurrection’s suppression, and “nationalist” Zairians deemed victims of a “massacre” by the colonial authorities in what is often described as an unequal confrontation.¹²³ *Histoire 6^{ème} année secondaire* (2009) justifies local developments of radicalisation in the 1950s as responses to Belgium’s “procrastination”, “obstruction”, and “immobility” in the face of requests for reform, an “unwillingness”

arising, in this narrative, not from Belgian prudence in the interest of Congo's stability, but from a reluctance "to allow Congo to access independence in peace and harmony".¹²⁴ Drawing a comparison with colonial policies elsewhere, *Histoire: 2ème année secondaire* (2010) highlights that "[w]hile English and French Africa were striding towards independence, the Belgian leaders kept silent about the emancipation of Belgian Congo",¹²⁵ giving Belgium, as *Histoire 6ème année secondaire* (2009) asserts, a "bad reputation" on the international stage.¹²⁶

Contrasting again with earlier textbooks and with most Belgian publications, which had blamed Congo's instability on impatient local actors, Zairian and later Congolese textbooks, by and large, indict the former colonial power for Congo's post-colonial chaos. The first charge they level relates to the unfortunate precipitation of events; the textbooks point the finger at the "suspicious" and "disconcerting" rapidity with which the colonial power engaged in the decolonisation process after their "slow[ness] in reacting to the first innocuous claims of the Congolese" and their "deaf[ness] to international pressure".¹²⁷ Second, post-colonial textbooks lay blame for the troubled post-independence period at the feet of the colonial rulers by asserting that they had "hardly worried about preparing the Congolese elites to take power into their hands";¹²⁸ they trace Belgians' "atrophying" paternalism, manifest in the limitations imposed on local educational opportunities and responsibilities,¹²⁹ to the "bad habit of the white [of] 'despis[ing] the black'"¹³⁰ and to a strategic conspiracy to retain the Congolese in perpetual inferiority and dependence.¹³¹ Third, the textbooks blame the post-colonial chaos on the interference of Belgium and of other foreign "industrial powers" in local affairs, particularly through the "incit[ement]" of army mutinies and secessions¹³² and through the conduction of unlawful and "terrorising" military interventions in the Congo under the pretext of saving white people.¹³³

Echoing their Belgian counterparts, representations of the decolonisation process in Congo's post-colonial textbooks appear notably vague on the circumstances surrounding the assassination of the "national independence hero" Lumumba.¹³⁴ Most textbooks, including those issued after the publication of the expert panel on Lumumba's murder in 2002, negate any attribution of agency by simply stating that he was killed. There are implicit allusions to Belgium's interest and involvement in the murder, notably in suggestions that the Belgian authorities perceived Lumumba as an "agitator"¹³⁵ or that the anti-colonial rhetoric characterising Lumumba's historic speech of June 1960 "plunged the Belgians into panic [... and led to] his political ousting and death".¹³⁶ The general tendency to reference the incident in terms that avoid assigning or pinpointing direct blame, however, prevails.

Discussion and conclusion

In tracing evolving textbook representations of colonial history in Belgium and Congo since 1945, the comparative historical analysis presented above has pointed to evident trends in the knowledge on the shared Belgian–Congolese colonial past promoted in textbooks across time and space. The examination of textbooks' coverage of this shared past and of their varying positions on debates around colonial history has brought to light patterns of continuity and change, and convergences and divergences, in discursive perspectives, emphases, omissions, and nuances in each context, tracing the reverberations of colonialist and postcolonial thought in these educational media. The analysis illuminated a gradual shift in Belgium from triumphalist colonialist ideology, via practices of (non-)representation tending to favour amnesia, towards more critical accounts, particularly with regard to the more remote past. In Congo, there has been a simultaneous shift from colonial glorification to anti-colonial

nationalism, with the intermission of an immediate post-colonial phase of adjustment to the new political dispensation. These shifts have accompanied and largely reflected broader dominant societal discourses which have emerged and evolved against the backdrop of the abrupt end to Belgian colonial rule and of a slow process of decolonisation of existing power structures and knowledge systems which only gradually gave way to a postcolonial world still in the making.

The analysis identified wide chasms between textbook discourses in each country and advances towards critical and postcolonial perspectives in academic historiography. Most notably, Belgian textbooks seem to have done little to distance their underlying discourses from a Western, Eurocentric approach, demonstrating the persistence of the concept of “the West and the Rest” as a “regime of truth”. At the same time, patriotism, as an educational aim long underpinning the study of history, has gradually lost its currency, if not yet completely disappeared from these textbooks. Conversely, in Congo, the encouragement of patriotism has been a prominent objective underlying post-colonial textbooks, whose narratives have sought to inculcate in students a national and African consciousness while turning away from colonial perspectives. In opposition to textbook discourses in Belgium, which by and large remain inattentive to Congolese voices, Congolese post-colonial textbooks have radically changed to emphasise local agency, paying increasing attention to Congo’s long and glorious pre-colonial era, to the role of the Congolese as the real agents (and the victims) of colonial developmental efforts, and to the heroic and patriotic resistance to Leopold’s and Belgium’s abusive and exploitative paternalist colonial rule. These findings echo and support closely related studies which have observed two parallel phenomena in present-day Europe and Africa. One is “the disinclination of mainstream textbooks to include the points of view of the formerly colonised ... as a cultural legacy of colonialism” in Europe.¹³⁷ The other is “a move towards contesting and subverting the historical ‘cultural hegemony’ (Gramsci 1985, 2011) of Eurocentric perspectives” in African textbooks, which have been “increasingly asserting and foregrounding the perspectives and voices of the formerly colonised ... now elevated to a self-asserted role of equally legitimate producers of knowledge”.¹³⁸

These findings indicate that Congolese textbooks seem to have made a greater effort at decolonising knowledge in line with postcolonial discourses than their Belgian counterparts. This said, the analysis has also revealed that the history textbooks of both countries do not appear to have experienced the postcolonial turn undergone by academic scholarship. Particularly, textbook representations show little trace of the impact of New Imperial History, whose narratives consider multiple entanglements and reciprocal influences between colonisers and colonised and in so doing transcend nation-state perspectives and disrupt the traditional dichotomy of agency and passivity. More generally, the analysis has pointed to the severely limited permeation of history textbooks in the two countries by international developments and trends in historiography and history didactics, and the restricted emergence of transnational, intercultural, and multi-perspective approaches to the study of the past. The exploration of historical events from the perspective of “the other” to the end of facilitating an understanding of that “other” in its own right remains a rarity.¹³⁹ In both countries, ethnocentrism and binary oppositions continue to dominate the textbooks’ historical narratives.

The search for an explanation for this disconnect of textbook accounts with the current state of the historical discipline and the generally accepted principles of history education might cast suspicion on multiple factors. One of these relates to the evident influence of representations drawn from pervasive national memory cultures, which might appear to have

been a readier source for textbook authors than has academic historiography. A related factor reinforcing the gulf between the school subject of history and academic historiography, and the concomitant influence of popular historical culture on history education, revolves around the practical and contextual circumstances of textbook production. Most textbook authors, particularly since the 1970s, are history teachers, who are generalists and who may have limited opportunities to acquaint themselves with recent academic historiography. In the case of Congo, moreover, limited accessibility of resources also has a part to play, with authors often relying on previous textbook editions and on more easily accessible representations within popular historical culture, and in many instances restricting themselves to only slightly amending old material. In Belgium, another possible explanation for the continued predominance of a white, Eurocentric perspective on the colonial past in history education might relate to the small size and marginal societal influence of the post-colonial Congolese community.¹⁴⁰ Unlike in other European countries, whose post-colonial migrant communities have influenced public debate on the colonial past,¹⁴¹ African minoritised and diasporic groups in Belgium do not seem to have taken a leading role in the societal exploration of the colonial legacy; the dominance of white Belgians in the field may point to continued asymmetries in power relations.¹⁴² As a consequence, public scrutiny or questioning of colonial representations is largely absent, as is any challenge to textbook authors and publishing houses to rethink their accounts. The neglect of cross-border dialogue, exchange, and cooperation between historians and history educationalists, which could potentially facilitate exposure to hitherto unexamined source materials and alternative perspectives, has exacerbated the situation.¹⁴³

Another potential explanation for this disconnect between textbook content and academic history may reside in the processes of educationalisation which have unfolded over the course of the past seven decades. The marginalisation of postcolonialism and the lack of value placed on postcolonial perspectives by policymakers and curriculum developers are undoubtedly factors in the limited influence of the postcolonial turn on the study of the colonial past in Belgian and Congolese history classrooms. This is arguably a manifestation of lack of genuine interest in prioritising the alignment of history as a school subject to academic perspectives. A model for understanding this disjunct may further present itself in the concept of “alchemy” introduced by the educationalist and curriculum theorist Thomas Popkewitz to describe the fundamental changes characterising the process through which disciplinary knowledge is transferred to schools, notably through curricula, textbooks, and classroom practices. Popkewitz explains these changes by arguing that the primary aim of schooling is not to nurture disciplinary understandings, but to normalise and govern students’ behaviour, social conduct, and communication within processes of educationalisation and socialisation.¹⁴⁴ This study has shown Popkewitz’s concept of alchemy at play in the history of history education in Belgium and Congo. Academic accounts of the national past have undergone adjustment to the end of placing them primarily at the service of civic objectives, which, as they have changed in the past seven decades, point to evident historical evolutions in educationalisation processes in the two countries. In this regard, the study has also brought to light contradictions and conflicting expectations in processes of educationalisation. One manifestation of these contradictions is the disconnect evident in Belgium since the 1960s between general educational aims geared towards fostering internationalism, and critical thinking and the delayed and tentative application of these principles when addressing the particularly sensitive Belgian–Congolese colonial past: ideals lauded as encompassing principles seem to dematerialise when the attention moves closer to home. In Congo, a similar tension is evident in the disjunct between a prevalent rhetoric in favour of immediate decolonisation of education and its aims, and practices of representation which struggled to

obtain distance from colonial knowledge due to deeply embedded extant structures and systems of knowledge production. By examining practices of representation within one specific topic in one school subject, this study has thus provided evidence, on a micro-level, for education historians' general argument that educationalisation is not a univocal and clear-cut process, but one with a multifaceted and ambiguous character, encompassing divergent and often contradictory aims.¹⁴⁵

Another concept which might guide us in understanding factors influencing representations in textbooks and their disconnect with postcolonial perspectives in academic historiography is the “grammar of schooling”, a notion describing the structures and rules that organise and regulate education, whose inherent inertia and resistance to change often hinders educational innovation.¹⁴⁶ This “grammar” represents a point of rupture between the theoretical formulation of educational principles, driven by a desire for innovation, and educational practice, rooted in tradition and habit and inclined to block innovation initiated or imposed from above. This notion particularly comes to the fore in the observation that textbook authors cling to previous versions of textbooks rather than aligning their accounts with new historiographical insights.

The question then arises as to how the inertia of the “grammar of schooling” can be breached. One possibility might be found in the promotion of cross-border dialogue, exchanges of textbooks and other source materials, and international cooperation between historians and textbook authors. This might contribute to alternative and novel approaches to the study of colonial history in school history education in line with the postcolonial turn in historiography: an undoubtedly challenging, yet undeniably present potential development. The feasibility of such a postcolonial approach in the current school subject of history, in light of this study's findings, remains an issue for another discussion.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Denise Bentrovato holds a PhD in history, and is a research fellow in the Department of Humanities Education, University of Pretoria, South Africa, and in the Department of History, University of Leuven, Leuven, Belgium. She is also the co-founder and co-director of the African Association for History Education.

Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse holds a PhD in history, and is associate professor in History Didactics, in the faculty of arts, University of Leuven, Belgium. He coordinates the Specific History Teacher Training Programme.

Notes

1 Paul St-Pierre, “Multiple Meanings and Contexts: The Diversity of the Post-colonial,” *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Redaction* 10, no. 2 (1997): 9–17.

2 Susanne Grindel, “Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts of History Textbooks,” in *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, ed. Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger, and Maria Grever (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 259–73.

3 Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” in *Formations of Modernity* (Understanding Modern Societies: An Introduction – Book 1), ed. Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (Cambridge: Polity Press-Blackwell-Open University, 1992), 185–227.

4 Matthew Stanard, “Post-1945 Colonial Historiography and the New Imperial History,” in *The Colonial Past in History Textbooks: Historical and Social Psychological Perspectives* (International Review of History Education Series), ed. Karel Van Nieuwenhuysse and Joaquim Pires Valentim (Charlotte, NC: IAP, 2018), 13–30.

5 See for instance Idesbald Goddeeris, “Postcolonial Belgium: The Memory of the Congo,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 3 (2015): 434–51; Idesbald Goddeeris, “Colonial Streets and Statues: Postcolonial Belgium in the Public Space,” *Postcolonial Studies* 18, no. 4 (2015): 397–409.

6 Denise Bontrovato, “Narrating and Teaching the Nation: History, Identity and the Politics of Education in the Great Lakes Region of Africa (Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo)” (PhD diss., University of Utrecht, 2013); Denise Bontrovato, “Teaching History under Dictatorship: The Politics of Textbooks and the Legitimation of Authority in Mobutu’s Zaire,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History after 1945*, ed. Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 307–21.

7 Jan Briffaerts, *When Congo Wants to Go to School: Educational Realities in a Colonial Context. An Investigation into Educational Practices in Primary Education in the Belgian Congo (1925–1960)* (Amsterdam: Rozenberg, 2011).

8 Antoon De Baets, “Métamorphoses d’une Epopée: le Congo dans les Manuels d’Histoire employés dans nos Ecoles [Metamorphoses of an Epic: Congo in School History Textbooks used in our Schools],” in *Racisme, Continent Obscur. Clichés, Stéréotypes, Phantasmes à propos des Noirs dans le Royaume de Belgique* [Racism, Dark Continent. Clichés, Stereotypes, Fantasies about the Blacks in the Kingdom of Belgium], ed. Jean-Pierre Jacquemin (Bruxelles: CEC/Le Noir du Blanc, 1991), 45–57; Antoon De Baets, *De Figuranten van de Geschiedenis. Hoe het Verleden van Andere Culturen wordt Verbeeld en in Herinnering Gebracht* [The Figurants of History. How the Past of Other Cultures is Represented and Remembered] (Berchem: EPO, 1994).

9 Raf De Keyser, “Belgisch-Kongo in den Belgischen Geschichtslehrbüchern [Belgian Congo in Belgian History Textbooks],” in *Afrika im Geschichtsunterricht Europäischer Länder: Von der Kolonialgeschichte zur Geschichte der Dritten Welt* [Africa in the History Education of European Countries: From Colonial History to Third World History], ed. Walter Fürnrohr (München: Minerva, 1982), 152–71.

10 Marc Depaepe, “L’Image du Congo (R.D.C.) dans les Manuels Scolaires Belges et les Ecrits Psychopédagogiques durant la Période Coloniale (1908–1960) [The Image of Congo (RDC) in Belgian Textbooks and Psycho-pedagogical Writings during the Colonial Period (1908–1960)],” *Annales Aequatoria* 29 (2008): 5–28; Marc Depaepe and Lies Van Rompaey, *In het Teken van de Bevoogding. De Educatieve Actie in Belgisch-Kongo (1908–1960)* [In

the Sign of Paternalism. Educational Action in Belgian Congo (1908–1960)] (Leuven/Apeldoorn: Garant, 1995). For a historiographical overview of the history of Congolese education, see Marc Depaepe, “Writing Histories of Congolese Colonial and Post-colonial Education. A Historiographical View from Belgium,” in *Connecting Histories of Education: Transnational and Cross-cultural Exchanges in (Post-)Colonial Education*, ed. Barnita Bagchi, Eckhardt Fuchs, and Kate Rousmaniere (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), 41–60.

11 Augustin Odimba Omakoko, *L’Enseignement de l’Histoire en République Démocratique du Congo (Ex-Zaïre): Diagnostic (1960–1980)* [History Education in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Former Zaïre): Diagnosis (1960–1980)]. Publications universitaires européennes. Série XI: Pédagogie, vol. 775 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999).

12 Karel Van Nieuwenhuysse, “From Triumphalism to Amnesia: Belgian-Congolese (Post)Colonial History in Belgian Secondary History Education Curricula and Textbooks (1945–1989),” *Yearbook of the International Society for History Didactics* 35 (2014): 79–100; Karel Van Nieuwenhuysse, “Increasing Criticism and Perspectivism: Belgian-Congolese (Post)Colonial History in Belgian Secondary History Education Curricula and Textbooks (1990–present),” *International Journal of Research on History Didactics, History Education, and Historical Culture* 36 (2015): 183–204.

13 Benoit Verhaegen, “La Colonisation et la Décolonisation dans les Manuels d’Histoire en Belgique [Colonisation and Decolonisation in History Textbooks in Belgium],” in *Papier Blanc, Encre Noire. Cent Ans de Culture Francophone en Afrique Centrale (Zaïre, Rwanda et Burundi)* [White Paper, Black Ink. One Hundred Years of Francophone Culture in Central Africa (Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi)], vol. 2, ed. Marc Quaghebeur and Emile Van Balberghe (Bruxelles: Labor, 1992), 333–79.

14 Honoré Vinck, “The Influence of Colonial Ideology on School Books in the Belgian Congo,” *Paedagogica Historica* 23, no. 2 (1995): 355–406.

15 Marc Depaepe, “Educationalisation: A Key Concept in Understanding the Basic Processes in the History of Western Education,” *History of Education Review* 27, no. 2 (1998): 16–28; Marc Depaepe, “Colonial Education in the Congo: A Question of ‘Uncritical’ Pedagogy until the Bitter End?” *Encounters in Theory and History of Education* 18 (2017): 2–26.

16 Eleftherios Klerides, “Imagining the Textbook: Textbooks as Discourse and Genre,” *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 2, no. 1 (2010): 31–54.

17 In Belgium, history is taught as a separate subject only at secondary school level. At primary level, it is taught as part of what is known as “world orientation”, together with other disciplines such as geography and biology.

18 The sample includes the textbook series *Historia Cultuurgetijden*; *Histoire et Humanités*; *Sciences et Lettres*; *Sprekend Verleden*; *Historische Units*; *Actua – Chrono – Tijdspiegel*; *Janus*; *Formation Historique*; *Gio-Clio. Heden-Verleden* for the 1945–1989 period. The series *Actua – Chrono – Tijdspiegel*; *Documentatiemappen*; *Memo*; *Racines du Futur*; *Historia*; *Storia*; *Passages*; *Construire l’Histoire*; *FuturHist. Le Futur, Toute une Histoire* have been analysed for the period from the 1990s onwards. All series are available and accessible in the Historical Collection of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences

at the Catholic University of Leuven, previously known as the Archive and Documentation Centre for the History of Education.

19 The decentralisation that has characterised Belgian education since the 1960s was followed by formal devolution to the three Belgian linguistic communities – Flemish, French, and German-speaking – in 1989. The very small German community, which has not produced its own history textbooks, is not included in this research.

20 Tessa Lobbes, “Verleden zonder Stof. De Gedaanten van het Heden in het Belgische Geschiedenisonderwijs (1945–1989) [Past without Content. The Shapes of the Present in Belgian History Education (1945–1989)]” (PhD diss., University of Leuven, 2012).

21 Vinck, “The Influence of Colonial Ideology”; Honoré Vinck, “Le Manuel Scolaire au Congo Belge. L’Etat de la Recherche [The School Textbook in Belgian Congo. The State of the Research],” *History of Education & Children’s Literature* 2, no. 1 (2007): 117–42; Honoré Vinck, “Répertoire des Manuels Scolaires du Congo Belge [Repertoire of School Textbooks in Belgian Congo],” in *Les Manuels Scolaires dans l’Histoire de l’Education: Un Enjeu Patrimonial et Scientifique* [School Textbooks in the History of Education: A Patrimonial and Scientific Challenge], ed. Michel Berré, Florence Brasseur, Christine Gobeaux, and René Plisnier (Mons: CIPA, 2013), 71–83.

22 This article extensively cites these resources, which the first author collected in Belgian libraries and archives and obtained from history teachers and school inspectors during fieldwork conducted in Congo between 2009 and 2014. In contrast to the Belgian sample, the resources were not always part of specific textbook series issued in successive editions. Complete references are given throughout the analysis.

23 Daniël Vangroenweghe, *Rood Rubber. Leopold II en zijn Kongo* [Red Rubber. Leopold II and his Congo] (Brussel: Elsevier, 1985).

24 Geert Castryck, “Whose History is History? Singularities and Dualities of the Public Debate on Belgian Colonialism,” in *Being a Historian. Opportunities and Responsibilities. Past and Present*, ed. Sven Mörsdorf (s.l.: CLIOHRES-ISHA, 2010), 1–18.

25 Luc De Vos et al., *Lumumba. De Complotten? De Moord* [Lumumba. The Conspiracies? The Murder] (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2004).

26 Mark D’Hoker, “Vijfentwintig Jaar Democratisering van het Secundair Onderwijs in België, 1945–1970,” in *Op Eigen Vleugels: Liber Amicorum Prof. dr. An Hermans*, ed. Mark D’Hoker and Marc Depaepe (Antwerpen: Garant, 2004), 133–42.

27 Els Witte, *Voor Vrede, Democratie, Wereldburgerschap en Europa. Belgische Historici en de Naoorlogse Politiek-Ideologische Projecten (1944–1956)* [For Peace, Democracy, Global Citizenship and Europe. Belgian Historians and Post-War Politico-Ideological Projects (1944–1956)] (Kapellen: Pelckmans, 2009).

28 National history was the almost exclusive focus at primary level, dwindling to approximately one third of the history curriculum at secondary level: cf. Kaat Wils, “The Evaporated Canon and the Overvalued Source: History Education in Belgium. A Historical Perspective,” in *National History Standards. The Problem of the Canon and the Future of*

Teaching History (International Review of History Education), ed. Linda Symcox and Arie Wilschut (Charlotte, NC: IAP, 2009), 15–31.

29 Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse, “Towards a Postcolonial Mindset in a Post-colonial World? Evolving Representations of Modern Imperialism in Belgian History Textbooks (1945–2017),” in *The Colonial Past in History Textbooks: Historical and Social Psychological Perspectives* (International Review of History Education), ed. Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse and Joaquim Pires Valentim (Charlotte, NC: IAP, 2018), 155–76.

30 De Baets, “Métamorphoses d’une Épopée,” 46.

31 Jean Van Houtte and Pieter Voeten, *Cultuurgetijden: Geschiedenis van België en Kongo* [Tides of Culture: History of Belgium and Congo] (Lier: Van In, 1960), 276.

32 Michel Dierickx, *Historia. Handboeken van Geschiedenis voor het Middelbaar Onderwijs. Geschiedenis van België* [Historia. History Textbooks for Secondary Education. History of Belgium] (Antwerpen: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1956), 212.

33 Van Houtte and Voeten, *Cultuurgetijden*, 276.

34 Dierickx, *Historia*, 217.

35 De Keyser, “Belgisch-Kongo in den Belgischen Geschichtslehrbüchern”.

36 De Baets, *De Figuranten*.

37 Guy Vanthemsche, “The Historiography of Belgian Colonialism in the Congo,” in *Europe and the World in European Historiography*, ed. Csaba Levai (Pisa: Edizioni Plus-Pisa University Press, 2006), 93. One example is Constant Leclère’s work *La Formation d’un Empire Colonial Belge* [The Establishment of a Belgian Colonial Empire] (1932), to which both public (1952) and private (1953) secondary history education curricula referred.

38 Depaepe, “Colonial Education in the Congo,” 6.

39 Ibid., 10.

40 On colonial education in Belgian Congo, see also Bentrovato, “Narrating and Teaching the Nation”; Briffaerts, *When Congo Wants to Go to School*; Marc Depaepe and Lies Van Rompaey, *In het Teken van de Bevoogding*; Kita Kyankenge Masandi, *Colonisation et Enseignement. Le Cas du Zaïre* [Colonisation and Education: The Case of Zaire] (Bukavu: Editions du Ceruki, 1982).

41 Depaepe, “Colonial Education in the Congo,” 21.

42 This institution, still operating today, was established in 1928. It was renamed Royal Academy of Colonial Sciences in 1954 and Royal Academy of Overseas Sciences in 1959.

43 Eduard De Jonghe, *L’Enseignement des Indigènes au Congo Belge* [Indigenous Education in Belgian Congo]. Rapport présenté à la XXIIe session de l’Institut Colonial International de Paris, mai 1931 (Brussels: Dewarichet, 1931), 8.

44 Congo Belge. Service de l'enseignement, *Organisation de l'Enseignement Libre Subsidé pour Indigènes avec le Concours des Sociétés de Missions Chrétiennes: Dispositions Générales* [Organisation of Private Education for Indigenous Peoples with the Help of the Societies of Christian Missions: General Provisions] (Léopoldville, 1948), 18–19.

45 *Mambi ma Botangi, II* (Lisala, 1950), 31–4, qtd. in Honoré Vinck, *African Colonial Schoolbooks (Belgian Congo): An Anthology* available online at http://www.aequatoria.be/04engels/0538manuels_en/0381florilege_en.htm; and *Livre de Lecture Français-Lingala* [Reader French-Lingala] (n.p./n.d.), 146–54, qtd. in Vinck, *African Colonial Schoolbooks*.

46 *Bosako w'Oyengwa, III* (Coquilhatville, 1955), 243–4, qtd. in Vinck, *African Colonial Schoolbooks*.

47 *Mambi ma Botangi, II* (Lisala, 1950), 27–31; *Mambi ma Botangi II* (Lisala, 1955), 90–3, qtd. in Vinck, *African Colonial Schoolbooks*.

48 *Mateya ma Bomonisi, Manual du Maître* [Observation Lessons, Teacher Guide] (Lisala, 1955), 88–90, qtd. in Vinck, *African Colonial Schoolbooks*.

49 *Bonkanda wa Mbaanda; Mateya ma Lisolo. Manuel du Maître II* [Teacher's Book] (Lisala, 1954), qtd. in Vinck, *African Colonial Schoolbooks*.

50 *Mateya ma Lisolo, III. Livre du Maître* [Teacher's Book] (Lisala, 1948), 28, qtd. in Vinck, *African Colonial Schoolbooks*.

51 *Histoire du Monde II* [History of the World II] (Bolenge, 1940), 98–103, qtd. in Vinck, *African Colonial Schoolbooks*.

52 Briffaerts, *When Congo Wants to Go to School*.

53 *Mambi ma Botangi, II* (Lisala, 1955), 31–4, qtd. in Vinck, *African Colonial Schoolbooks*.

54 R.A. Mathers, *Bonkanda wa Baoci b'Anto* (Bongandanga, 1925), 23–30, qtd in Vinck, *African Colonial Schoolbooks*.

55 Van Hullebusch, *Botondoli Mambi ma Nse, Mobu bwa Mitano* (Lisala, 1944), 27–9, qtd. in Vinck, *African Colonial Schoolbooks*.

56 See Zana Aziza Etambala, *Congo 55/65: Van Koning Boudewijn tot President Mobutu* [Congo 55/65: From King Baudouin to President Mobutu] (Tielt: Lannoo, 1999); Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London: Zed, 2002); Walter Geerts, *Mobutu: de Man van Kamanyola* [Mobutu: The Man from Kamanyola] (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2005).

57 Valerie Rosoux and Laurence van Ypersele, “The Belgian National Past: Between Commemoration and Silence,” *Memory Studies* 5, no. 1 (2012): 45–57.

58 De Baets, “Métamorphoses d'une Épopée”.

59 Ibid.

60 Michel Dierickx, *Historia. Geschiedenis van België* [Historia. History of Belgium] (Antwerpen: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1963), 237.

61 Ibid.

62 Michel Dierickx, *Historia. Handboeken van Geschiedenis voor het Middelbaar Onderwijs. De Nieuwste Geschiedenis* [Historia. History Textbooks for Secondary Education. History of Modern Time] (Antwerpen: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1961), 274.

63 Vanthemsche, “The Historiography of Belgian Colonialism,” 97. See for instance Jean Stengers, *Combien le Congo a-t-il coûté à la Belgique?* [How Much did the Congo Cost Belgium?] (Brussel: Arsom, 1957); *Belgique et Congo. L’Elaboration de la Charte Coloniale* [Belgium and Congo. The Elaboration of the Colonial Charter] (Brussel: La Renaissance du Livre, 1963).

64 Hall, “The West and the Rest”.

65 D’Hoker, “Vijfentwintig Jaar Democratisering”; Van Nieuwenhuyse, “Towards a Postcolonial Mindset”.

66 Tessa Lobbes, “Geschiedenisonderwijs tegen de Horizon van het Heden. Het Experiment van Leopold Flam in het Nederlandstalige Rijksonderwijs (1955–1970) [History Education against the Horizon of the Present. Leopold Flam’s Experiment in Flemish Public Education (1955–1970)],” *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis* 42, no. 1 (2012): 139–92.

67 Lobbes, “Verleden zonder Stof”.

68 Chris Albrecht et al., *Sprekend Verleden* [Telling Past] (Antwerpen: S.M. Ontwikkeling, 1963).

69 Bentreto, “Narrating and Teaching the Nation”; Gratien Mokonzi Bambanota, *De l’Ecole de la Médiocrité à l’Ecole de l’Excellence au Congo-Kinshasa* [From the School of Mediocrity to the School of Excellence in Congo-Kinshasa] (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2009); Gratien Mokonzi Bambanota, *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Effective Delivery of Public Services in the Education Sector* (Rosebank: AfriMAP/Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, 2010); Simon Gasibirege Rugema, *A la Recherche d’une Réforme Scolaire Adaptée* [Searching for an Appropriate School Reform] (Kinshasa: CEPAS, 1979); Odimba Omakoko, *L’Enseignement de l’Histoire en République Démocratique du Congo*.

70 Lumumba’s Independence Day address, cited in Suzanne McIntire, *Speeches in World History* (New York: Infobase, 2009), 438–40.

71 Lumumba, cited respectively in M. Frédéric Kabasele, “Mon Rêve sur le Congo et sur l’Afrique [My Dream for Congo and for Africa],” *Agence de Presse D.I.A* [www.dia-afrique.org]; and in Jules Gérard-Libois and Benoît Verhaegen, *Congo 1960* (Bruxelles: CRISP, 1961), 593–5.

72 G. Beel, *Histoire du Congo. Formation de la Nation Congolaise. Destiné aux Elèves des Ecoles du Congo* [History of Congo. Establishment of the Congolese Nation. Intended for Students of Congo's Schools] (Namur: Maison d'édition Wesmael-Charlier, 1963), 19–21, 26. The textbook emphasised the “rage and indignation” of the Belgians, who launched a “gigantic struggle” against the Arabs’ “odious” slave trade and achieved a “resounding success”.

73 Beel, *Histoire du Congo*, 60.

74 Ibid., 67.

75 Ibid., 60.

76 *Regards sur l'Histoire. Panorama des Civilisations du 5ème Siècle à nos Jours. Cours à l'Usage des Elèves de 2ème Année du Cycle d'Orientation* [Perspectives on History. Panorama of Civilisations from the 5th Century to the Present. Course for Students of the 2nd Year in the Orientation Stage] (Kinshasa: Centre de Recherches Pédagogiques, 1967), 120–1. While Beel's *Histoire du Congo* takes a similar approach to the “bloody troubles” of 1959, it also makes mention of Congolese feelings of impatience and resentment towards the predominance of foreign powers and interests and towards the racist and humiliating practices of “a certain category of Whites”. Beel, *Histoire du Congo*, 80–3.

77 Noëlla De Roover, *Histoire de Notre Pays. Manuel d'Histoire pour la 5ème Primaire* [The History of Our Country. History Textbook for the 5th Grade] (Léopoldville: Bureau de l'Enseignement Catholique, 1963).

78 Five pages outlined the benefits of colonisation, while the discussion of its negative sides fitted on less than one page. Issuing a positive overall assessment of the colonial enterprise, the author concluded that “[t]his colonisation earned it [Belgium] valuable benefits, but it [also] powerfully contributed to the well-being of the population”: De Roover, *Histoire de Notre Pays*, 67.

79 De Roover, *Histoire de Notre Pays*, 74. The book indicated these factors as the context to the “bloody disorders” of 1959 – portrayed as a manifestation of great discontent among local youths, many of whom were shot dead by police – and to the subsequent troubles that arose after independence.

80 De Roover, *Histoire de Notre Pays*, 47.

81 Ibid., 9.

82 Ibid., 53–9.

83 D'Hoker, “Vijfentwintig Jaar Democratisering”. Lobbes, “Verleden zonder Stof”; Bregt Henkens, “The Rise and Decline of Comprehensive Education: Key Factors in the History of Reformed Secondary Education in Belgium, 1969–1989,” *Paedagogica Historica* 40, no. 1–2 (2004): 193–209.

84 Lobbes, “Verleden zonder Stof”.

85 Paul Morren et al., *Janus I. Handboek voor het Geschiedenisonderwijs in de Observatiegraad V.S.O.* [Janus I. Textbook for History Education in the Observation Stage of VSO] (Kapellen: De Sikkel, 1976), 154.

86 Paul Morren, *Historisch Units: Nationalisme, Imperialisme en Kolonialisme in de 19e Eeuw* [Historical Units: Nationalism, Imperialism and Colonialism in the 19th Century] (Antwerpen-Amsterdam: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1975), 37.

87 See Bambi Ceuppens' analysis of a number of popular history books of the 1980s and 1990s: *Onze Congo? Congolezen over de Kolonisatie* [Our Congo? Congolese on Colonisation] (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2003).

88 Vanthemsche, "The Historiography of Belgian Colonialism".

89 See, for instance, Jean-Luc Vellut, "Hégémonies en Construction: Articulations entre Etat et Entreprises dans le Bloc Colonial Belge (1908–1960) [Hegemonies under Construction: Articulations between State and Enterprises in the Belgian Colonial Bloc (1908–1960)]," *Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines* 16, no. 2 (1982): 313–30; Jean Stengers, *Congo. Mythes et Réalités* [Congo. Myths and Realities] (Parijs-Louvain-la-Neuve: Duculot, 1989); Daniël Vangroenweghe, *Rood Rubber. Leopold II en zijn Kongo* [Red Rubber. Leopold II and his Congo] (Brussel: Elsevier, 1985).

90 Vanthemsche concludes that Belgium's colonial past was probably unique among the fields of the country's history in the number of non-Belgian authors it attracted. They included L.H. Gann and L. Duignan, B. Emerson, S.J.S. Cooley, R.O. Collins, N. Ascherson, A. Maurel, J. Depelchin, B. Fetter, S.E. Katzenellenbogen, J. Higginson, D. Northrup, S.H. Nelson, and W.J. Samarin: Vanthemsche, "The Historiography of Belgian Colonialism," 100.

91 This phenomenon is framed more generally in Marc Depaepe, "The Practical and Professional Relevance of Educational Research and Pedagogical Knowledge from the Perspective of History: Reflections on the Belgian Case in its International Background," *European Educational Research Journal* 1, no. 2 (2002): 360–79.

92 Jean-Jacques Hoebanx, "L'Histoire de Belgique dans Quelques Manuels Scolaires [Belgian History in Some School Textbooks]," in *Histoire et Historiens depuis 1830 en Belgique* [History and Historians in Belgium since 1830], ed. Hervé Hasquin, Special issue of *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles* 1–2 (1981), 61–80; Suzanne Citron, *Enseigner l'Histoire Aujourd'hui. La Mémoire Perdue et Retrouvée* [Teaching History Today. Memory Lost and Recovered] (Paris: Les Editions Ouvrières, 1984); Verhaegen, "La Colonisation et la Décolonisation".

93 From the 1960s onwards, control over education policy was gradually transferred to the three regional "communities" of Belgium: the Dutch, the French, and (the very small) German communities. This federalisation process was completed in 1989 with the formal handover of all educational matters to the three communities. "Belgian" history education as such hence no longer existed: Tessa Lobbes and Kaat Wils, "National History Education in Search of an Object: The Absence of History Wars in Belgian Schools," in *The Palgrave Handbook of History Education Conflicts in the Post-Cold War Era* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2019).

94 Wils, “The Evaporated Canon and the Overvalued Source”.

95 Ibid.

96 Hugo Van de Voorde and Paul Vandepitte, eds., *Historia 5* (Kapellen: Pelckmans, 2001), 106.

97 Hugo Van de Voorde, ed., *Historia 6* (Kapellen: Pelckmans, 2009), 39.

98 Gorik Goris, ed., *Storia 6* (Lier: Van In, 2002), 161.

99 Willy Schuermans and Michel Meyers, *Memo 6* (Antwerpen: De Boeck, 2004), 116.

100 More recently, another book has shed additional light on the American involvement in the assassination. See Bruce Kuklick and Emmanuel Gerard, *Death in the Congo: Murdering Patrice Lumumba* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

101 See, for instance, Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem, *Nouvelle Histoire du Congo: Des Origines à la République Démocratique* [New History of Congo: From the Origins to the Democratic Republic] (Brussels-Kinshasa: Le Cri Edition, 2009); Karen Brouwer, *Gender and Decolonization in the Congo: The Legacy of Patrice Lumumba* (New York: Palgrave, 2010); John Kent, *America, the UN and Decolonisation: Cold War Conflict in the Congo 1959–1964* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Sergey Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956–1964* (Stanford University Press, 2010).

102 Idesbald Goddeeris and Sindani E. Kiangu, “Congomania in Academia: Recent Historical Research on the Belgian Colonial Past,” *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 126, no. 4 (2011b): 54–74. They mention, for instance, Guy Vanthemsche, *Congo. De Impact van de Kolonie op België* (translated into English in 2012: *Belgium and the Congo 1885–1980*, Cambridge University Press) (Tielt: Lannoo, 2007); Stephen Howe, ed., *The New Imperial Histories Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Vincent Viaene, David Van Reybrouck, and Bambi Ceuppens, eds., *Congo in België. Koloniale Cultuur in de Metropool* [Congo in Belgium. Colonial Culture in the Metropolis] (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2009).

103 The series leads of *FuturHist* are Hervé Hasquin, historian at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles*, and Jean-Louis Jadoulle, history didactician at the *Université de Liège*. They supervise the writing process, which is carried out by history teachers and supported by a scientific committee composed of three academic historians from the *Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis Bruxelles*, the *Université de Liège*, and the *Université Catholique de Louvain* respectively. *Passages* is written by academic staff members of the Catholic University of Leuven, supervised by Kaat Wils and Hans Cools, two academic historians who are also specialists in history didactics, and a scientific committee.

104 Greet Draye, et al., *Passages. Het Interbellum en de Tweede Wereldoorlog* [Passages. The Interbellum Period and the Second World War] (Averbode: Averbode, 2010), 88.

105 Hervé Hasquin and Jean-Louis Jadoulle, ed., *FuturHist. Le Futur, Toute une Histoire! 5ème Secondaire. De l'Age Industriel à la Fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* [FuturHist. The Future, Quite a History! Year 11. From the Industrial Age to the End of the Second

World War] (Namur: Didier Hatier, 2010), no. 62. “Negrophilia” is a concept used verbatim by the textbook authors.

106 Idesbald Goddeeris, “Postcolonial Belgium: The Memory of the Congo, ca. 2010,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 3 (2015): 434–51.

107 Robin Butlin, *Geographies of Empire. European Empires and Colonies ca. 1880–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

108 Bentreovato, “Narrating and Teaching the Nation”; Mokonzi Bambanota, *De l’Ecole de la Médiocrité*; Mokonzi Bambanota, *Democratic Republic of the Congo*; Gasibirege Rugema, *A la Recherche d’une Réforme Scolaire Adaptée*; Odimba, *L’Enseignement de l’Histoire en République Démocratique du Congo*.

109 Ministère de l’Education Nationale, *Programme Nationale Enseignement Primaire, Vade-Mecum des Maîtres* [National Curriculum for Primary Education. Teachers’ Vademecum] (Kinshasa: Ceredip/Edideps, 1988).

110 Kazadi Longesha, “Preface,” S. Longo Kazumba, *Histoire. Classes Terminales* [History. Final Classes] (Kinshasa: New Scolot ed., 2006; first published 1984 and 1987), 3–4.

111 Mobutu Sese Seko, *Discours, Allocutions et Messages. 1965–1975* [Discourses, Speeches and Messages], vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions Jeune Afrique, 1975), 238–9, 587, 606–7.

112 Thomas Callaghy, *Politics and Culture in Zaire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan 1987); Bob W. White, “L’Incroyable Machine d’Authenticité. L’Animation Politique et l’Usage de la Culture dans le Zaïre de Mobutu [The Incredible Authenticity Machine. Political Animation and the Use of Culture in Mobutu’s Zaire],” *Anthropologie et Sociétés* 30, no. 2 (2006): 43–63.

113 Bentreovato, “Teaching History under Dictatorship”.

114 RDC, Ministère de l’Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel, Direction des Programmes Scolaires et Matériel Didactique, *Programme National d’Histoire. Enseignement Secondaire* [National History Curriculum. Secondary Education] (Kinshasa, 2005), 3.

115 A group of teachers, *Histoire 6^e Primaire: Le Congo en Afrique et dans le Monde* [6th Grade History. Congo in Africa and in the World] (Kinshasa: Okapi, 1971), 77, 129, 131; also in later editions *Histoire 6^e Primaire: Le Zaïre en Afrique et dans le Monde. Des Origines à nos Jours* [6th Grade History. Zaïre in Africa and in the World. From the Origins to the Present] (Kinshasa: ed. Samafos, 1981), and *Histoire 6^e Primaire. Le Congo (RD) en Afrique et dans le Monde. Des Origines à nos Jours* [6th Grade History. DR Congo in Africa and in the World. From the Origins to the Present] (Kinshasa: New Scolot, 2004). Notably, the identities of the authors of this particular textbook, referred to as “a group of teachers”, are not revealed.

116 Kasongo wa Kapinga, *Histoire du Zaïre, 5^{ème} Primaire* [History of Zaire, 5th Grade] (Kinshasa: Editions ed. Samafos, 1975), 26.

117 Kasongo wa Kapinga and Kombe, *Histoire du Zaïre, 6ème Primaire* [History of Zaire, 6th Grade] (Lodi: Laus, 1982), 41–6. Critical views are also expressed in: A group of teachers, *Histoire 6^e Primaire*, 31; E. Babudaa Malibato, *Education Civique et Politique 3. Le Citoyen et la Conscience Nationale, Africaine, Internationale* [Civic and Political Education 3. The Citizen and National, African and International Consciousness] (Kinshasa: ed. Bobiso, 1981), 39.

118 R. Lupamanyi, J.P. Lisongo, and G. Langwa Langwa, *Histoire: 2ème Année Secondaire* [History: 8th Grade] (Kinshasa: Mediaspaul, 2010), 71, 127. Also in C. Akenawi Laken and B. Makwiza Dilanda, *Histoire 6ème Année Secondaire* [History: 12th Grade] (Kinshasa: Centre de Recherches Pédagogiques, 2009), 177–8. Similar arguments are found in Wua-K. Malaba Tshiwula, *Civisme 2* (Kinshasa: ed. Sciedi, 1974), 40; Kasongo wa Kapinga, *Histoire du Zaïre, 5ème, 62; Histoire du Zaïre, 6ème, 27.*

119 Longo Kazumba, *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, 222.

120 Lupamanyi et al., *Histoire: 2ème Année Secondaire*, 122–3, 139.

121 Akenawi Laken and Makwiza Dilanda, *Histoire 6ème Année Secondaire*, 170.

122 Akenawi Laken and Makwiza Dilanda, *Histoire 6ème Année Secondaire*, 163–9. Also in Lupamanyi et al., *Histoire: 2ème Année Secondaire*, 139–73. In contrast to the extensive attention devoted to the topic of anti-colonial resistance, the collaboration of local chiefs in colonial abuses receives only sporadic mentions.

123 Babudaa Malibato, *Education Civique et Politique 3*, 45; Longo Kazumba, *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, 262, 182. Several textbooks underline the asymmetrical nature of the confrontation between the bullets aimed at the crowds by the police and the stones thrown by the masses in response: E. Mashako Zende and D. Kambale Mastaki, *Histoire: Degré Moyen* [History: Middle Grades] (Goma: Coordination Diocésaine des Ecoles Conventionnées Catholiques, 2009), 40. *Histoire: 2ème Année Secondaire* further juxtaposes the hundreds of wounded and dozens of dead among the Congolese “martyrs of independence” to the 49 wounded and no fatalities among the Europeans: Lupamanyi et al., *Histoire: 2ème Année Secondaire*, 129.

124 Akenawi Laken and Makwiza Dilanda, *Histoire 6ème Année Secondaire*, 165.

125 upamanyi et al., *Histoire: 2ème Année Secondaire*, 127.

126 Akenawi Laken and Makwiza Dilanda, *Histoire 6ème Année Secondaire*, 166.

127 Ibid., 169.

128 Lupamanyi et al., *Histoire: 2ème Année Secondaire*, 127.

129 Lupamanyietal., *Histoire: 2ème Année Secondaire*, 127. Also in Longo Kazumba, *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, 169, 172, and Babudaa Malibato, *Education Civique et Politique 3*, 31–9. According to some material, the opening of breweries “to drug the Black so that they remain in a millenary sleep” had aided the subjugation of the Congolese to the colonial yoke: J.M. Muzungu Baderha, *Syllabus du Cours d’Histoire dans les Classes de*

Sixièmes Années des Humanités Secondaires. Version I. Année Scolaire 2008–2009 [Syllabus of the History Course in the Year 12 of the Humanities. Version I. School Year 2008–2009] (Goma, 2008), 88. Also in Kasongo wa Kapinga, *Histoire du Zaïre, 6ème*, 123.

130 Mashako Zende and Kambale Mastaki, *Histoire: Degré Moyen*, 40.

131 Akenawi Laken and Makwiza Dilanda, *Histoire 6ème Année Secondaire*, 179.

132 Kasongo wa Kapinga, *Histoire du Zaïre, 6ème*, 92–4; Longo Kazumba, *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, 187.

133 Akenawi Laken and Makwiza Dilanda, *Histoire 6ème Année Secondaire*, 186, 190, 193.

134 Kasongo wa Kapinga, *Histoire du Zaïre, 6ème*, 81. See also Longo Kazumba, *Histoire. Classes Terminales*, 262.

135 Kasongo wa Kapinga, *Histoire du Zaïre, 6ème*, 81.

136 Akenawi Laken and Makwiza Dilanda, *Histoire 6ème Année Secondaire*, 186. Curiously, the authors allude more explicitly to the role of American secret services in the murder. It is worth noting that, in his most renowned synthesis of Congolese history, Congolese historian Ndaywel briefly refers to Lumumba's assassination as "the outcome of a methodical policy by Brussels, New York and Washington, supported by associates in Kinshasa" and denounces concerted efforts towards "hiding from the Congolese people the history of the death of their great leader", although he concedes that the truth on the matter was partly revealed by the Belgian Parliamentary Commission: Ndaywel, *Nouvelle Histoire du Congo*, 484.

137 Denise Bentreovato and Imke Rath, "A 'Matter of the Whites'? Contemporary Textbook Portrayals of Former African Colonies in WWI," *Textbooks and War: Multinational Perspectives on History Education*, ed. Eugenia Roldán Vera and Eckhardt Fuchs (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 159.

138 Bentreovato and Rath, "A 'Matter of the Whites'?" 160.

139 A similar argument has been made for the case of France by Halima Ait-Mehdi, "Teaching the History of Colonization and Decolonization in France: A Shared History or to Each Their Own?" *Prospects: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* 42 (2012): 191–203.

140 Jamina Mertens et al., "A New Floor for the Silenced? Congolese Hip-Hop in Belgium," *Social Transformations: Journal of the Global South* 1, no. 1 (2013): 87–113.

141 Gert Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands. Sixty-five Years of Forgetting, Commemorating, Silencing* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

142 Goddeeris, "Congo in onze navel. De omgang met het koloniale verleden in België en zijn buurlanden [Congo in our Navel. Dealing with the Colonial Past in Belgium and its Neighbouring Countries]," *Ons Erfdeel* 54, no. 1 (2011): 40–9; Goddeeris, "Postcolonial Belgium". This is not to claim that the African community in Belgium is uninterested in questions of colonial memory and history education. Indeed, the Royal Museum for Central

Africa was recently approached by a collective calling itself “Colonial memories and the war against discrimination”, of which a large number of sub-Saharan organisations in Belgium are members, calling for an investigation into the possible connections between colonisation and the discrimination endured by people of sub-Saharan origin in post-colonial Belgium. Nevertheless, governments in Belgium do not appear to feel prompted by the postcolonial migrant community to undertake active agenda-setting for a critical colonial memory culture.

143 Goddeeris and Kiangu point to this necessity in Idesbald Goddeeris and Sindani E. Kiangu, “Congomania in Academia. Recent Historical Research on the Belgian Colonial Past,” *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 126, no. 4 (2011): 54–74.

144 Thomas Popkewitz, “The Alchemy of the Mathematics Curriculum: Inscriptions and the Fabrication of the Child,” *American Educational Research Journal* 41, no. 1 (2004): 3–34.

145 Marc Depaepe, “Colonial Education in the Congo”; Marc Depaepe, “Educationalisation”.

146 David Tyack and William Tobin, “The ‘Grammar’ of Schooling: Why Has it Been so Hard to Change?” *American Educational Research Journal* 31, no. 1 (1994): 453–79.