figures of success sometimes created better linking between the 'masses' and colonial authorities than the évolués. Maître Taureau, for instance, managed to organize beauty pageants, folkloric performances, and Congolese rumba shows frequented by évolués, the 'masses', and colonial officials alike. If the role of the ambianceurs has been studied in the scholarship on popular culture, their relationship to the évolués remains little known.[2]

While offering a deep historical understanding about the ways the Congolese elite acquired an intimate knowledge of Belgian colonialism and made use of it, *The Lumumba Generation* thus will also help us to rethink how subtle and multiple rebellions were linked to each other in the last years of the Belgian Congo.

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Congolese Students in Congo's Global History

Students of the World: Global 1968 and Decolonization in the Congo

By Pedro Monaville. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022. Pp. 368. $107.95, hardcover (ISBN: 9781478015758); $29.95, paperback (ISBN: 9781478018377).

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This book by Pedro Monaville delves into the history of student activism within the context of global decolonization movements and the events of May 1968. The author focuses specifically on Congolese students and explores how this generation of students redefined Congolese politics after the country gained independence. The students built a movement with three objectives: the decolonization of higher education, the establishment of a strong and just nation-state, and the fostering of solidarity across borders.

The book also highlights a significant defeat that left a lasting impact on postcolonial Congo. Despite their determination to bring radical change to Congolese politics, the students suffered setbacks when they confronted the Congolese state in 1969 and 1971. According to Monaville, 'what was lost' during these confrontations 'was not futurity and the idea that time might bring change', but rather 'the cosmopolitan edge that authorized students to act as mediators between the Congo and the world' (3–4). Monaville sees the struggle of these students as an unfinished chapter in the history of decolonization, offering an alternative perspective to current debates limited to epistemological questions on the decolonization of university. By connecting the problematic of transformation of higher education with broader struggles against imperialism and neocolonialism, these students presented what the author calls 'an alternative history of the present' (*xi*).

[2]See, for instance, T. Kayembe Biaya, 'La culture urbaine dans les arts populaires d'Afrique: analyse de l'ambiance zaïroise', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 30:3 (1996), 345–70.

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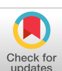

To reconstruct this history, Monaville extensively relies on archival materials and conducts interviews with former student activists who are now scattered across different parts of the world. The book adopts a remarkable conceptual framework that encompasses a range of ideas and themes, including but not limited to 'politics as pedagogy', 'the politics of distance', 'politics as cumulative rather than disjunctive', 'Afrocentrism', 'cosmopolitanism', 'the question of the world and its habitability', and 'decolonization as an intersubjective process that transforms perceptions of self and others'. These concepts serve as the bedrock of the book and contribute to its exemplar status as a model of conceptual history writing.

The book is structured into four parts, comprising a total of nine chapters, which follow a chronological order to explore distinct aspects of the subject. The initial part, encompassing Chapters One and Two, delves into the influence of postal routines on the shaping of political imagination in the Congo. It thoroughly examines the significance of long-distance communications, particularly through postal exchanges, and their profound impact on political imagination during both the colonial years and the early stages of independence. Monaville emphasizes the remarkable power of imagination, especially in the face of oppression and repression. It was through the force of imagination that Congolese students managed to surpass the mental constraints imposed on them by the colonial regime and effectively establish connections with the outside world. This enabled them to fulfil their aspirations of engaging in global matters and actively participate in shaping the world.

The second part, comprising Chapters Three and Four, delves into campus micropolitics and the subjective experiences of students. It shows how an educational system designed to uphold the colonial status quo inadvertently produced the very activists who played a role in dismantling colonialism. Monaville demonstrates how the former students of colonial schools, who comprised the Congolese elite, became involved in anticolonial movements. He then charts the development of the politicization process within this movement at Lovanium, the first Congolese university and a symbol of colonial power. Monaville illustrates how the Congolese students successfully subverted the university's original purpose, which aimed to cultivate a 'technical elite' in collaboration with the Belgians (17). Through their protests against the colonial nature of Lovanium, Monaville suggests that they extended 'the global' discourse on 'cultural alienation' to 'the campus' level.

The third part, encompassing Chapters Five to Seven, offers a narrative centred around the Congo crisis. It specifically examines the role of educated youth and the process of radicalization. Monaville maps out the progression of student politics in the early years of the 1960s. This map illustrates how the assassination of Lumumba, along with the worldwide outcry it generated, served as a pivotal moment for students to contemplate their role in the global landscape. The author examines the establishment of the Congolese Student Union and its subsequent rise as a significant driving force in Congolese nationalism during the ensuing months. Furthermore, he highlights how the involvement of different Lumumbist armed movements progressively radicalized these students, pushing the movement towards the left.

The final part, consisting of Chapters Eight and Nine, explores the range of sentiments, emotions, passions, fervor, and challenges that defined the Congolese experience throughout the 1960s. It provides a comprehensive depiction of the struggles faced by Congolese students during this pivotal period. Moreover, the author examines Joseph Mobutu, the second president of the Congo, and his exploitation of his connection with the students to solidify his regime. However, the author also highlights how Mobutu orchestrated cycles of repression against the student movement, perceiving it as a threat to his rule. Monaville argues that this recurring cycle of state violence and suppression coerced the students 'into submission', undermining the cosmopolitan ideals that propelled their emergence 'as a political force' in the aftermath of 'independence' (19).

In the Conclusion, the author reflects on the notion of 'reverberations' (206–9), and underscores the importance of recognizing Africa's distinctive experience in the 1960s within a global context and the significance of carrying these reverberations into the future, especially given the unfulfilled promises of decolonization. Monaville introduces his definition of decolonization 'as a pedagogy of the world' (209), thereby expanding our comprehension of this concept. According to him,

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'decolonization was not' merely a backdrop 'for Congolese students' but also constituted 'the world in which they lived'. It served as 'their' encompassing 'horizon', extending beyond the immediately visible landscape to encompass both tangible reality and the realm of possibilities (19).

Monaville's book firmly anchors itself in what he refers to as the 'global'. Within the context of his writing, this concept assumes paramount significance. He perceives it 'not as a neutral framework for the addition of singular histories', but rather 'as a field of struggle' (9). This compelling argument calls for a reevaluation of our understanding of 'world-making', similar to the reorientation advocated by Adom Getachew.[1] Monaville's primary concerns also resonate with 'the question of the world and its habitability' at the heart of Achille Mbembe's recent work.[2] Monaville's central focus in relation to this question revolves around the inquiry of the world and its relevance to educated Congolese individuals across different generations, from the early twentieth century through decolonization and beyond. Three distinct moments stand out in this regard: the era of Belgian colonization, characterized by strict control over the international mobility of Congolese people and their education beyond primary school (20–62); the policies adopted by Catholic missions that embraced a politics of closure, mirroring the approach of the colonial state (65–102); and the transformative 1960s, where the barriers imposed by colonialism were dismantled, leading to a profound openness to the world (109–27). During this era, Congolese students perceived themselves as active agents, shaping the world through their ideas, rather than being mere victims of the international order.

The beauty of this book lies in both its content and form. As Nancy Rose Hunt aptly emphasizes, 'form matters in history'.[3] Monaville's book exemplifies an approach that integrates 'theory and form', thereby offering a valuable contribution to the historiography of student activism, decolonization, the Cold War, and the Global Sixties.

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Intellectuals with Pickaxes

A Ritual Geology: Gold and Subterranean Knowledge in Savanna West Africa

By Robyn d'Avignon. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022. Pp. 328. $104.95, hardcover (ISBN: 9781478015833); $27.85, paperback (ISBN: 9781478018476).

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It is well documented that gold fields have the power to transform human relations. The 1849 gold rush in northern California and the unearthing of the Witwatersrand gold reef in the 1880s in

[1]A. Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self Determination* (Princeton, 2019).

[2]A. Mbembe, 'Notes on planetary habitability', Keynote address, 'Climate, Sustainability and Inequality Seminar', University of the Witswatersrand, Nov. 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1AKvMN5ock

[3]N. R. Hunt, 'History as form, with Simmel in tow', *History and Theory,* 56:4 (2018): 126–44.

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