

Is Repatriation Inevitable?

by Allen F. Roberts

Debates about repatriation of human remains and significant cultural materials to their communities of origin, including objects deemed “art” following culturally determined assessments, have raged for many years. One need only consider how the “madness” of returning the famed fifth-century BCE “Elgin Marbles,” as they are known in the UK after the man who purloined them from the Acropolis in the early nineteenth century, is debated as an issue of contemporary politics in Britain, as has been the case for generations (Trend 2018). Yet there seems a sudden acceleration of such conversations with regard to sub-Saharan holdings (e.g., Scher 2018).

Perhaps most notable has been French President Emmanuel Macron’s November 2017 declaration at the University of Ouagadougou that within the next five years, “conditions should be met for a return of African patrimony to Africa.” This position was found “surprising to many” in France, *Le Monde* reported. In March 2018, President Macron named Bénédicte Savoy, an historian of French arts, and Felwine Sarr, a Senegalese economist, novelist, and theorist of Afrofuturism, to produce a plan to this effect before the end of 2018.¹ Such news was well received in former French colonies like the Republic of Bénin, where calls have long been made for return of important sculptures and other artifacts seized during colonial conquest in the 1890s. President Macron has promised to see to changing the legislation that has long considered such works the inalienable property of the French Republic.²

Equally well-heralded initiatives are underway concerning loot from the Punitive Expedition of 1897 to what is now southwestern Nigeria, including the famed Benin Bronzes held at the British Museum and other

ALLEN F. ROBERTS is Professor of World Arts and Cultures/Dance at UCLA and a member of the UCLA African Arts editorial board. His most recent book, *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo* (2013, Indiana University Press), won the *Arnold Rubin Outstanding Publications Award from ACASA for Best African Arts Book 2011–2013*. aroberts@arts.ucla.edu



1 This figure, invested by the matrilineal ancestors of the Tabwa chief Lusinga Iwa Ng’ombe of what would become the Congo, was seized by mercenaries of the military officer Emile Storms in early December, 1884, and brought home with him to Belgium. Through the sculpture, Lusinga still has stories to tell, as during a visit to Los Angeles for the *Shaping Power* exhibition of 2013 at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Photo: courtesy LACMA

institutions across Europe and the Americas. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Africanist art historian John Picton captures the conundrum:

The moral case is indisputable. Those antiquities were lifted from Benin City and you can argue that they ought to go back. On the other hand, the rival story is that it is part of world history and you do not want to take away African antiquity from somewhere like the museums in Paris or London because that leaves Africa without its proper record of antiquity ...

... presumably with regard to inclusion in encyclopedic histories composed for largely non-African audiences. “Concerns about security were ... foremost in the minds of European institutions,” Picton continues, and “there has to be a recognition perhaps that things are on long-term loan from Nigeria” (Quinn 2017).³ Who gets to decide what constitutes “security” is haunted by ongoing colonial notions of African “incompetence” and refusal to recognize that if, by some measures, certain African museums are “insecure” because treasures have been stolen and sold from their reserves, Africans are usually not the ones

purchasing them or whose countries show disinterest in establishing bilateral agreements to prohibit such commerce.⁴

That such complexities have been readily ignored is a function of broader neocolonial strategies and colonial amnesia—the forgetting of inconvenient pasts.⁵ Nonetheless, *ça commence à bouger un peu*—things are beginning to “shake” just a bit and in unexpected ways, as attested by the denouement from the following case study from Belgium and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The case itself suggests how politically and culturally complicated repatriation can—and, perhaps, *should*—be.

LUSINGA IN LOS ANGELES

Lusinga Iwa Ng’ombe visited Los Angeles in 2013,⁶ despite the fact that this Congolese warlord was decapitated in 1884 by assassins dispatched by the Belgian military officer Émile Storms. A majestic wooden figure of Lusinga (Fig. 1), seized by Storms’s mercenaries and transported to Belgium where it is now understood to be among the “treasures” of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), is invested with ancestral spirits of the chief and his matrilineage. When the sculpture was displayed in an exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art entitled *Shaping Power: Luba Masterworks from the Royal Museum for Central Africa*, Lusinga was present as well.⁷

Sculpture and related performance practices played instrumental roles in the formation and expansion of important central African polities. Indeed, the efficacies of such works of art shaped power, even as they were shaped by power.⁸ Such an active sense of artistic engagement with people’s purposes informed the composition and design of the LACMA exhibition. The juxtapositions of objects on display further suggest ways that museum exhibitions can be curated so that ambiguities of who “owns” what are given full play, and no one has the last word—as, indeed, neither Lusinga nor Storms did, can, or will.

First, a beheading. The event occurred on December 4, 1884, and has been articulated ever since through competing Congolese and Belgian histories attuned to particular audiences and political goals (A.F. Roberts 2013). Two protagonists engaged in a deadly *pas-de-deux* driven by immense ambition, as each man violently strove to establish hegemony along the southwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika in what is now the DRC: Lusinga Iwa Ng’ombe, deemed a “sanguinary potentate” by the British explorer Joseph Thomson after visiting the chief in 1879 because of Lusinga’s ruthless slaving for the east African trade; and Émile Storms, belligerent commander of the fourth International African Association expedition and founder of an outpost at Mpala near Lusinga’s redoubt.⁹ The IAA’s overt mandate was to promote scientific knowledge

while helping to suppress slavery. Lusinga and Storms were bound for confrontation, and Lusinga lost his head.

Storms did develop IAA scientific aims, and as he scheduled, mapped, traded, and collected, he broached Belgian colonization of time, place, value, and Nature itself. He also initiated changes in social organization still perceptible in the mid-1970s at Mpala.¹⁰ Yet despite its lofty public goals, the IAA was a front for the imperialist maneuvering of Léopold II, King of the Belgians. Storms had a covert directive to strike off westward from Mpala to join Henry Morton Stanley coming up the Congo River from the Atlantic coast. Together they would inscribe a “White Line across the Dark Continent,” as a contemporary tract had it (Anon. 1883), and in so doing, they would substantiate Léopold’s audacious—and successful—claim at the much-anticipated Berlin Conference of 1885 that the Congo should become his personal property.

Had the IAA plan been realized, Storms could have expected to share some portion of the enormous celebrity accorded to Stanley. As it was, the seasoned Stanley proved so swiftly successful that Storms’s further services were deemed unnecessary, and he was summoned back to Belgium and into disgruntled anonymity. Twists and turns continued as Storms returned to Europe, however. He bore Lusinga’s skull in his luggage and presented it to the eminent physical anthropologist Émile Houzé,

who made it the subject of a sinister treatise in protoeugenics applicable to Africans as well as to his own Flemish countryman—Houzé being a Walloon (see A.F. Roberts [2013: 143–56], Couttenier [2014], and Arndt [2013] on the heated regional politics of Flemish-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia). Storms also brought home booty seized from Lusinga, including the compelling ancestral figure mentioned above. Unpublished photos taken in 1929 as the Widow Storms prepared to donate her husband’s African collections to the Royal Museum show the sculpture standing before an over-mantle mirror that reflected phantasmagorical displays in the Storms’s drawing room, through which the aging general invented an “Africa” to suit his triumphant recollections (see A.F. Roberts 2013: 157–73, Volper 2012, Wastiau 2005.)

What might have become of Lusinga’s skull and sculpture had they remained in the Congo? His cranium would have been venerated following a complex funerary process. If his kinsmen had followed what they may have understood Luba procedures to be, the skull would have been detached from the corpse and buried in the bed of a momentarily diverted stream, along with the skull of the deceased chief’s predecessor. Such an enchainment of remains suggested continuity of leadership by an incipient dynasty.¹¹

As for the ancestral figure, in the late 1800s, Lusinga and a few of his kinsmen seeking to

exploit the explosive potentialities of the east African ivory-and-slave trade adapted symbols of self aggrandizement in emulation of the fabled Luba kingdom so influential throughout southern Congo and adjacent lands (Reefe 1981; cf. Heusch 1982). In becoming increasingly “Luba-ized” (Verhulpen 1936) in this way, Lusinga embellished and invented traditions to establish continuity with a *suitable* historic past (Vansina 1996). Among his strategies, Lusinga commissioned a large wooden figure to embody his matrilineage that would serve as an active life force to which he might look to protect and promote his interests.

One can assume that Lusinga expected to keep his ancestral figure in perpetuity, to be inherited and cherished by his successors, and that such permanence would have been of great value unto itself. As Annette Weiner (1985: 210) suggested with regard to conceptually similar material culture among Maori people of New Zealand,

The primary value of inalienability . . . is expressed through the power these objects have to define who one is in an historical sense. The object acts as a vehicle for bringing past time into the present, so that the histories of ancestors, titles, and mythological events become an intimate part of a person’s present identity.

In commissioning and then carefully preserving the sculpture, Lusinga must have hoped to create and/or elaborate upon a

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African Arts (ISSN 0001-9933 print, 1937-2108 online) is published quarterly by the University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1310, in spring, summer, autumn, and winter. For editorial information and advertising rates, write *African Arts*, The J.S. Coleman African Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1310. Phone: 310-825-1218. Fax: 310-206-4746. Email: afriartsedit@international.ucla.edu (editorial); afriartsbus@international.ucla.edu (operations). The opinions of contributors and advertisers are not necessarily those of African Arts.

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *African Arts*, MIT Press Journals, One Rogers Street, Cambridge, MA 02142-1209. Periodicals postage paid at Boston, MA and at additional post offices.

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African Arts is abstracted and/or indexed in IBZ: International Bibliography of Periodical Literature; SCOPUS; MLA International Bibliography

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Printed in Hong Kong.



2 Aimé Mpane
Congo: Shadow of the Shadow (2005)
 Mixed-media installation; 340 cm x 530.9
 cm x 365.8 cm
 National Museum of African Art,
 Smithsonian Institution, Museum purchase,
 2009-10-1
 Photo: © 2013 Museum Associates, LACMA

dynastic history for himself and to have it be recognized by others. Again among Maori, Weiner (1985: 210) stressed that “inalienable wealth takes on important priorities in societies where ranking occurs,” and one can assume that Lusinga aspired to establish a social hierarchy among otherwise strikingly egalitarian Tabwa people then living in widely scattered, small, lineage-based communities southwest of Lake Tanganyika.

For Lusinga, then, the figure that Storms would eventually capture and bear away to Europe was his dynastic lineage, a living essence with which the chief could commune while sharing freshly brewed beer and long, meditative hours. In this, the figure constituted a “compressed performance” (Pinney 2004: 8) of the practices and associations to which it alluded, and to Lusinga’s own interactions with his matrilineal ancestors. And to redirect Alfred Gell’s (1998: 62) assertions when writing of Kongo *minkisi* sculptures, “an instructed person” among Tabwa who approached the figure of Lusinga’s matrilineal ancestors—or his skull, either—would not have seen “a mere thing, a form” to which s/he might or might not “respond aesthetically.” Instead, s/he would have perceived “the visible knot which ties together an invisible skein of relations, fanning out into social space and social time.”

Storms clearly understood Lusinga’s skull and ancestral figure to be war trophies, via a property regime very different from what the same objects meant to the chief and people from whom Storms’s men seized them. The

“use value” for Storms was directed toward his own self-presentation rather than any purpose Lusinga and his followers might have intended. Storms’s African souvenirs remained in his widow’s possession until 1930. As Boris Wastiau (2005: 101–105) comments, by then they had become “family relics, metonyms of the deceased ... thereby implying new ‘rituals’ of remembrance and devotion”—to the Widow Storms and her family and friends, that is, rather than to the Congolese people who had possessed or used the objects. The ongoing “social lives” of the things seem to have left any such possibilities far behind.

Since 1930, when Storms’s collection was given to what is now the RMCA, Lusinga’s skull and ancestral figure have served further enunciatory functions as signs of “primitivity” underscoring the justifications and purposes of Belgian “civilization” (see Saunders 2005). While the Lusinga sculpture resided in a forlorn vitrine, a bust of Émile Storms was to be seen at the Royal Museum in 2010, scowling in marmoreal pallor at Herbert Ward’s larger-than-life sculpture *Defiance* (1909), depicting an angry African striding forth below the plinth bearing the bust.¹² Through such odd encounters, one can assume that Storms and Lusinga have whispered to each other through the many years since their epic encounter in 1884, for they do have a great deal in common despite ongoing narratives about them.

OTHER IMAGINARIES

In contrast to Lusinga’s and Storms’s portraits of hubris is a contemporary work by the Congolese artist Aimé Mpane called *Congo: Shadow of the Shadow* (2005) that was featured in LACMA’s *Shaping Power* exhibition (Fig. 2).¹³ Composed of nearly 5,000 matchsticks, the fragility of a muscular man is as poignant as his pensive stance, gazing upon a tombstone cross inscribed “Congo ... 1885.” Lit from behind, the figure’s even larger shadow seems to mirror the gaze from an afterlife. What suffering Congolese have known since the Berlin Conference of that year, when the Congo Free State was conferred upon Leopold II as his very own piece of “this magnificent African cake,” as the king famously quipped (see Cornelis 1991)! The *pas-de-deux* of Lusinga and Storms presaged well more than a century of turmoil still ongoing in the DRC, with the genocidal strife of last decades among its dire consequences.

Shadow of the Shadow was a deeply moving presence that gave further voice to historical sculptures displayed in *Shaping Power*, over and above their label copy. Like the Lusinga figure, these works still have much to say about what they once were and how and why they have become “treasures of the Royal Museum” (see Couttenier 2018). On the wall opposite the entrance to the Mpane installation, a small screen showed a video interview with

Dr. Mutombo Nkulu-N’Sengha, professor of religious studies at California State University, Northridge. The Congolese scholar, himself of Luba heritage, spoke to the themes of the *Shaping Power* exhibition, but also to the we-are-still-here courage required to face harsh realities of present-day DRC.

How will the Lusinga figure and other important works in the collections of the Royal Museum be displayed to convey rather than mask mimeses such as that between Lusinga and Storms?¹⁴ How may historical ambiguities like those that resulted from that epic day in 1884 be featured to mitigate colonial amnesia that, for so long now, has permitted Belgians to ignore aspects of their collective pasts that remain acutely uncomfortable? How may earlier Congolese voices, such as Lusinga’s and those of millions of others who fell in colonial conquest, not only be heard but inform Belgo-Congolese collaboration in humane futures for both sides?¹⁵

Hopeful progress has begun. To cite but a few of many provocative activities:

- Shortly before the RMCA closed for renovation, the Congolese artist Sammy Baloji and the cultural activist Pierre Mudekerezza held residencies resulting in the exhibition *Congo Far West: Arts, Sciences & Collections*.¹⁶ The purpose was to begin rethinking the museum as two arts activists reflected upon how Congolese people and circumstances have been presented to Belgian audiences at the RMCA since the late nineteenth century. In 2013, a portion of the exhibition was seen in Lubumbashi as a rare exchange of this sort, and although these particular achievements may not have contributed to discussions of material repatriation per se, seeking voices and artistic expression from “the other side” of the colonial dichotomy is—to some degree, anyway—a repatriation of *agency*.

- During the night of January 10, 2018, members of an “anticolonial collective” wishing to “exorcise” (*désenvouter*) the “imperial city” of Brussels, removed a bust of Léopold II, King of the Belgians, from its pedestal in Brussels’ tony Duden Park. The gesture recognized that such monuments are “points of crystallization” of “contested memories” concerning colonial brutalities. Although the replacement bust was quickly removed when the “real” monument was found unharmed and restored, a photograph of the insurrectionary work, sculpted in mud and covered with birdseed, lives online (Fig. 3), as does the graffiti on the pedestal reading “Congo Free State & ‘Congo Horrors’ Explanatory Text Necessary.”¹⁷

- As a “hinge point” for “construction of an African consciousness in Belgium,” Lumumba Square was dedicated on June 30, 2018. The mayor of Brussels admitted that the location “is not grand, but we wanted a symbolic gateway” to Matonge, the city’s African quarter. Even so, as Laura Ilunga of Association



3 Leo in bird seed.

Photo: Urban(e)(istiques) Anomalie(ën)(s) Bru(x)(ss) el(se)(s), <http://westenberg.constantvzw.org/?p=2834>, Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Museums *should* be provocative rather than staid places, after all, where one yearns to learn something new every visit.²⁰

More is brewing in Brussels. In March 2018, journalist Michel Bouffiu (2018a) published an exposé in the popular weekly *Paris Match Belgique*, drawing attention to how Lusinga's skull lies forgotten in a drawer of the Royal Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels. Yet it "invites us to remember crimes committed in the name of 'civilization' during the first years of colonization." The author consulted Storms's diaries and other pertinent archival documents, including discussion of Émile Houzé's treatise through which, as Bouffiu puts it, "voilà l'insoumis devenu sous-homme"—and thus did the person who would not submit become subhuman (Bouffiu 2018a: 69, 72; see also Wastiau 2017: 470–71).²¹

As an investigative reporter, Bouffiu also interviewed Camille Pisani and Guido Gryssels, respectively directors of the Royal Institute of Natural Sciences of Brussels and the Royal Museum for Central Africa. Dr. Pisani holds that she is prepared to repatriate Lusinga's skull and other human remains held by her museum should DNA testing affirm the consigner's kinship to the deceased person and "complete documentation" of the cranium be realized. She added that legislative work must also be undertaken, for Belgium has never engaged in restitution of possessions of the state (Bouffiu 2018a: 75). For his part, Dr. Gryssels stressed that he and his staff "feel no sympathy for the shocking way certain collections were acquired through military actions and recourse to violence"; yet rather than repatriating objects, he is in favor of collaboration with African museums and long-term loans, "as long as conservation conditions are optimal" (Bouffiu 2018a: 75).

This was where matters stood as of the March 2018 issue of *Paris Match Belgique*, but Michel Bouffiu was by no means finished. He launched a blog at www.lusingatabwa.com where he published his interviews with Pisani and Gryssels as well as contributions from Congolese and other African scholar/activists residing in Belgium. A rousing piece on the site by MRAX—the Movement against Racism, Antisemitism, and Xenophobia—is titled "In Belgium, the Murderer-Collector of Human Remains Is Glorified." The authors hold that Storms was not simply following orders as a military officer during his days in the Congo, but was motivated by racist ideology and convinced of white European superiority. Lusinga's skull is a "trophy of such crimes" for which Storms has never been condemned.

Belgian politicians offer statements on lusingatabwa.com, such as Deputy Benoit Hellings, who calls for the Belgian Secretary of State for Scientific Politics to repatriate Lusinga's skull. Leaders of six Belgian political parties unanimously support such a request and modifications to standing legislation necessary to permit the action and also call for federal investigation of colonial circumstances of which the Lusinga-Storms encounter is indicative. Christophe Marchand, a lawyer specializing in legal and international rights, wonders if Storms should be brought before a tribunal, albeit a century after his death, to end the impunity of colonial crimes. Calvin Soirese Njall holds that Storms's actions be understood as crimes against humanity, even as he notes that such terms of reference have never been applied to African holocausts of slave-trading and colonial conquest. Scholar/activist Martin Vander Elst adds that such recognition should produce malaise at the RMCA as displays and renovations are completed.

Complementing such views, Brussels-based art historian Toma Muteba Luntumbue asserts that "Belgians have been the victims of a 'mystification' about their colonial history of which young people are only just beginning to become aware."²² Among other calls to action, Luntumbue exhorts his readers to engage in a "vast operation of debaptizing street and place names" glorifying Belgian colonizers and, as has been happening of late with regard to monuments to Confederate heroes of the American South, colonial Belgian statues should be removed from public places.²³ A national day for remembering victims of colonial violence should be convened annually. As for repatriation of "treasures" held at the RMCA such as the figure of Lusinga's matrilineage, discourse about how African museums are ill prepared to receive and conserve repatriated works of art is paternalistic. "Restitution of Congolese cultural objects is inevitable," but "the task of physically liquidating the Tervuren Museum must await the next generation, for its petrified institutional model is ethically and politically incompatible with the twenty-first century," Luntumbue concludes.

Where will these initiatives lead from the stopped-in-time snapshot presented in this First Word? Lusinga's descendants have yet to be consulted, and it is not certain what they would do were the skull and ancestral figure returned to them. Nor have practicalities of eventual repatriation been broached. Furthermore, horrific conflict is ongoing in northeastern DRC and the Kasai; given the scale of such catastrophe, why would restitution of Lusinga's remains and possessions *matter*?²⁴ Perhaps, as with the June 2018 dedication of Lumumba Square in Brussels, small symbolic steps are needed before vast decolonization can be contemplated, let alone implemented. Or are small symbolic steps a means to avoid actual action?

Change noted at the time, "little is said of colonization in our schools and Belgo-Congolese people feel bullied" by racial profiling and stop-and-search police tactics. The hope is that naming the square will be a step toward renegotiation of shared histories. That a conference called Lumumba and the Struggle Against Imperialism was convened by city officials seemed a good sign. Yet the mayor's prohibition of the participation of Ludo De Witte, author of the groundbreaking *The Assassination of Lumumba* (2001) that led to creation of parliamentary commission to consider Belgian "moral responsibility" for the killing, suggested that "the history of Lumumba continues to bother very active pro-colonial factions."¹⁸

■ As the present essay is being completed, a call has been issued for contributions to a book of brief suggestions to Philippe, King of the Belgians, as he composes his speech to dedicate the renovated Royal Museum for Central Africa on December 8, 2018.¹⁹ Writers are invited to consider themselves among "les nègres du roi des Belges," in reference to the bad old days of Léopold II's murderously exploitative Congo "Free" State (see Hochschild 1999). The word *nègres* can either be a relatively benign reference to people of color, rather like "Negroes," or the vile equivalent of the N-word in English.

ONWARD

A major work by Aimé Mpane has been commissioned for the new RMCA. Surely, intentional juxtapositions between such works and those of the museum's earlier treasures will result, as they did in the *Shaping Power* exhibition at LACMA; but so will unintentional ones, as chance encounters of the sort inherent in all museum displays—witness the 2010 event at the RMCA when Storms's bust gloomily gazed down upon Herbert Ward's *Defiant African*.

Notes

The present paper was submitted on August 1, 2018, while the events under discussion are obviously ongoing. Like all my writing, this paper is dedicated to the memory of Mary "Polly" Nooter Roberts (1959–2018).

1 As accomplished as these two scholars most assuredly are, and especially regarding Savoy's pertinent studies of Napoleonic looting, their understanding of African material arts is not evident (*Le Monde* 2018).

2 *Le Monde* (2018). Scher (2018) points out that holdings of French museums are considered inalienable property following sixteenth century precedent, so changes in legislation must be enacted before any such repatriations will be possible. Congolese art historian Toma Luntumbue (see Clette-Gakuba 2018) has noted that European authorities would do well to look for guidance in the US Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 that addresses "cultural items including human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony" (<https://www.nps.gov/nagpra/>). On the complexities of object repatriation, see Nevadomsky 2018.

3 As a gauge of how fraught these matters are, see the exchange between Julian Volper, a curator at Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa, writing in *Le Figaro* (2017); and a piece coauthored by art history professor Cécile Fromont and RMCA researcher Hein Vanhee in *Le Monde* (2017). Volper exhorts readers to "defend our museums" against Europeans who would empty them of their collections in compliance with African demands for repatriation. The "pernicious opportunism" of these latter plays upon a "half-baked" sense (*une pensée partielle*) of "culpability that every European should feel about his history to avoid being accused of being racist or reactionary." In a blistering retort, Fromont and Vanhee find Volper's position "polarizing" and instead call for "defense of museums open to change ... dialogue, and cooperation."

4 These are huge topics, with many protagonists in Africa and elsewhere striving to ameliorate such relationships, such as the West African Museums Program's valiant efforts in this regard (<http://wamponline.com/EN/>). The Getty Foundation and the British Museum sponsor similar east African initiatives (<http://www.getty.edu/foundation/initiatives/past/africa/geap.html>). In southern Africa, the African Program in Museum and Heritage Studies at the University of the Western Cape is a leading resource base (<https://www.uwc.ac.za/Faculties/ART/History/Pages/APMHS.aspx>). On legal aspects of repatriation and protection of cultural heritage in postcolonial Africa, see Klesmith 2014; and for US government perspectives, <https://eca.state.gov/cultural-heritage-center/cultural-property-protection>.

5 Whether or not "colonial amnesia" is an appropriate understanding of complex politicohistorical relations between Belgians and Congolese is debated. Calling upon the writings of Derderian (2002), Ewans (2003), and Hasian (2012), Bambi Ceuppens (2017)—an anthropologist and curator at the RMCA—holds that one should instead consider a dynamic of "cloistered remembering of truncated, skewed, and fragmented memories made up of legends and stereotypes elaborated out of fear of telling the truth." See also Van den Braambussche (2002).

6 The following paragraphs are revised from my much longer paper posted on www.lusingatabwa.com as of March 2018.

7 On the Lusinga figure as a "treasure," see Verswijver et al. (1995). On the ongoing presence of Lusinga in the figure, see A.F. Roberts 2013. *Shaping Power* was curated by Mary Nooter Roberts, LACMA's consulting curator for African arts, in collaboration with Anne-Marie Bouttiaux, now retired as head of the ethnography section of the RMCA (<http://www.lacma.org/video/shaping-power-luba-masterworks-royal-museum-central-africa>).

8 Ideas from *Shaping Power* are expounded upon by M.N. Roberts (2013); for a broader exposition of Luba arts, see Roberts and Roberts (1996).

9 On Lusinga as a "sanguinary potentate," see Thomson (1968). Alpers (1975) provides broader perspectives of the eastern African slave trade. A wide variety of arts created and deployed in such fraught contexts are considered by Meier and Purpura (2018) and Van Wyk (2013).

10 I spent most of my 45 months of doctoral research in sociocultural anthropology (1974–1977) at and around Mpala.

11 Other burial practices were current among late

nineteenth century Tabwa communities who were far from unified in culture (A.F. Roberts 2013: 193–217). Although the "Luba" procedures—that is, as understood on a distant periphery of Luba influence (see A. F. Roberts 1996)—may or may not have been followed by Lusinga's kin, they may well have been as a function of dynasty-building after what they understood to be a Luba model.

12 The juxtaposition may have been a temporary byproduct of early stages of the museum's renovation; nonetheless, visitors in 2010 witnessed the placement (A.F. Roberts 2013: 225–29). On Herbert Ward's sculptural depictions of "typical" sub-Saharan Africans on display for decades at the RMCA as well as at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, see Arnoldi (1998, 2005).

13 Aimé Mpane introduced the work when he visited LACMA (<http://www.lacma.org/video/artist-aim%C3%A9-mpane-visits-lacma>). The installation is in the collections of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art (<https://africa.si.edu/collections/view/object/asitem/People@2486/0?state-flow=1b5d8ff9-ddfb-4676-82a4-c14fb831429a>).

14 As of this writing in July 2018, the RMCA is set to reopen in early December 2018, after several years of restoration. As Maarten Couttenier (2018: 79) cogently notes, debates about repatriation of "treasures" held at the RMCA are now nearly nonexistent, "so what can museums and communities do?" As an RMCA curator, he calls for provenance research and use of local expertise to integrate into exhibitions in Africa and abroad, forthrightly including both "uplifting and darker consequences." For "what is more valuable: owning an object or the encounter[s]" so instigated? Among many provocative resources useful for speculating about how the RMCA may be reinvented, see Bragard and Planche (2012), Seiderer (2014), Luntumbue (2015), Van Buerden (2015), Wastiau (2017).

15 A great many Congolese organizations are striving to put the world back together; to name just two, Res-Congo, the Network of Congolese Scholars of Peace and Security (www.rescongo.org) and ACED, the Collective for Colonial Memory and Struggle Against Discrimination (www.memoirecoloniale.be) engage in activities such as "decolonial tours" of Brussels. Choreography is being devised to remember, heal, and move forward despite dire difficulties experienced in the DRC for decades now; see Dupray (2013) concerning the arts activism of Faustine Linyenkula and the Studios Kabako he directs in Kisangani. On similarly inspired work, see Ndaliko (2016) on film-based arts activism through the Yole!Africa Cultural Center of Goma, DRC.

16 See Lagae and Cornelis (2011). On collaborative arts activities by Baloji and Mudekerezza, see Mudekerezza (2011), and for further artistic activities based upon *Congo Far West*, Baloji and Couttenier (2014). Aspects of Baloji's work are discussed in Jewsiewicki (2016), with pertinent bibliography.

17 The subversive performance by ACED is discussed by Martin Vander Elst (2018). Many other artistic interventions of the sort have been undertaken of late; see Imbach (2008), Goddeeris (2015), Ceuppens (2017).

18 See *Le Soir* (2018a, b), among others. On Ludo De Witte's "censure," see Bouffiu (2018c). Thanks to Martin Vander Elst for bringing the links of this paragraph to my attention. His own activism includes hosting a program on Brussels' Radio Panik on June 30, 2018, that featured Michel Bouffiu and Aimé Mpane among the discussants (<http://www.radiopanik.org/emissions/apc/apc-4-la-pygme-le-crane-et-la-place-lumumba-/>).

19 The call is posted on the DRC-oriented blog at www.mukanda.univ-lorraine.fr managed by Professor Pierre Halen at the University of Lorraine in France. The insouciant project, to be published through Éditions Maelström (Brussels), has been launched by arts activists Laurent d'Ursel, who has led the Collectif Manifestement since 2006, seeking to "reattach Belgium to the Congo," and Eddy Ekete Embesa, a visual artist, musician, and comedian in Kinshasa who has just finished a film on how the Royal Museum is remembered by its general public.

20 An important literature concerns attention to controversial topics through museum programming; Karp (2006) remains a good place to start one's investigations.

21 Several artistic initiatives have been taken regarding Lusinga's skull, including clandestine photographs taken by Sammy Baloji posing as a "natural history researcher" in response to the "fictitious scientificity" of late

nineteenth century physical anthropology by the likes of Émile Houzé, and to counter the "violent erasure" of Lusinga by Émile Storms. Baloji's photomontage of Lusinga's skull was seen at the Musée du quai Branly, among other venues (Arndt 2013). The possibility of a TV docudrama on Lusinga and Storms was explored by the Belgo-Congolese cineaste Roland Gunst (personal communications, 2016–2017), and I have been told that filmmaker Mathias De Groof is expanding his 2013 film *Lobi-Kuna* (trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAVrWE6Gh5Y>) to feature stories of Lusinga and Storms at the RMCA (<http://www.cobra-films.be/fedetails.php?id=318>). Thanks to Elaine Sullivan for this last information.

22 On Toma Luntumbue as cited here, see www.lusingatabwa.com. Luntumbue directed the 2015 and 2017 Picha Biennales in Lubumbashi (Strother 2017), and he cocurated *ExitCongo* with Boris Wastiau. The accompanying book (Wastiau 2000) mentions Storms's punitive activities. As he participated in a documentary on the RMCA created in 2002 by Henri Orfinger for Belgian television, Luntumbue covered Storms's marble bust with a blood-red cloth as "an artistic action to draw attention to this person glorified in colonial memory" ([lusingatabwa.com](http://www.lusingatabwa.com)).

23 For comparison, on refabulation—that is, assigning new memories and myths to places as an act of post-colonial agency—in Dakar, Senegal, see Roberts and Roberts (2008).

24 In an ever-growing literature on civil strife in the DRC, Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002), Turner (2007), and Prunier (2011) remain valuable sources to begin inquiry; also see Canby (2018) for a poignant review of Daniel McCabe's documentary *This Is Congo*. As of this writing, Michel Bouffiu (2018b) continues his provocative reporting with reference to the "colonial plunder" of hundreds of other Congolese skulls and skeletal sets remaining in Belgian public collections. While repatriation of Lusinga's skull remains important because it is one of the few positively identified, Bouffiu asks that a far broader set of issues be considered.

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