

more expansive concept of Christian love. Van Klinken reads the video as a ‘political and theological text’ (66) that ‘provides insight into the intersection of Kenyan, Christian, and queer identities and politics’ and its contribution to ‘an African queer theology of love’ (58).

Chapter 3 presents an anthology of some 250 life history interviews with LGBTQ Kenyans, framing them as counter stories, ‘that resist dominant narratives of sexuality’ (99) and that promote a Kenyan brand of sexual politics. Van Klinken’s analysis is at its most powerful when it highlights the instability of self-signifiers in the narratives of participants, through, for example, their coming out stories. From these stories emerges a complex version of intimate citizenship that Van Klinken rightfully acknowledges is ‘far from homogenous’ (112). They both challenge the violence of Kenyan heteronormativity and reveal localised strategies for ‘dealing with sex, love, relationships, marriage, and family’ (112), unsettling over-simplified accounts of African LGBTQ lives.

Chapter 4 provides a thick description of how the Nairobi-based Cosmopolitan Affirming Church (CAC) ‘negotiates lgbt identities and Christian faith in the Kenyan context’ (144). With its connections to emerging forms of radical inclusivity within the African American Pentecostal movement, the church offers a critique of socio-political homophobia on the continent, suggesting that there has been a ‘spiritual colonization of Africa’ (155). Van Klinken shows how the church functions as much as a space for ‘queer religious world-making’ (168). For example, he describes a drag-queen contest in which the congregation is invited to envision a society in which LGBTQ people and queer practices are religiously sanctioned and celebrated, bearing witness to a theological statement on queer empowerment.

Van Klinken intersperses these case studies with four ethnographic interludes that address his experience as a researcher occupying a queer, white European subject position. For example, in ‘Bodywork’ he reflects on a sexual experience with a queer Kenyan to ‘illustrate the complex situation of power and vulnerability’ (95) of sex during fieldwork and to challenge taken-for-granted norms about ethnographic research ethics. These interludes raise ‘ethical, methodological, and political’ (24) questions related to fieldwork and, he hopes, contribute to a ‘queer-world making in academia’ (196) that affirms, rather than avoids, the embodied humanity we share with our research participants.

*Kenyan, Christian, Queer* will serve as an important resource for students and scholars of religious, queer and African studies. Its intervention in these three overlapping fields make it an exciting contribution to scholarship on the role of religion in queer African lives.

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**Politics and Violence in Burundi: the language of truth in an emerging state** by AIDAN RUSSELL

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This superb book by Aidan Russell concerns a neglected place and time. The place is Burundi, whose complex past is buried by those of its larger and better-known

neighbours in the Great Lakes region. The time is ‘the long 1960s’, beginning in 1959 with the emergence of democratic competition, when multiple possibilities for what the post-colonial future might look like were in play, and culminating in genocide in 1972, when ‘the future horizons of possibility closed’ (9).

Meticulously documented in wide-ranging archival research and interviews, the study centres on the communes of Kabarore and Busiga along the Burundi–Rwanda border. Drawing on linguistic anthropology and a deft knowledge of Kirundi, Russell is particularly concerned with the tensional character of the language of truth and its political function. In tracking concepts of *ukuri* (truth) and *ibuhuha* (rumour) and their cognates, he weaves a story of post-colonial openings and closures which powerfully demonstrate how ‘the language of truth [can be] turned as much to violence and destruction as to hope and possibility’ (28).

The first part of the book focuses on the emergence of the party system in the last years of colonial rule. It is preceded by a survey of the development of the Burundian monarchical state from 1796, which introduces the complexities of the pre-colonial Burundian political system, the amorphousness and historicity of ethnic identities, and the development of the antagonism between the Bezi and Batare Ganwa factions which played out in the respective independence programmes of *Uprona* and the *Parti Démocratique Chrétien* (PDC). The second part of the book deals with the tumultuous first years of the post-colony after Bezi Prince Louis Rwagasore’s assassination. These were years of *Uprona* factionalism, rapid changes of government and intense interpersonal rivalry. They also saw deteriorating relations with Rwanda, the diffusion of Casablanca-Monrovia Pan-Africanist programmes and the ideological schisms of the Cold War into domestic politics, and the development of a republican movement which culminated in abolition in 1966 and the emergence of Michel Micombero as Burundi’s first president. Russell also sheds light on some little-known events neglected in state-centred narrations, such as in the excellent commentary on the Mparamirundi rebellion of 1961 in the borderland.

This was Burundi’s ‘time of politics’ (9), in the felicitous words of one interviewee, and politics was a ‘world of talk’ (71). From the stirrings of decolonial sentiments and the opening of the horizon of possibilities, the pursuit of political power was accompanied by discursive struggles over *ukuri*. Micombero’s new republic proclaimed that it had no room for *abanyabihuha* (people of rumours), denounced *politiques bw’insaku* (the politics of malevolent gossip), and aimed at the development of republican-citizens of *ukuri n’ubutungane* (truth and justice) who would engage in ‘vigilance’ in defence of *ubumwe* (unity). But alongside attempts to impose totalistic truths there existed the more pluralistic sphere of *ibuhuha* which constituted ‘the most vital space of democratic contest’ (76). Rumour ‘pricked an alertness in power and informed popular thoughts of alternative possibilities’ (165).

The book concludes with an extensive account of the 1972 genocide, *ikiza*. Because of the emphasis on the possibilities of the early post-colony, the discussion avoids framing the genocide as the inevitable endpoint of the ‘leapfrogging legacy’ of colonial rule or as a link in Burundi’s historical ‘chain of violence’ (270). It also demonstrates the horrifying ‘truth-making’ effect of genocide. As Russell puts it: ‘If the previous decade of decolonisation constituted the search for what power and community would mean after empire, here people for the first time thought they knew the heart of a new order’ (263).

Overall, this is a landmark study for scholars of Burundi and the Great Lakes region. It should, however, be read much more widely as an empirical study in

the 'futures past', to use Koselleck's term, of the decolonisation movements of the 1960s, and as a theoretically sophisticated framing of the relationship between languages of truth and power.

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**Contradictions of Democracy: vigilantism and rights in post-apartheid South Africa**

by NICHOLAS RUSH SMITH

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*Contradictions of Democracy* is a must-read book for scholars working on vigilantism, (urban) policing and security in South Africa and beyond. In this alluring account, Nicholas Rush Smith provides a novel perspective on vigilantism by showing that in South Africa, it is not the (inevitable) result of democratic failure, but rather a response to processes of democratic state formation that are fostered by intimate civic networks. With this intriguing claim, Smith critiques two prevalent approaches to understanding vigilantism in the scholarly literature: the civic and state failure explanations. The first argues that vigilantism is the result of a breakdown of social capital and the second finds fault in institutional absence, failure and/or ineffectiveness. By drawing from rich empirical data, Smith powerfully debunks these dominant approaches and provides an innovative way of understanding vigilantism that is not only of interest to scholars working on South Africa, but to an interdisciplinary public interested in matters pertaining to policing, security, citizenship and statehood.

The main theme that powerfully comes to the fore in each chapter is, as the title of the book suggests, contradiction. In the second chapter, Smith explores the historical antecedents of contemporary vigilante violence and identifies the paradox that closely knit relationships often facilitate, rather than suppress, violence. Another key contradiction emerges in Chapter 4, where Smith analyses a killing in KwaMashu's K Section and questions how violence occurs after the police have made an arrest, i.e. when the state has been 'successful' in finding the suspect. Through a meaning-making approach to law and rights, he emphasises how citizens interpret the law and effectiveness of (state) institutions in ambiguous and contradictory ways. In Chapter 5, Smith analyses the contradictory relationship between police officers and citizens who engage in community policing initiatives encouraged by the state. The South African state instigates patrollers to maintain procedures underpinned by the law, yet simultaneously enables, and at times stimulates, those same citizens to violate the law through the use of extrajudicial force. In the last chapter, Smith shows how vigilantism can act as a lens through which to analyse the state's use of (authoritarian) violence and the contradictory nature of extrajudicial police violence.

Smith succeeds in fleshing out these contradictions in a captivating way through his use of meticulous detail from his in-depth ethnographic fieldwork and extensive archival research. By drawing from this data, he provides vivid and engaging accounts of, for example, a community policing patrol he accompanied in Sebokeng (Chapter 5), the ambiguous position of Vikela, a local crime fighter in KwaMashu (Chapter 6), and the somewhat absurd protest staged at a Pretoria