



Portrait of Marie Gevers by Nicole Hellyn
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The *Mille Collines* of Marie Gevers: From Reportage to Literary Text

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Abstract: Little known today beyond the country of her birth, Marie Gevers (1883–1975) is a major Belgian writer. Her interest in the everyday life of farming communities, her attachment to the things and people of her region, and a heightened sense of the rhythms of nature explain the success of her books. As a literary journalist, she also penned articles and reportages for newspapers such as “La Descente du Congo” (1952), *Des mille collines aux neuf volcans. Ruanda* (1953), and *Plaisir des parallèles. Essai sur un voyage* (1957). The relevance of Gevers’s contributions to Belgian colonial literature has received hardly any attention, yet it is essential to analyze these texts in their particular contexts. Years of public banishment because of her minor involvement with the country’s occupying forces during the Second World War prompted Gevers to take some distance and spend time in Rwanda as of 1948. Three years after Liberation, the Cold War was at its height, and majority opinion in Belgium had come down firmly behind the Truman Doctrine. However, United Nations criticism of Belgium’s management of its colonies was not welcome, and the country reaffirmed the role it had to play both in Congo and Rwanda. Therefore, Gevers’s African texts should be read as part of a general and national argument supporting the benefits of colonization. Gevers’s objectives were twofold: first, to provide texts that showed her humanist understanding of a different world; and second, to rehabilitate herself as a major Belgian writer of stylistically impeccable texts.

Keywords: Marie Gevers – Rwanda – Belgian colonial literature – Congo – *Des mille collines aux neuf volcans* – German censorship – Second World War – *Le Soir* – “Descente du Congo” – ideology

Little known today beyond the country of her birth, Marie Gevers is a major Belgian writer. Born on December 30, 1883, in Edegem, close to Antwerp, she wrote critically well received poems before turning to the novel. In 1930 she received the Prix du Centenaire and, four years later, the Prix Populiste for *Madame Orpha ou la sérénade de mai* (Mrs Orpha or the Serenade of May).¹ In 1938 she became the first woman to be elected to the Royal Academy of French Language and Literature. Her oeuvre consists of ten or so novels and as many short-story collections, as well as essays dedicated to nature, such as *Plaisir des météores ou le Livre des douze mois* (The Pleasure of Meteors or the Book of Twelve Months).² In 1960 Gevers received the Prix Quinquennal de Littérature for her career as a whole. She died on March 9, 1975, in the Missembourg home where she was born.

Gevers wrote in French. She also understood Dutch perfectly, including the patois of her native region. She translated Flemish poets and essayists. Her interest in the everyday life of farming communities, her attachment to the things and people of her region, and a heightened sense of the rhythms of nature explain the success of her books.³

Modest, and not given to public statements, Gevers was nevertheless regularly in demand to give an interview, write a column, or release an as yet unpublished story. These journalistic contributions are so numerous that the *Bibliography of Belgian Writers* abandoned the idea of identifying all of them.⁴ On several occasions, however, her articles were not simple contributions but rather genuine reportages, ones that make it possible to consider her an author-journalist in the full sense of the term.

Gevers's journalistic contributions thus offer the advantage of revealing a little-known aspect of her career. They are equally important in providing an understanding of the real issues at stake within several of her publications, in particular the subject of *Des mille collines aux neuf volcans. Rwanda* (Rwanda: From a Thousand Hills to Nine Volcanoes).⁵

Between 1950 and 1960, Gevers indeed published three texts that are exceptions to her oeuvre. Before the Rwanda book, on November 8, 1952 she spoke about "La Descente du Congo" ("The Descent of the Congo") at the Royal Academy.⁶ And, in 1958, she published *Plaisir des parallèles. Essai sur un voyage [Congo]* (The Pleasure of Parallels: An Essay on a Journey).⁷ These writings on Belgian colonies were preceded and nurtured by three voyages she made, in 1948, 1951, and 1955, to the region of Central Africa where her daughter lived.

Gevers's contribution to the corpus of Belgian colonial literature has not often been analyzed. Well received at the time, it still draws approving comments from the *National Biography*, which stresses the author's ability to place

Western standards and values in perspective.⁸ More recently, on the occasion of the reissue of *Mille collines*, Valentin-Yves Mudimbe noted: "her testimony is a form of pathos in the sense that it is an expression—and a signification—of being different, and a discovery of the difference around oneself."⁹ The website of the Archives et Musée de la Littérature concurred: "the lady from Missembourg' lifts the colonial travel story out of its commonplaces."

Whoever takes the trouble to place Gevers's colonial writings in context will nevertheless note that this evaluation merits some discussion. The category of travel writing, which traditionally designates the literary aspect of journalistic reportage, has little relevance because *Mille collines* is, first and foremost, a freelance article published in the press. As for the author's empathetic viewpoint for African tales and for the actors of the colonial enterprise—the colonized as well as the colonizers—it also demands to be questioned with reference to a particular era and specific stakes.¹⁰ Nevertheless, these two aspects make sense only in the context of fully understanding Gevers's situation when she took her first voyage to Rwanda. It is with this point we will commence our investigation.

The Situation of Marie Gevers in 1945

The war period profoundly marked Belgian literary life. Crucial factors included the closing of borders, which meant that authors found plenty of difficulty in traveling to Paris and publishing there. Authors also encountered a social demand for entertaining texts, as well as German censorship (and, inevitably, self-censorship on the part of writers and publishers). Certain authors "snapped their pen in half" during this period, refusing to publish, while others benefited from new opportunities. In general, for writers as for the rest of the population, the keyword of the period was "accommodation" to new circumstances. Effective collaboration and mounting resistance remained marginal.

In the sector of the press controlled by occupying forces, Gevers's name surfaced frequently. The stories that appeared under her byline were largely in continuity with the subjects she addressed prior to 1940, and the same was true of the eight books she published between 1940 and 1945. The texts were apolitical enough not to alarm the Nazis, although one might compare them with the major themes "in the spirit of the times": the link between the inhabitants and their land, the love of nature, and the fascination with atavisms. Gevers was not the only one writing in this vein, however, and so such an analysis would fall under an *a posteriori* moralism rather than an academic approach. An extensive ideological critique of the texts published throughout the period would run the risk of many anachronisms.¹¹ One could—and this would be more useful—make a complete inventory of these contributions in

such a way as to compare Gevers's apolitical texts and the clearly more slanted articles that were published in the same newspapers. Putting her complete works under this microscope would doubtless reveal a form of heedlessness, or even intellectual irresponsibility. Nonetheless, at the time of Liberation more specific rebukes were made regarding her.

From its first sessions at the end of 1944, the Royal Academy had to face the question of members who had compromised themselves with the Occupiers. The case of Horace Van Offel, editor-in-chief of the "stolen" newspaper, *Le Soir*, was easy to resolve. He was a notorious collaborator who published Nazi propaganda, and was expelled from the institution on October 21, 1944. Gevers was criticized in less absolute terms. "The Academy considers that Mme Marie Gevers has committed an error in lending herself to the re-publication of certain of her works by a publishing house known for its relations with the enemy. It regrets, on the other hand, that Mme Marie Gevers lacked prudence in her relationships with journalists in the pay of the occupier."¹² Nonetheless, because the Academy's statutes made no provision for temporary expulsions, it recommended to Gevers that she not take up her place for some time. Similarly, the Association of Belgian Writers and the PEN Club voted to reprimand both Henri Davignon and Gevers, the former for an article published in *Le nouveau journal* and for his involvement in the francophone cultural council, and the latter for a meeting with journalists from both the "stolen" *Soir* and *Nouveau journal*.

Indeed, Gevers had given an interview to *Le Soir*. Responding to questions from Marcel Dehayé, the following words are attributed to her: "She also thinks that in literature in particular, the time of morbid analyses has passed, as has that of introspections tinged with Freudianism. . . . We must draw closer, the author of *Plaisir des Météores* also tells us, to nature, the land, and draw wisdom from them."¹³

After the war, Gevers was reproached again, this time because of the republication of *Paix sur les champs* (Peace on the Fields)¹⁴ by Éditions de la Toison d'Or in 1943, a publisher funded by the Occupier. The owner of this publishing house was Édouard Didier, who in 1946 was tried in absentia in Brussels and sentenced to death. Raymond De Becker, his main literary advisor, was subjected to the same sentence, commuted in 1947 to life imprisonment.¹⁵

To defend herself, Gevers explained in a letter to the Academy in October 1944 that Jean Van Loock had introduced her to "two young people," Jean Libert and Jean de la Lune (Marcel Dehayé), whom she did not know were collaborators with *Le Soir*.¹⁶ She also felt that she had nothing to do with the beliefs of its editor.¹⁷ On this point, her defense was convincing: other writers published by the same editor were not troubled (this is the case for Paul

Willems, the son of Gevers), or, if they were, it was for other counts of indictment (such as the stories read on the radio by Michel de Ghelderode). It was, on the other hand, difficult to imagine that she was unaware of the political commitments of her two interviewers, with whom she remained in contact for a while.¹⁸ The case against her nevertheless seemed slight, and it is hard to understand, *a posteriori*, the animosity of Valère-Gille, her principal accuser.

In October 1945, Gustave Vanzype, the permanent secretary, sent her a train ticket so that she could return to the Academy. She refused, as the controversy had yet to be brought to an end. At the same time, she was expelled from the "Soroptimist Club of Antwerp,"¹⁹ of which she had been a member since its founding in September 1945. She received a letter from William Ugeux of the Belgian Civil Mission on February 19, 1945, reminding her that she was banned from publishing for having been involved in publications coming out under enemy control. She would have to request permission to publish again. Finally, after a certain delay, the Société des Gens de Lettres de France pronounced "a very severe reprimand" against her in its session of October 28, 1946. Yet Gevers returned to the Academy for its February 1946 session, "and everything passed off very pleasantly," she told her lawyer.²⁰ However, almost four years passed before she dared to speak there again. Her first postwar talks were "Memories of Verhaeren" (1949) and "Pilgrimage to Combray-Illier" (1951).²¹

From a psychological perspective, Gevers took the reproaches badly. In her *Journal d'une cave* (Diary of a Cellar), she explained how much hatred she had felt for Germany, following the Great War. This animosity lasted until 1935, at which point it disappeared despite a brief resurgence in May 1940.²² On January 5, 1945, she noted that she could hate Germany, but above all she loved her country and Flanders, united in a musical "third" or like the components of a stereoscopic photograph.²³ On February 2, 1945, she pitied the Germans taking shelter within their homes, under Allied bombing, as she did the Belgians who had been forced to flee.²⁴ These ambivalent sentiments placed her in an awkward position with Belgian patriotic opinion. The personal attacks depressed her and for several months she published next to nothing. To gain some distance between herself and a climate she judged poisonous, she eventually escaped the toxicity by joining her daughter in Rwanda in 1948.

The Author-Journalist of 1948

Again, context is important. Three years after Liberation, the Cold War was at its height, and majority opinion in Belgium had come down firmly behind the Truman Doctrine, as presented by United States President Harry S. Truman on March 12, 1947. The principal enemy henceforth became the

Soviet Union. Anti-communist discourse spread to socialist circles, and the Belgian communist party became isolated. On the day of Truman's speech, communist ministers left the government. A period of social agitation followed, culminating in the murder of elected communist deputy Julien Lahaut on August 18, 1950. The Catholic Party, which had won the June 1949 elections, pushed the socialists out of power for five years.

The dominant political parties thus opted for an unambiguous Atlantist rallying. Nevertheless, as far as the question of the management of the colonial domain was concerned, this choice posed a problem. In 1945, Article 73 of the United Nations Charter recognized the "primacy of the interests of the inhabitants" of the colonies over the interests of the colonizers.²⁵ As historian Guy Vantemsche has demonstrated, this provision triggered lively reactions in Belgium.²⁶ Successive Belgian governments considered it necessary to stand up against both US and UN interference in Belgian colonial policy. The Catholic Party in particular was at the forefront of this dispute, issuing a series of propaganda texts that attempted to convince the public that the Belgian government had been doing everything possible, in the Congo and in Rwanda, to develop these countries in the interests of their inhabitants.

Among the newspapers at the forefront of these issues was *Vrai*, managed by three energetic young editors, Jo Gérard, Georges-Henri Dumont, and Georges Sion. This "weekly of national life" published between September 16, 1944 and July 10, 1949, until the Catholic Party victory rendered its role unnecessary. In an editorial entitled, "We Are at War," Dumont wrote, "The hour has come to exterminate communism wherever it has cunningly implanted itself. Let every state threatened from within—and Belgium is one of them—go on the offensive against the agents from abroad, and victory will be ours in 1948."²⁷ In August 1948, the newspaper led a campaign against the criticisms, which the Belgian administration of Ruanda-Urundi had given rise to, at the United Nations Trusteeship Council (the colonies had been entrusted to it after the First World War, to be managed under the system of mandates).²⁸ The main Catholic daily, *La Libre Belgique*, took a similar view, explaining that Germany had done nothing for its colonized peoples, and that for Belgium, "The task to be accomplished was and remains enormous: to educate the people, teach them the principles of Christian morality, develop the country economically."²⁹ While the Trusteeship Council regretted that "no progress has been made in terms of the goal of making the indigenous peoples understand what democracy is and how it is applied,"³⁰ the *Libre* stressed the countries' economic, medical, and educational development.

On August 15, 1948, *Vrai* began publishing a series of open letters to Sion under the general heading: "Marie Gevers Writes to Us from Ruanda."³¹

For his part, Sion was preparing what was to become his *Voyage aux quatre coins du Congo (1949–1952)* (Voyage to the Four Corners of the Congo),³² and Dumont would chronicle the history of these years in: *Le Congo du régime colonial à l'indépendance, 1955–1960* (The Congo from the Colonial System to Independence, 1955–1960),³³ and *La table ronde belgo-congolaise (janvier–février 1960)* [The Belgo-Congolese Round Table (January–February, 1960)].³⁴

The articles by Gevers, which form the raw material of the text published by Plon in 1952, thus belong to a set of arguments that sought to defend and to illustrate the benefits of Belgian colonization. They were nurtured by articles from *La Libre Belgique* that Émile Gevers-Orban (Marie's brother) regularly sent to his sister, so that she could allude to them "in her reporting."³⁵

This became a major turning point in Gevers's oeuvre. Normally an apolitical writer, she found herself enrolled in an ideological cause. In the wake of her *Vrai* articles, in 1950 she offered to the *Patriote illustré* a piece of reportage on "Les sources du Nil" (source of the Nile), based on a story from her son-in-law, Jean Schuermans.³⁶ In August 1954 she published "Ruanda-Urundi" in *Panorama*. In September 1960 she published "Femmes d'Afrique" ("Women of Africa") in *Nouvelles littéraires*. And in 1961 she published "Les petits vachers" ("The Little Cowherds") in *Bellone*. In strategic terms, the gains were obvious. Excluded on the grounds of collaboration, Gevers returned to the mainstream thanks to the celebration of the Belgian colonial oeuvre. On November 8, 1952, the Academy welcomed her first major personal talk on that theme, "La Descente du Congo," definitively reintegrating her into the literary and national community.

Literary Stakes of Rwandan Reportage

We are now able to grasp as fully as possible the literary stakes of Rwandan reportage. For an author censured by the Association of Belgian writers, it was not only a question of producing a text bearing witness to her humanist understanding of a different world, but also of rebranding herself as a writer of the first rank, who had lost nothing of the sensibility that had been recognized in her descriptions of the Flemish region, and who was still capable of producing a stylistically impeccable text.

Of course, nothing is overtly political in Gevers's text. The reportage opens with thoughts on language that aim precisely at escaping colonial stereotypes. It continues with a cosmological description of nature and human beings in line with the categories she has been using in previous works. Nonetheless, in view of the publishing context, three main argumentative axes within *Mille collines* need to be highlighted. It is, first of all, a question

of highlighting the exemplary work of missions, missionaries, Force Publique (Public Force, the Belgian military force), and Belgian administrators.³⁷ Using classic methods of first-person reportage, a guarantee of authenticity, the female narrator recounts a number of concrete anecdotes that illustrate the good will of the colonists. The devotion of a bush doctor and the skill of an engineer are emphasized. Nonetheless, the author acknowledges some obvious struggles that remain: the difficulties of the terrain, the meeting between races and cultures is problematic, and colonization in general remains difficult. She invokes the brevity of the colonial experience: it is necessary to allow time to do its work and to have confidence in the good will of those on both sides.³⁸ Beyond these reservations, Gevers concludes that the balance sheet of colonization appears to be positive overall, an observation seemingly based on the fact that it comes from a “normal” writer on a family trip, not from reportage motivated by particular circumstances.

On a conceptual level, the second axis, Gevers in no way distances herself from the dominant mental categories of Belgian colonizers. The notion of “race,” for example, is used in a spontaneous manner. She distinguishes “[t]hree races. It is enough to spend a few days in Ruanda to differentiate them.”³⁹ The criteria for differentiation are physical. “Aged some forty years, a height of 1.90 m denotes the purity of his race.”⁴⁰ And, between these races, the hierarchy is no less evident. According to her, “The Batwa acknowledge the supremacy of the Batutsi. They agree to be employed as court jesters or dancers, they pay their dues to the king, but they don’t work at all. They remain free.”⁴¹ The unconscious superiority of the white race manifests itself even when the narrator believes she is paying a compliment, as when the spotlessly clean residences of the Tutsis “call to mind the work of higher insects.”⁴²

The third argumentative axis involves the affirmation of a particular ethos. A French-speaking Flemish writer, known for her sensitivity to nature, Gevers piles on the parallels between native country and visited country. She who knows her trees and her meteorology writes: “The eucalyptus has taken in Ruanda, just as long ago the Canadian poplar took in the Flemish region.”⁴³ “At home, in Flanders, we know the rain hole.”⁴⁴ “It is the northwest. But here? The wind here is as uncertain as a barometer imported from Europe.”⁴⁵

The description of Rwandan weather also serves to strengthen the idea that the separation of the races is a near-ontological fact of nature: “Here the midday sun is eternally at six hours from its rising, and six hours from its setting. Always, always, twenty-four hours divided exactly in two. Desperately, immutably, the azure split into two equal parts for the night and for the day, and the gulf between black and white . . . eternally, eternally. . . .”⁴⁶

Through this type of comparison a positional affirmation is being enun-

ciated. Gevers reaffirms that she has not changed, that she is always faithful to a self-image constructed on perception through the senses and the attention paid to men and women in a strange and foreign world. Nonetheless, this experience of otherness, she insists, remains above all the experience of a writer. From the start of her reportage (in the version published in book form at least), she thus specifies:

I arrived equipped with my verifiable assortment of precise terms, perfect, tried and tested by the centuries. I told myself: *Patience, patience, – Patience in the azure. Each atom of silence. Is the chance of a ripe fruit.*⁴⁷ Just as for us, users of the French language, each word is the chance of a well ripened fruit which, detached from us, seizes objects and submits them to us.

These words, so exact in Europe, it was going to be necessary to use them at 2° 33’ of latitude South, at 29° 35’ of longitude East, and at 1650 meters of altitude. . . . I soon realized . . . that it was necessary to make them supple, to train them to serve the new things.⁴⁸

Mediation through writing recalls that “things seen” are also “things read.”⁴⁹ Her reportage is a text, and thus shows itself as such through the choice of images, rhythm, and economy of narration. This is why the text of *Mille collines* often differs from the militant reportage published in *Vrai*. Even if Gevers is anxious to respect the spontaneity of her story—the fragmentary and anecdotal character underlining its naturalness—she takes care to revise her work for publication in book form. The illustrations disappear and, with them, a link to immediate reality. The new version is more concise and narrowed, the vocabulary more precise, and the punctuation better adjusted. The shift from one to the other corresponds to the shift from the short-lived to the perennial story.

These strictly literary effects are also present in “La descente du Congo,” the talk delivered at the Academy, a symbol of her reintegration into the Belgian literary community. We will take a few examples from this text, more condensed and fine-tuned for the occasion.

First of all, the authorial position is taken up almost in the exact same way. Gevers declares, “The writer feels proud. Because only she, having words and images at her disposal, could manage to evoke the empire of trees intermingled with the empire of waters.”⁵⁰ The reading contract here clearly becomes that of a travel narrative, freed from the constraints of publication in a newspaper. Highly metaphorical images insist on the personification of natural elements. She evokes “the noble and slow dance of the islands,” the river as a kind of big, playful child: “In the steep slopes the waters do not much concern themselves with obstacles. It is a game to shatter them or to wear

away the rocks, to circumvent them by gnawing away at them, or indeed, like at the Falls, to leap over scattered rocks and fall back again howling.”⁵¹

While the future of the colony remained, in the eyes of the Belgians, as assured as it was radiant, Gevers indulges in the pleasure of words. The repetition of the word “white,” an adjective at first, then a noun, seems to recognize an immutable state of affairs when she writes, “The lower deck of the white boat of the whites is full of black travelers, with their families, their chickens, their bundles, their cooking utensils.”⁵² The word is reprised in another image, a few lines further on. There, the technological preeminence of the colonial country is emphasized: “Upon the arrival of the white boat all the canoes steer towards it, like steel needles towards a magnet.”⁵³

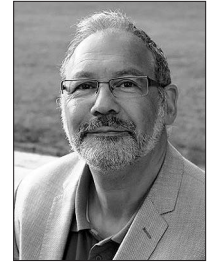
Inevitably, every travel story returns to its starting point, and Gevers’s is no exception. It draws a parallel between Belgium and abroad. Institutions such as religious communities and the Force Publique play an essential role in the two countries, and their functions are highlighted in the colonial story. Another parallel might be more political. We detect that the laudatory portrait of King Mwabi III in *Mille collines* is not without its discrete allusion to the situation of Leopold III, and “La descente du Congo” seems to confirm this. Two years after the 1950 assassination of Lahaut, the communist representative killed for having yelled, “Long live the Republic,” in the Belgian Parliament, Gevers allows herself the pleasure of social irony by evoking the danger of a Congo devoured by “republicans”:

One surmises that the ground of the islands, however hidden it might be under the vegetation, must conceal a wriggling mass of insects and reptiles. . . . The throbbing of the propeller makes every living thing hide. Apart from towards the evening the garlanded flight of the parrots . . . the birds named republicans. They will strip of all its leaves, like locusts, the tree upon which they descend.⁵⁴

Although discreet, the irony is no less manifest. It indicates the extent to which Gevers has re-entered mainstream Belgian public opinion. Seen this way, “La descente du Congo” is a fully appeased text. Gevers, sure of herself and at the summit of her art, ends her African experience, begun under such trying auspices, on a *via sacra*.

Ultimately, Gevers’s trajectory illustrates the power of the press. Reportage had been merely a stage in her life as a writer, yet a decisive one. The author prosecuted for an interview in the “stolen” *Soir* and then banished by the national community finds another news medium, one that allows her to reintegrate herself with literary institutions and the dominant ideological *doxa*. The literary life is one that is written in a media system whose importance is not always acknowledged, but whose effects are incontestable.

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Notes

1. Marie Gevers, *Madame Orpha ou la sérénade de mai* (Paris-Neuchâtel: V. Attinger 1933).
2. Marie Gevers, *Plaisir des météores ou le Livre des douze mois* (Paris: Stock, 1938).
3. Gevers was a signatory of the Groupe du Lundi manifesto in 1937. This assemblage of Belgian writers rejected regionalism and nationalism, embracing French literature overall. (The question of whether or not Gevers in fact was read as a regional author will not be discussed here.) For Gevers, the meaning of nature attained a general scope. See Cynthia Skenazi, *Marie Gevers et la nature* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1983).
4. In periodicals such as *Rex*, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, *Le Soir*, *Comœdia*, *L'Indépendance belge*, *Cassandra*, *La Cuisine*, *Chez soi*, and others.
5. Marie Gevers, *Des mille collines aux neuf volcans. Ruanda* (Paris: Stock, 1953).
6. Marie Gevers, “La descente du Congo,” *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Langue et de Littérature française*, 1952, 215–224.
7. Marie Gevers, *Plaisir des parallèles. Essai sur un voyage* (Paris: Stock, 1958).
8. Cynthia Skenazi, “Marie Gevers,” *Nouvelle biographie nationale*, vol. 4 (1997): 172–176.
9. Preface to the reissue of *Mille collines*, Central Africa Series, no. 52 (Archives et Musée de la Littérature, Brussels, 2002).
10. The intertextual dimension has been analyzed by Justin Bisanswa, who compares the statements by Gevers with those of Leiris and Gide. Justin Bisanswa, “Le voyageur et son double: Je te ferai signe,” in *Littératures et Sociétés africaines. Regards comparatistes et perspectives interculturelles. Mélanges offerts à Janos Riesz*, eds. Papa Samba Diop and Hans-Jürgen Lusenbrink (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2001), 243–254.
11. The novel *Château de l'ouest* takes place during the First World War and recounts the story of a pregnancy against a backdrop of espionage (which in fact is

no more than an adultery). See Hubert Colleye, "La vie littéraire," *La Revue générale belge* (April 1948): 949. Colleye makes of it a "novel of war time," thinking, or pretending to think, that it is a book written during the Second World War. In reality the novel had been offered in 1936 to *L'illustration*, which refused it.

12. Académie royale de langue et de littérature françaises de Belgique, *Bulletin ARLLF* (December 1944): 127.

13. Marcel Dehaye, "Un thé aux pommes chez Marie Gevers," *Le Soir*, February 11, 1941, 10.

14. Marie Gevers, *Paix sur les champs* (Paris: Plon, 1941).

15. Both would later live in France. See among others: Olivier Dard, Étienne Deschamps et Geneviève Duchenne, eds., *Raymond De Becker (1912–1969)* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2013).

16. Jean Van Loock directed the collection *Les Écrits* during the war.

17. See FS 55/18/6/1-4, Gevers Fund, Archives et Musée de la Littérature, Brussels, as well as the manuscript, "Journal d'une cave," a fragment of a diary in which she returns to these events (FS55/18). Following the controversy, Gevers had written to Alcide, editor of the Antwerp-based *Matin*, to protest against the satirical article he had published on this subject.

18. Marcel Dehaye to Marie Gevers, August 8, 1941 Archives et Musée de la Littérature, FS 55/18/6/4 ter. The letter offers to portray her in the review *Elle et Lui*, to which she agreed. Jean Libert was sentenced to ten years in prison for acts of collaboration; Dehaye, a collaborator with the 'stolen' *Soir*, was stripped of his civil and political rights after Liberation (they would be restored to him in 1949). See Pierre Assouline, *Hergé, Biographie* (Paris: Plon, 1996), 253–254, and Benoit Peeters, *Hergé fils de Tintin* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), 243.

19. The Soroptimist Club of Antwerp is a branch of Soroptimist International, an organization for professional women launched in 1930, in Belgium, dedicated to advancing human rights and the status of women in society.

20. Marie Gevers to J. Thévenet, her lawyer, February 23, 1946, typewritten copy, (Marie Gevers, *Journal d'une cave*, manuscript, Archives et Musée de la Littérature, Brussels, FS55 00018/0001. AML FS 55 18/6/47).

21. Marie Gevers, *Journal d'une cave*, manuscript, FS 55 00018/0001, Archives et Musée de la Littérature, Brussels.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

25. Guy Vantemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo. L'impact de la colonie sur la métropole* (Brussels: Le Cri–Histoire, 2010), 183–186.

26. *Ibid.*

27. G.H. Dumont, "Nous sommes en guerre" (We Are at War), *Vrai*, January 11, 1948, 2.

28. "La Belgique ne se laissera pas injurier par l'ONU," *Vrai*, August 8, 1948.

29. "Ruanda-Urundi sous le mandat de la Belgique," *La Libre Belgique*, August 8, 1948, 1.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Marie Gevers, "La source du Nil," *Vrai*, August 15, 22, 29, 1948, September 5, 12, 19, 1948, October 31, 1948; Marie Gevers, "Les belles histoires du Ruanda," *Vrai*, November 7, 1948; Marie Gevers, "Montée vers une chefferie," *Vrai*, November 14, 1948; Marie Gevers, "Huttes de luxe," *Vrai*, November 28, 1948; and Marie Gevers, "En tournée dans les collines," *Vrai*, December 26, 1948.

32. Georges Sion, *Voyage aux quatre coins du Congo (1949–1952)* (Brussels: Goemaere, 1953).

33. Georges-Henri Dumont, *Le Congo du régime colonial à l'indépendance, 1955–1960* (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1961).

34. Georges-Henri Dumont, *La table ronde belgo-congolaise, janvier–février 1960* (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1961).

35. Used by Émile Gevers-Orban in a letter to his nephew, Paul Willems, Liège, August 16, 1948 (Archives et Musée de la littérature, Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels, FS557/96/4).

36. Marie Gevers, letter to the editor, *Patriote illustré*, July 1, 1950 (AML, FS 55 7/95 bis).

37. Gevers, *Mille collines*, 95, 107.

38. For example: "It has taken us two thousand years to understand that kindness exists. . . . Oh! We exercise it rarely, but still, everyone knows all the same that it exists. . . . And you want to see the gulf which separates us from the inhabitants of Ruanda bridged in thirty years." *Ibid.*, 90. See also 66, 130.

39. *Ibid.*, 27.

40. *Ibid.*, 101.

41. *Ibid.*, 65.

42. *Ibid.*, 42.

43. *Ibid.*, 18.

44. Editor's note: "hole of rain" is a literal translation of the original French, "trou de pluie," probably crafted after the local Flemish patois.

45. Gevers, *Mille collines*, 56.

46. *Ibid.*, 92.

47. Paul Valéry, "Palme," in *Charmes. Œuvres. Tome I* Édition de Jean Hytier, 1957. Paris: Bibliothèque de la *Pléiade*, n° 127, 155.

48. Gevers, *Mille collines*, 13–14.

49. Myriam Boucharenc, "Choses vues, choses lues: le reportage à l'épreuve de l'intertexte," *Cahiers de Narratologie*, no. 13 (2006), <http://narratologie.revues.org/320>.

50. Gevers, "La descente du Congo," *Bulletin de l'Académie royale de Langue et de Littérature françaises de Belgique*, December 3, 1952, 224.

51. *Ibid.*, 216.

52. *Ibid.*, 218.

53. *Ibid.*, 223.

54. *Ibid.*, 219.