

Depictions of a Contemporary African Hero: Interpretations of Patrice Lumumba as a Heroic Figure in Aimé Césaire's *Une Saison au Congo* (1966) and Raoul Peck's *Lumumba* (2000).

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Justine McConnell for her guidance as a supervisor for this dissertation and whose lectures on World Literature were instrumental in my fascination with African diaspora literature and poetry.

Thank you to my parents for their boundless support and whose creativity and sense of adventure helped encourage me to explore this moment in African history.

Lastly, to Patrice Emery Lumumba, whose life, thoughts and deeds have greatly influenced my own life.

“Reserve place for outrage.”

- Mum’s advice

List of Figures

Figure I.I. Scene from <i>LUMUMBA</i> (2000): In a moment of defeat, LUMUMBA and MAURICE share a laugh, remembering a conversation they had about being mistaken for an ‘anthropophage’ by the Belgians.....	11
Figure I.II. Scenes from <i>LUMUMBA</i> (2000): Peck presents LUMUMBA as a reflection of the nation’s emerging discourse by displaying the positive reactions of citizens listening to his Independence Day speech on radios.....	14
Figure II.I. Scene from <i>LUMUMBA</i> (2000): LUMUMBA is positioned between a black and white portrait of KASA-VUBU and a Belgian correspondent in order to symbolise LUMUMBA’s immobility in pursuing his freeing of the RC from the Belgians.....	19
Figure II. II. Scene from <i>LUMUMBA</i> (2000): LUMUMBA embarks in a canoe onto the river.....	22
Figure III. I. Scene from <i>LUMUMBA</i> (2000): Emptiness fills the space, signifying LUMUMBA is close to isolation.....	25
Figure III. II. Scene from <i>LUMUMBA</i> (2000): MOBUTU sits on leopard skin symbolising his wealth and powerful status.....	28
Figure III. III. On the left, a scene from <i>LUMUMBA</i> (2000) where LUMUMBA greets a celebratory crowd and on the right, a close-up of a painting depicting Christ’s Entrance into Jerusalem by Bernhard Plockhorst (date unknown) (Source: Mary Fairchild).....	28
Figure III. IV. Scene from <i>LUMUMBA</i> (2000): Close-up of a tortured LUMUMBA as he emerges from the plane and looks down at the reporters that have gathered.....	29
Figure III. V. Scene from <i>LUMUMBA</i> (2000): LUMUMBA’s point of view of the reporters who stand motionless.....	29
Figure III. VI. On the left, a scene from <i>LUMUMBA</i> (2000) where LUMUMBA is presented to the press below from on top of a truck. On the right, a close up of a painting by Tintoretto ‘Ecce Homo or Pontius Pilate Presenting Christ to the Crowd’ (1546-1547) (Source: São Paulo Museum of Art Website).....	30

Key: The Reference of Historical Versus Fictional Depictions

Due to the use of historical names for fictional characters in the works, in this dissertation:

Historical figures will be presented in normal text: i.e., Lumumba, Mobutu etc.

Césaire's stage play, *Une Saison au Congo* (1966) will be referred to as *SAISON*, in capital letters and italicised.

Peck's film, *Lumumba* (2000) will be referred to as *LUMUMBA*, in capital letters and italicised.

When referencing characters in *SAISON* and *LUMUMBA*, names will be written with non-italicised, capital letters: i.e., LUMUMBA, MOBUTU etc.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
List of Figures	3
Key: The Reference of Historical Versus Fictional Depictions	4
Introduction	6
I. The National Hero	8
	3

LUMUMBA's Corporeal Existence: Négritude and 'the Other'	8
Narrating the Nation	12
II. The Mythical Hero	16
LUMUMBA 'the Cunning'	16
Nietzsche's <i>Birth of Tragedy</i> and the Destiny of a Mythical Hero	19
III. The Mortal Hero	23
Imagining the Gaps	23
Aggrandising the Character of LUMUMBA	26
Conclusion	30
Appendix: Original French Texts	34
Bibliography	35

Introduction

In the space of just over a decade, Patrice Lumumba evolved from traveling beer salesman and postal clerk in Belgian Congo to become first Prime Minister of the independent Republic of Congo (RC).¹ After just two and a half months in office, a firing squad would

¹ Prior to gaining independence in June 1960, the country now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was known as the Belgian Congo; at independence it became the Republic of Congo; between 1971-1997 under Mobutu it was called Zaire; and

assassinate him and proceed to exhume, dismember and burn his body to ashes.² Lumumba's nationalist ideas of a free and independent republic were ousted in favour of the Belgian desire for a neo-colonial regime.³ It is clear his physical and symbolic influence struck a powerful chord with the Congolese people and whose aspirations for independence transcended far beyond the RC's borders across the entire African continent.

Lumumba's story is predominantly that of African singularity, yet it is one which cannot be told the same way twice. The legacy of Lumumba lives on in the works of Aimé Césaire and Raoul Peck, who explore Lumumba's life as the RC's martyr for independence. Césaire's play *UNE SAISON AU CONGO* (1966) offers a philosophical look at Lumumba's efforts to free the RC as well as the escalation that followed. Martinique-born, Césaire grew up in the French Caribbean before moving to Paris where he, among other impressive feats, would meet other African revolutionary thinkers and establish the concept of *négritude*. *Négritude* offered an empowering social and cultural identity for diasporic Africans to claim the richness of their heritage that was readily dismissed not just in France but across Europe at the time.⁴ In addition to his plays, his critiques on colonialism also manifest themselves in his poetry and prose essays, which were testaments to the growing movement towards empowering the African voice.

Peck's cinematic oeuvre consists of celebrating monumental figures in history while striving to capture the accurate truth regarding his protagonists. Having previously produced a documentary on Lumumba in 1990 titled *LUMUMBA, LA MORT D'UN PROPHÈTE* (*LUMUMBA:*

after that, it became the DRC. For uniformity purposes, the DRC will be referred to as the Republic of Congo as it was known at the time of Lumumba's time in office.

² Ludo de Witt, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, trans. by Ann Wright and Renée Fenby (London: Verso, 2001), p. x.

³ "It was Belgian advice, Belgian orders and finally Belgian hands that killed Lumumba on that 17 January 1961." de Witt, p. xxii.

⁴ Gregson Davis, Aimé Césaire (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), p. 7.

DEATH OF A PROPHET), Peck's film *LUMUMBA* (2000) strives to approach Lumumba's historical timeline from a more intimate standpoint than that of his documentary while still depicting an accurate representation of Lumumba. Both Peck and Césaire focus primarily on Lumumba's densely packed months in office which provided a plethora of phenomena and interactions for these artists to present a rich and complex protagonist.

Césaire and Peck explore their *LUMUMBA*'s corporeal existence in order to reflect how the colonisation of land is a reflection of the colonisation of the individual. Césaire and Peck manifest *LUMUMBA* as someone who possesses the narrative of a nation's history by connecting the past to the present, just like the symbolic 'oral storyteller' of African cultural tradition. His depiction as a national hero is represented through his rhetoric in expressing the empowerment of the RC. Furthermore, while *LUMUMBA* in both texts does not hold the semi-divinity possessed by many mythical heroes, his mastery of language, which both artists celebrate in their respective works, makes him an equally heroic character. In considering the hero Odysseus, we can see *LUMUMBA* as not simply a mythical hero but as a myth himself: heroic, yet as in most cases tinged with tragedy. *LUMUMBA*'s 'myth', therefore, is interpreted differently by both artists: while Césaire evokes Greek tragic effects, Peck strives to uphold a sober historical accuracy in *LUMUMBA*'s narrative and have *LUMUMBA* take control of his own destiny. Rather than promoting the idea of him as divine, both artists reiterate his 'humanness' by incorporating their own fictional moments into *LUMUMBA*'s narrative, thus offering a glimpse into his hidden vulnerability.

An understanding of Lumumba's importance as a contemporary African hero will become clear through this comparison of Césaire and Peck's different artistic depictions of *LUMUMBA*'s

heroic feats. Through these various depictions of LUMUMBA as a heroic figure, the ideas and values that arise from his depiction as a post-colonial African hero in the texts will also explain why a French poet from Martinique and a Haitian filmmaker would choose to explore the story of Lumumba. Exploring ways in which the historical figure of Lumumba is depicted as a national, mythical and mortal hero in these two texts will offer an interpretation of how the contemporary diasporic discourse of LUMUMBA contributes to shaping the postcolonial African identity.

I. The National Hero

LUMUMBA's Corporeal Existence: Négritude and 'the Other'

LUMUMBA can be understood as a national hero by exploring the ways in which he is a representation of the RC. Césaire represents LUMUMBA's body as restricted by physical categories yet limitless in his relationship with the natural world. LUMUMBA's biological connection to a geographical essence is embodied through négritude's centralisation of the African experience of returning allegorically, to the African continent. Négritude strives to unify Africans under one prevailing, inherent identity and carries what Gregory Davis describes as "an activity of self-exploration, of 'delving' into the psycho-social unconscious" in his volume *Aimé Césaire*.⁵ Césaire's poetically illustrated négritude in particular, while abstract, actually manifests itself into physical entities as seen in Césaire's definition of the concept in which he writes:

It plunges into the red flesh of the ground
It plunges into the ardent flesh of the sky
It perforates the opaque pressure of its righteous patience.⁶

⁵ Davis, p. 50 - 51.

⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre and John MacCombie, 'Black Orpheus', *The Massachusetts Review*, 6.1, (1964), 13 - 52, in JSTOR <www.jstor.org/stable/25087216> [accessed 11 May 2020], p. 36.

In a similar fashion, as the character M'SIRI's thrusts of the blade that begins LUMUMBA's consignment to death in ACT III SCENE VI, LUMUMBA proclaims,

*I will be the field; I will be the pasture
I will be with the fishers Wagenia
I will be with the shepherd of the Kivu
I will be on the mount, I will be in the ravine.*⁷

Here, Césaire evokes what Ali A. Mazrui defines in his essay *The Re-invention of Africa* as *romantic primitivism* which celebrates poetic nature in the African identity.⁸ LUMUMBA's death in *SAISON*, therefore, signifies the sinking of the self into his natural surroundings. His expressed dedication to the RC is similar to Césaire's own depiction of Négritude, which he also describes as a return to the African soil itself. Césaire thus communicates a sense of geographical centrality to the self, RC and Africa and evokes a similar sense of romanticism seen in Césaire's négritude in LUMUMBA's poetic declaration of a corporeal connection to the RC.

Césaire uses surrealism as a literary tool in order to encompass the need for a concept such as Négritude to provide a fraternity and sense of brotherhood between Africans. The title '*UNE SAISON AU CONGO*' arises from the title *Une Saison en Enfer* (1873), a poem by French surrealist poet Arthur Rimbaud. *Enfer* marked a literary revolution for the movement of surrealism by breaking the traditional mould of romantic poetry with Rimbaud's new amalgamations of prose. Rimbaud's deviation and refusal to comply with the conventional values of poetry made *Enfer* carry what biographer Edmund White described as "an

⁷ Aimé Césaire, *A Season in the Congo*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Pennsylvania, USA: Seagull Books, 2018), p. 145. All translations from the play, unless otherwise stated, are taken from this edition.

⁸ Ali A. Mazrui, 'The Re-Invention of Africa: Edward Said, V. Y. Mudimbe, and beyond', *Edward Said, Africa, and Cultural Criticism*, 36.3, (2005), 68-82, in *Research in African Literatures* <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3821364>> [accessed 18 May 2020], p. 77.

excruciating dialogue with itself about the attractions and repulsions of civilisation.”⁹ Césaire was inspired by the surrealist style as he believed it allowed one to reclaim one’s authentic self. In an interview with Haitian poet Rene Depestre, he explained how surrealism allowed him to “plunge into Africa” by providing him with the artistic freedom to explore abstract ideas.¹⁰ Césaire’s use of surrealism allows LUMUMBA’s story to carry the poet’s postcolonial modernist ideas by exploring the unconscious of an African hero to show their innate connection to the African ‘ecosystem’.

Communicating an identity that is very much innate in the return of the body to the land itself, proves a limit in LUMUMBA’s mortal conquests. This is illustrated in LUMUMBA’s wish to multiply and divide himself across the RC “pour pouvoir déjouer partout l’innombrable complot de l’ennemi!” [“to thwart everywhere the countless plots of the enemy!”].¹¹ His inability to physically prevent other ‘plots’ or ‘narratives’ from developing within the RC exposes his corporeal limitations. LUMUMBA’s endeavor to release the RC from Belgium’s colonial ‘plot’ proves unattainable, for it is far too powerful to be overthrown by a mere mortal.

As Césaire notes in *Discourse on Colonialism*, “colonisation works to decivilise the colonizer...”.¹² To murder LUMUMBA exposes the barbarity of the colonisers as oppose to the barbaric identity instilled on Africans by the colonisers themselves. This stereotype of the barbaric African is also evident in *LUMUMBA (2000)*, where the depiction of the corporeal self reflects his dehumanisation. When LUMUMBA’s close compatriot MAURICE hears of Belgium’s withdrawal from the RC on the radio, he jokes, “Nous vais le manger” [“We’ll eat them raw.” or

⁹ Edmund White, *Rimbaud: The Double Life of a Rebel* (Great Britain: Atlantic Books, 2008), p. 116.

¹⁰ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. by Joan Pinkham (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972), p. 26.

¹¹ Aimé Césaire, *Une saison au Congo* (Paris: Éditions Points, 1973), p. 49.

¹² Césaire, (1972), p. 2.

“We’re going to eat it.”].¹³ LUMUMBA reminds MAURICE that danger of being incarcerated still remains, warning him the Belgians will take him for *un anthropophage*. *Anthropophage*, as LUMUMBA explains to his curious ally, refers to those who eat human flesh — cannibals. The inside joke resurfaces towards the end of the film when MAURICE and LUMUMBA lay in a dimly lit cell after being severely tortured. Collapsed in silence, MAURICE painfully turns to LUMUMBA and mutters, “*Anthropophage*” to which they both laugh breathlessly (*Figure 1.1*).¹⁴



Figure 1.1. Scene from LUMUMBA (2000): In a moment of defeat, LUMUMBA and MAURICE share a laugh, remembering a conversation they had about being mistaken for an ‘anthropophage’ by the Belgians.

Peck reinforces the fear attached to colonisation through the active termination of LUMUMBA who is seen to carry the qualities of an *anthropophage*: primitive and there a threat. LUMUMBA’s metaphorical identity as an *anthropophage* reflects Belgium’s intent to cultivate the African due to a sense of fear. Genuine in its banter, this reminder of term represents a corporeal ‘othering’ seen in the larger colonial image of the African. The colonisation of ‘the Other’ exposes the pragmatic view discussed in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* of the relationship between Western cultures and ‘the Orient’. Said’s discussions regarding the implementation of Western cultural discourse into Asian and African culture helps illuminate how imperialist

¹³ *LUMUMBA*, dir. by Raoul Peck, trans. Lenny Borger & Cynthia Schoch (Zeitgeist Films, 2000), 0:14:45.

¹⁴ *LUMUMBA*, 1:31:59.

expansion shapes the anatomical image of the *anthropophage* in *LUMUMBA*. The corporeal self, like the land, is seen in the same light as “wild, seductive” and “open to possession”.¹⁵

Narrating the Nation

Homi K. Bhabha wrote in his collection *Nation and Narration*, “Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realise their horizons in the mind’s eye.”¹⁶ LUMUMBA’s status as a national hero is recognised in his drive to voice the new, unfolding narrative of the RC as a post-colonial nation. With its newfound independence, the RC could now possess an identity that more accurately articulated its ‘nation-ness’ and both artists explore the prevailing nationalism of the RC through LUMUMBA’s patriotic rhetoric. LUMUMBA’s desire for what Congo’s ‘narrative’ could contain is reflected in Césaire and Peck’s renditions of his famous speech at the official Independence Day ceremony. Through this significant moment in the RC’s history, both artists exhibit how LUMUMBA’s words united the country under a prevailing narrative and evoked a national collective identity.

In ACT I SCENE V, LUMUMBA’s reclaims the country, its lakes, forests and sky as *les nôtres* (ours) providing Césaire with the opportunity to communicate with a thespian voice, ‘a call to Africa’. LUMUMBA’s self-assertion of ‘nation-ness’ celebrates the freedom of ‘Congo’ however, it also dedicates this freedom to ‘Kongo’. The Kingdom of Kongo was one of the historic, ancient civilisations of Africa that existed throughout present-day Angola and the DRC.

¹⁵ Elleke Boehmer, ‘Transfiguring: Colonial Body into Postcolonial Narrative’, *African Literature Issue*, 26.3, (Spring, 1993), 268 - 277, in *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1345836>> [accessed 14 May 2020], pg. 269 - 270.

¹⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, ‘Introduction: narrating the nation’, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), pg. 1-7.

¹⁷ Its integration into LUMUMBA's speech assigns new meaning to the RC's origin. Césaire's poetic writing style allows LUMUMBA to evoke ontological themes of the African identity and here, his articulation of RC's new identity appeals not just to its potential but also its history:

We will take them up, one after the other, all the laws, for Kongo!

We will revise them, one after the other, all the customs, for Kongo!

Tracking injustices, we will take up, one after the other

*all the parts of the old building, from top to bottom, for Kongo!*¹⁸

A resurrection of the ancient African Kingdom of Kongo within LUMUMBA's speech garners a nostalgia for the pre-colonial era. Evoking a monarchic quality of the nation, LUMUMBA uses Kongo's legacy to commemorate Congo's retrieved autonomy. As opposed to negritudes *romantic primitivism*, here, Césaire evokes what Mazrui defines as *romantic gloriana*, which references the cultural nostalgia of the history of Africa's kings, empires and their impressive qualities.¹⁹ This also represents what Benedict Anderson argues in his work *Imagined Communities*, that to recognise nationalism requires the alignment "not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which as well as against which it came into being."²⁰ Additionally, Anderson argues that nations declare themselves both new and yet ancestral in their 'nation-ness'.²¹ By devoting the liberties of the RC's independence to Kongo's legacy, LUMUMBA reconciles with a powerful past that defines the embarkment of a new narrative of the nation and therefore its people. Despite their homophonic sound, Césaire's use of 'Congo' and 'Kongo' in LUMUMBA's speech substantiates the reconfiguration of a modern yet traditional black identity. Césaire's application of both words in the speech offers a positive racial identity for black Africans, whose innate

¹⁷ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Kongo* (2020) <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Kongo-historical-kingdom-Africa>> [accessed 16 May 2020].

¹⁸ Césaire, (2018), p. 50. For original text see Appendix, p. 35.

¹⁹ Mazrui, p. 77.

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 2006), p. 12.

²¹ Anderson, p. 5.

heritage stretches symbolically back to Kongo. LUMUMBA stands as a national hero through providing a voice for the collective of the RC that assures continuity of historical African narratives. Peck's depiction of the same scene in his film has his LUMUMBA express a similar proclamation of independence. His scene focuses more on the visible elements of LUMUMBA's words to transcend physical space as a way to unite the RC as a community.

The character of LUMUMBA, played by Eriq Ebouaney in the film, delivers the Independence Day speech as what Christopher Pavsek describes as "forceful, even exaggeratedly masculine, passionate in a way Lumumba's was not".²² Due to the dramatisation of Lumumba's story itself, Peck likely chose to heighten the dramatics of the scene to further engage the audience at a pivotal moment in the film. In his address, LUMUMBA's colonel-like rhythm and tone further encourages a patriotic atmosphere, and the presence of radios seen throughout LUMUMBA's speech presents a united front of the RC's independence (*Figure 1.II*). The display of a variety of locations during his speech shows the transgressive nature of LUMUMBA's words, with Peck panning the camera from the radio and through the crowds that listen closely to its broadcast. Additionally, Peck captures not just the drawing of black individuals towards the source of the speech but also shows the deliberate moving away of white officers from the radio. The radio in Peck's film therefore symbolises mass-communication to the Congolese within this film.

²² Christopher Pavsek, 'The Black Holes of History: Raoul Peck's Two Lumumbas', *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 50.1/2, (2009), 82 - 94, in JSTOR <www.jstor.org/stable/41552540> [accessed 11 May 2020], p. 91.



Figure I.II. Scenes from *LUMUMBA* (2000): Peck presents *LUMUMBA* as a reflection of the nation's emerging discourse by displaying the positive reactions of citizens listening to his Independence Day speech on radios.

Benedict Anderson's *Communities* shows how newspapers are a way in which a community stays linked through cultural products. Newspapers, he writes, are a method of *print-capitalism* that sustains the circulation of information despite the physical distance that may exist between individuals in a community.²³ *Print-capitalism* provides a sense of an equal foundation of knowledge among every individual within the community and the radio acts as such a concept within the film. The radio is an important cultural product within the African culture, because it provides direct transcendence of news and is a way to information accessible for everyone within a community. Peck utilises this form of communication in this particular scene to create what Anderson describes as an "imagined linkage" between individuals.²⁴ When LUMUMBA ends his speech with, "Long live independence and African Unity! Long live the independent and sovereign Congo.", he receives a standing ovation not just from within the ceremony hall itself but across a variety of locations where the radio has delivered the speech.²⁵

²³ Anderson, p. 33.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *LUMUMBA*, 0:40:16. For original text see Appendix, p. 35.

LUMUMBA's speech in Peck's film is deliberately directed to his Congolese audience rather than the Belgian listeners. Perhaps Pavsek's comment on the "aggressiveness in tone" of LUMUMBA is a result of Peck focusing more on convincing his audiences of LUMUMBA's message rather than portraying the physical mannerisms of the real Lumumba. The film is then potentially at risk of being seen as a melodramatic portrayal of LUMUMBA's character, as Pavsek describes, rather than the historically accurate presentation of him. By appealing to the 'dramatics' Peck is actually able to emphasise the pathos of LUMUMBA's words. The emotional impact of his narration of the nation can be seen as historically 'truer' than the factual nature of depicting history because LUMUMBA is portrayed as he is remembered in the minds of the people: driven, empowering and an accurate reflection of the Congolese national identity.

Language cannot reflect the analytical details of the past within the medium of film, rather, language "creates and structures history and imbues it with meaning."²⁶ LUMUMBA's presentation as the bearer of the nation's narrative within these two texts can configure him as an oral storyteller of the Congolese nation. The traditional African figure of a storyteller is responsible for guarding and expressing the history of a community. Most importantly they pass these stories from one generation to the next.²⁷ These communal stories characterise the state of being within a collective and LUMUMBA's responsibility as a 'performer of stories' in the texts celebrates the diversity and preservation of African tradition. Being contemporary artists, Césaire and Peck dictate their personal histories by using the figure of LUMUMBA to represent their championing of African independence. Césaire and Peck therefore can also be considered as traditional storytellers, whose responsibility is to link the African past to the African present

²⁶ Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 35.

²⁷ Harold Scheub, 'African Oral and Written Traditions', *obo*, (2012), in *African Studies*.
<<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846733/obo-9780199846733-0037.xml>> [accessed 18 May 2020].

and project its meaning into the future. Through the avant-garde of surrealism Césaire explores the mystical customs of African storytelling and celebrates its oral traditions.²⁸ This tradition is reborn into what French writer Francois Pfaff defines as ‘African film language’. Its aims include portraying individuals “within, and never separated from, their natural and human surroundings...”.²⁹ By valuing the relationship between natural and human surroundings, both artists preserve the organic connection between the two and LUMUMBA’s representation as a national leader is shown to be innate.

II. The Mythical Hero

LUMUMBA ‘the Cunning’

LUMUMBA’s qualities as an influential speaker manifest similar characteristics to the archetypal story of Odysseus in Homer’s epic poem *The Odyssey*. This epic encapsulates the mythical hero of Odysseus ‘the Cunning’ whose strengths lie in his skill of language and deceit. LUMUMBA’s vitality in using language to advance his pursuit for the RC’s freedom characterises him similarly to Odysseus. For example, in *Book IX* of *Odyssey*, Odysseus deceives a dangerous Cyclops named Polyphemus by intoxicating him with fine wine and introducing himself as “No-man”. When Odysseus attacks Polyphemus, the injured Cyclops yells “My friends! No-man is killing me by sleight”.³⁰ His distress is dismissed by the other Cyclopes who do not perceive any danger from his cries. As a result, Odysseus’s misleading use of language allows him and his men to escape unharmed. LUMUMBA and Odysseus both use language to cleverly get out of threatening situations through the manipulation of speech and their cunning nature. After being imprisoned in ACT III SCENE I of *SA/SON*, LUMUMBA promises M’POLO, an

²⁸ Mildred Mortimer, ‘African literature in French: sub-Saharan Africa during the colonial period’, in *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, ed. by Edited by F. Abiola Irele and Simon Gikandi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 530 - 551, p. 538.

²⁹ Rosenstone, p. 179.

³⁰ Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by T. E. Lawrence (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992), p. 131.

associate and a current fellow prisoner, “I will talk to the soldiers, they are Congolese, I will break their hearts!”³¹ LUMUMBA extracts the goodwill of his jailers through conversing with them and offering them the *Polar* — a popular Belgian manufactured beer in the RC. LUMUMBA appeals to them not necessarily through ill-intentioned deception, but rather to discuss their disappointments in the RC, which are in many ways also his own concerns. This signifies LUMUMBA is influential not just in front of a microphone but also when conversing on a personal level.

Much like Odysseus, LUMUMBA is a prisoner, yet shown to have complete control displaying confidence and genuine interest in his jailer’s complaints. After gaining the soldiers’ favour he exclaims “I respect your opinions, and I don’t want to influence you in any way!”³² As Justine McConnell notes in her book *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939*, “When he declares himself to be ‘No Man’, far from having lost his sense of self, he is, in fact, at his most Odyssean.”³³ LUMUMBA’s encouraging words and promises of justice prove him a compatriot and win over his jailers, a fact which is affirmed at the end of the scene as they carry him out triumphantly.

This evokes another characteristic that LUMUMBA and Odysseus share. LUMUMBA’s cunning ability to befriend his jailers also reminds us of his first appearance at the beginning of the play as SMOOTHALKER, selling *Polar*. This characterisation of LUMUMBA as a cunning figure specifically emulates Odysseus’s trickster qualities. By casting him as ‘SMOOTHALKER’ before ‘LUMUMBA’ Césaire shows how LUMUMBA’s ability to persuade through his speech is a prominent quality in LUMUMBA’s character. Additionally, through the use of alcohol it becomes

³¹ Césaire (2018), p. 113. For original text see Appendix, p. 35.

³² Césaire, (2018), p. 113. For original text see Appendix, p. 35.

³³ Justine McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 24.

easier to persuade one's listeners. Alcohol thus serves as a standard exchange of hospitality between the characters in the jail and is similar to Odysseus's way of tricking Polyphemus by intoxicating him with wine.

Polyphemus in many ways, represents the metaphoric 'beast' of colonialism that LUMUMBA opposes. By calling men to action, he exclaims that "nous percerons le monstre par les narines!" ["we will pierce the monster by the nostrils!"].³⁴ LUMUMBA equates the fight for independence to the slaying of a monster in an epic myth, for just like Odysseus was stuck in the cave with Polyphemus, LUMUMBA strives to escape a similar prison — that of colonialism.

When military men storm a governmental meeting in Peck's film, their demands for promotions and better pay are met with an attentive and considerate LUMUMBA. Tensions are high with men crowding into the small conference room and in anticipation of LUMUMBA's response, he reasons with the combustible crowd. In one instance, the camera places LUMUMBA centre screen while a portrait of KASA-VUBU hangs to his right on the wall behind him and a Belgian correspondent occupies the bottom-left corner of the frame (*Figure II.1*). Kasa-Vubu was the first President of the RC and by having KASA-VUBU's portrait in the shot Peck alludes to the president's presence as a supporter of Belgian influence with the RC as opposed to LUMUMBA's modern, liberal outlook of the RC as a fully independent state. As LUMUMBA stands, almost posing next to the portrait, he promises to speak to the military at Camp Leopold the following day, stating, "Vous avez ma parole." ["You have my word"].³⁵ Here, rather than embody trickery within the portrayal of LUMUMBA, Peck superimposes the value of LUMUMBA's language on his responsibility as a trustworthy leader. LUMUMBA's ability to get the

³⁴ Césaire (1973), p. 48. Césaire (2018), p. 51.

³⁵ *LUMUMBA*, 0:45:12.

military to believe in his promise shows his greatest strength is his honor and skillful speech, but as MOBUTU warns LUMUMBA in *SAISON*, which is also applicable to Peck's LUMUMBA, his greatest strength is also his greatest weakness.



Figure II.1. Scene from *LUMUMBA* (2000): LUMUMBA is positioned between a black and white portrait of KASA-VUBU and a Belgian correspondent in order to symbolise his immobility of fully freeing of the RC from the Belgians.

Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* and the Destiny of a Mythical Hero

To depict a hero in a contemporary narrative is to inevitably interpret the mythical characteristics of the hero's 'journey' and 'return'. Friedrich Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* helped inspire Césaire's *SAISON*, through his discussions on the poetic complexity in portraying the tragic. Nietzsche's comparison of Greek theatre forms to contemporary styles highlights the notable relationship between art and suffering in Greek tragic plays. He explores this argument by outlining the symbolic and aesthetic nature of the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus.³⁶ Nietzsche illustrates how both gods represent two contrasting drives within our subjectivity; Apollo's sobriety awards him with the "Greek conception of excellence" while Dionysus carries a "sense of madness".³⁷ LUMUMBA carries qualities from both gods; his poised quality gifts him with pride and diplomacy yet the chaotic nature of Dionysus overcomes his conscience. His

³⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy or Hellenism and Pessimism*, ed. by Oscar Levy, trans. by William August Haussmann (Marc D'Hooghe, 2016), in , <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/51356/51356-h/51356-h.htm>> [accessed 18 May 2020].

³⁷ Paul Raimond Daniels, 'The Birth of Tragedy: Transfiguration through Art', in *The New Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Tom Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pg. 147 - 172, pg. 153.

downfall, thus, represents a succumbing of the hero to his Dionysian qualities, resulting in the styled representation of the tragic conclusion to the play. This fatal flaw in LUMUMBA's mythic heroism is embedded in the unconscious but is too great for the character of LUMUMBA to control. The sense of a Dionysian chaos and disorder within the play, both leading up to and right after his death leads to the ultimate victory of Dionysus and the cementing of the Greek tragic narrative within the play.

LUMUMBA's journey in particular can be defined by the title of the play itself, as MOKUTU summarises LUMUMBA's death in ACT III SCENE VIII as "le point de départ d'une saison nouvelle!" ["The point of departure for a new season!"]³⁸ While the literal title is a reference to Rimbaud's *Enfer*, the idea of a 'season' gives the events that occur in *SAISON* a natural sensation. Césaire considers the hero's journey as a cyclical phenomenon, which he also presents in LUMUMBA's statement early in the play, "When I will be defeated ... When Congo will be nothing more than a season, / where seasonal blood / continues to be beautiful."³⁹ LUMUMBA likens his own demise to the fall of the RC's independence itself and defines the regular waves of violence in the country as natural as the weather — predictable and uncontrollable. This fundamental quality of LUMUMBA can reflect what Jane Hiddleston addresses man being "redefined both at the moment of revolt and in succeeding years as black leaders set out to reorganise and reinvent the new nation, and all persist in portraying humanity as a *process* of recreation that never reaches a satisfying end."⁴⁰ Césaire outlines how the RC has a long history of violence and bloodshed and how LUMUMBA's success in 'completing' his journey could break the mystical control of the seasons of the RC. Yet, the inevitability of the

³⁸ Césaire, (2018), p. 154. Personal English translation.

³⁹ Césaire (1973), p. 76. For original text see Appendix, p. 35.

⁴⁰ Jane Hiddleston, *Decolonising the Intellectual: Politics, Culture, and Humanism at the End of the French Empire* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), p. 96.

cycle of tragedy on the stage as described by Nietzsche as well as in reality, presents LUMUMBA as a symbolic, seasonal entity and does not complete his journey. Césaire therefore exposes patterns in Congo by using the Greek tragic effect as the RC's new independence provides the perfect battleground for the Apollonian and Dionysian subjectivities, for its uncertain future harbours spontaneity and opportunities for acts of passion.

Peck's film focuses more on the physicality of the mythical hero's journey. The scene where LUMUMBA must cross a lake to reach Stanleyville but decides to turn back when he sees his family in danger proves Peck's artistic decision to reject the archetypal heroic journey. The scene begins with a slow pan of the lake, showing its breadth but also its emptiness, reinforced by the characters who notice there is no ferry to take them across. PAULINE, LUMUMBA's wife, insists that she and their young daughter stay behind to wait for the ferry. LUMUMBA thus embarks in a narrow canoe on to the lake and stands with his back towards his destination, facing his wife and child (*Figure II.II*). As the canoe reaches halfway across the water, military vehicles surround those who stayed behind and LUMUMBA urges those in the canoe to turn around. As MAURICE protests, LUMUMBA says he would rather go back and face them than let them take revenge on his family. "Ils m'écoutent." ["They listen to me."], he says.⁴¹ Here, Peck evokes the Apollonian nature of the hero, whose armor is his words. As LUMUMBA moves back towards the bank, angelic music begins to play and birds take flight from a tree as gunshots are heard. As the music grows louder LUMUMBA stands once again in the canoe and Peck provides a close-up of LUMUMBA standing determined with his eyes set on his family on the shore. Through displaying LUMUMBA's willingness to give himself up, he seals his tragic fate.

⁴¹ LUMUMBA, 1:28:17.



Figure II.II. Scene from *LUMUMBA* (2000): LUMUMBA embarks in a canoe onto the river.

LUMUMBA displays an inward journey, where inherent sacrifices make up his own myth. What Joseph Campbell refers to as the “Refusal of the Call” in his book *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, describes the rejection of one’s journey as the ultimate loss of “the power of significant affirmative action ... and his life [thus] feels meaningless.”⁴² Peck dismisses this consequence by LUMUMBA having to decide his fate in the middle of the lake. The river can be seen as Lumumba’s rite of passage as a mythical hero. The scene itself carries ramifications of the river Styx in Greek mythology where one passes from the real world into the underworld via a transport similar to LUMUMBA’s canoe. By placing LUMUMBA on the cusp between two worlds, he must choose between the historical and mythical narrative of the hero.

As McConnell writes in her book, interpreting myths as entities which harbour some form of ‘historical truth’ is to misinterpret the entire purpose of myths. Rather, myths contain spiritual representations of the ontological collectivity of a community.⁴³ Hence Peck’s decision to allow LUMUMBA to defy the pattern of traditional myth grounds him in African history therefore identifying him as a bearer of African discourse. LUMUMBA’s refusal to cross the river can be seen as a metaphor for a deviation from Greek mythological storytelling. The powerlessness described in Campbell’s composition of a failed hero is used instead to display the archetypal mythological hero reclaiming his humanity.

⁴² Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 54.

⁴³ McConnell, p. 22.

III. The Mortal Hero

Imagining the Gaps

Césaire imagines the LUMUMBA that he believed reflected the independence movement best. In ACT II SCENE X, Césaire creates the character of GHANA whom LUMUMBA must meet in order to discuss using the RC's radio, which GHANA has control over. The manifestation of GHANA carries poetic undertones and allows LUMUMBA to engage with a more experienced symbol of independence. A beacon of African nationalism, GHANA represents a 'new' African, one that LUMUMBA strives to foster in his nation as well. GHANA was the first nation to gain independence from their metropole and had done so more than three years prior to the RC.⁴⁴ Césaire engages a symbolic representation of Nkrumah in the character of GHANA to show LUMUMBA's naïveté with gaining and more importantly sustaining independence. GHANA warns LUMUMBA, "L'indépendance est une chose, la pagaye en est une autre. Nous sommes en pleine pagaye, monsieur Lumumba" ["Independence is one thing, and to paddle is another. We are in full paddle, Mr. Lumumba."].⁴⁵ The metaphor of *une pagaye* considers the physical movement of independence in order to communicate the state of flux of GHANA's independence. Césaire uses the paddle in order to symbolise a forward progression within the process of independence, and emphasises the responsibility of the African leaders to use their 'paddle' to steer towards their desired direction, otherwise, stronger currents will dictate its direction instead.

⁴⁴ Oliver Davies, Ernest Amano Boateng and Others, *Ghana* (2020) <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Ghana/Independence>> [accessed 27 May 2020].

⁴⁵ Césaire (1973), p. 85. Personal translation.

By engaging two countries that had notable heroic leaders, Césaire creates a discourse regarding the fragility in regaining a nation's freedom. GHANA tries to warn LUMUMBA that independence does not necessarily mean freedom. GHANA's discussion with LUMUMBA soon turns hostile when GHANA pulls out his revolver after being accused by LUMUMBA as a traitor for refusing to allow him to use the radio due to the threatening political climate. GHANA alludes to the chaos that could grow in the development of a freed nation. LUMUMBA, however, is dismissive of any danger, assuring GHANA he has the situation in the RC under control. Furthermore, here, GHANA carries a radical subjective view of LUMUMBA and his values creating an interesting irony as GHANA seems to reject LUMUMBA's wishes despite their common goals.

David Moore argues in his essay *Raoul Peck's Lumumba: History or Hagiography* that the film almost completely disregards any fault in its hero. He argues the film blames external forces for the struggles that were in Lumumba's control, concluding the film "overly simplifies both the individual and the context."⁴⁶ However it can be argued that Peck's film showcases LUMUMBA taking personal responsibility for the blame by giving the viewer access to private struggles he experienced. As the narrator of the film, LUMUMBA's control over the narrative brings audiences into personal moments, undocumented in history. One example of this is when LUMUMBA takes a moment for himself after meeting with MOBUTU, who has just betrayed LUMUMBA's trust (*Figure III.I*). The emptiness that fills the frame and isolates LUMUMBA visually symbolises his largely unsupported pursuit for the RC's freedom by those who have the power to make the necessary changes. Like many other freedom fighters his work comes at a cost, and Peck shows the extent to which he sacrificed his own life for his cause. Moments of

⁴⁶ David Moore, 'Raoul Peck's Lumumba: History or Hagiography?', in *Black and White in Colour: African History on Screen*, ed. by Vivian Bickfort-Smith and Richard Mendel (Ohio: University of Ohio Press), p. 223 - 239, p. 230.

detachment from others in the film, such as this one, offers a glimpse into the life of a man who dedicated himself to a mission; we witness moments of struggle in private, to show not only his vulnerability but his mortality.



Figure III.I. Scene from LUMUMBA (2000): Emptiness fills the space, signifying LUMUMBA is close to his isolation.

Peck's affirmation that this is a true story has been debated, for he represents moments that are emotionally charged rather than historically documented. Portraying LUMUMBA in this fashion evokes what Saidiya Hartman coined as 'critical fabulation' in her essay *Venus in Two Acts*, where she explores the "scarcity of African narratives of captivity and enslavement..."⁴⁷ An important question posed by Hartman is, "How can narrative embody life in words and at the same time respect what we cannot know?" Her exploration of slavery narratives shows the desire to take control of an interrupted voice. Peck expresses LUMUMBA's story not only to explore LUMUMBA's self but oneself as well, and the commonalities one shares with his character. By presenting parts of LUMUMBA's life as what Hartman describes as only "in the moment of their disappearance",⁴⁸ he becomes a more substantial character which the audience can relate to.

⁴⁷ Saidiya Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts', *Small Axe*, 12.2, (2008), 1 - 14, in *Project MUSE* <muse.jhu.edu/article/241115> [accessed 14 May 2020], p. 3.

⁴⁸ Hartman, p. 12.

The fabrication of what cannot be historically referenced influences the film's historical accuracy, yet through these imagined moments, Peck details the intimate weight of LUMUMBA's responsibility as a leader of the Congolese people. Peck thus strives to reflex the complexity of independence, by emphasising the believability of LUMUMBA's character who, like any other human, experiences moments of defeat.

Aggrandising the Character of LUMUMBA

Due to his qualities as a popular public figure, both artists aggrandise their representation of Lumumba by attaching prophetic qualities to his narrative. Césaire in particular recognises the inevitable dramatisation of his LUMUMBA and thus communicates LUMUMBA's devotion to the ordinary Congolese rather than the divine Gods. The image of the prophet in *SAISON* can be explored in ACT III SCENE II when LUMUMBA rejects the gift of a leopard skin by the SANZA PLAYER. The SANZA PLAYER declares to LUMUMBA before offering the leopard skin, "Chefs et rois, ils nous ont tous trahis! Tu vauds mieux qu'eux! Tu es notre inspire, notre messi!" ["Chiefs and kings, they have all betrayed us! You are our inspired guide, our messiah!"].⁴⁹ He compares LUMUMBA to Simon Kimbangu, a real Congolese man who in the 1940s was a self-proclaimed special envoy of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and who would be condemned to death by the Belgians for his beliefs.⁵⁰ The traditional leopard skin is meant to symbolise power, wealth and social status yet LUMUMBA rejects the gift proclaiming,

... I want to be neither messiah nor mahdi. My only arms are my words, I speak and I awaken, I am not a redresser of wrongs, not a miracle worker, I am a

⁴⁹ Césaire (1973), p. 105. Césaire (2018), p. 123.

⁵⁰ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Simon Kimbangu* (2019) <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Simon-Kimbangu>> [accessed 17 May 2020].

*redresser of life, I speak and I give back Africa to herself! I speak and I give back Africa to the world.*⁵¹

Several scholars believe LUMUMBA's rejection of the honourable gift signifies a disconnecting from the community he is a part. As Hiddleston remarks, his 'failure' in accepting the leopard skin is partially "the result of his excessive solipsism and naive belief in a rhetoric that finishes by leaving its addresses behind. [He] ... sets out to reinvent the new, liberated man, but lacks an ethics of dialogue."⁵² LUMUMBA's rejection can also symbolise a pledge of loyalty to 'his people' without the need for a materialistic reward. His own bidding for Congo's liberation, LUMUMBA argues, is not the result of a divine being. To be considered a messiah or a mahdi is to be considered supernatural and ordained by God like Kimbangu claimed to be. Hiddleston's remark regarding his "excessive solipsism", can be interpreted as LUMUMBA speaking his truth and by doing so, rejects the label of sainthood and proclaims himself human.

The rejection of religion and prophecy as the cause of Africa's suffering also denies the white-colonialist idea of the saviour. As Jean-Paul Sartre writes in his piece *Black Orpheus*, "The black man must (therefore) find death in white culture in order to be reborn with a black soul, ... in order to be reborn in truth."⁵³ In line with this, LUMUMBA shows through his declaration that the courage and power the leopard skin represents comes from within one's self and one's words. Sartre's argument communicates a need for Africa's self-reliance which LUMUMBA strives to iterate in his response to the SANZA PLAYER. The leopard skin makes a second appearance, worn by MOKUTU in the final scene of the play, where he performs LUMUMBA's eulogy while "haranguant la foule" ["haranguing the crowd"].⁵⁴ The possession of the leopard

⁵¹ Césaire (2018) p. 123. For original text see Appendix, p. 35.

⁵² Hiddleston, p. 105.

⁵³ Sartre and MacCombie, p. 29.

⁵⁴ Césaire (1973), p. 132. Césaire (2018), p. 154.

skin by MOKUTU reinforces his sinister nature of corrupting RC's freedom. Interestingly, while LUMUMBA in Peck's film does not get offered a leopard skin, it is present a shot when MOBUTU has taken power. At a celebration commemorating LUMUMBA legacy after his death, MOBUTU sits on a throne wearing a leopard cap while a leopard skin lays at his feet (*Figure III.II*). As sinister diegetic music accompanies a slow pan towards MOBUTU on his throne he adjusts a heavy golden watch that hangs on his wrist. Peck reflects what Césaire symbolised in his LUMUMBA as the materialistic desire for man to be divine and have full control and power over another.



Figure III.II. Scene from LUMUMBA (2000): MOBUTU sits on leopard skin symbolising his wealth and powerful status.

Contrastingly to Césaire's rejection of the prophetic hero, the narrative of the film itself resembles the retelling of the story of Christ who, similarly, is born of humble origins, progresses to notability through help and admiration from the community, and whose tragic fate is met through betrayal. While the title of his 1990 documentary foregrounded LUMUMBA perception as a prophet, Peck assures his film is dedicated to representing the reality of LUMUMBA. LUMUMBA's depiction as a prophetic figure is still apparent in the film, evident towards the beginning via visualisations showing him gliding above a standing crowd. The positioning of the camera manifests itself as a follower among the crowd, where arms are raised while many gaze up at LUMUMBA. The waving of flowers and other plants in this scene have strong reflections of

the story behind Palm Sunday wherein palms were carried when welcoming Christ into Jerusalem (*Figure III.III*). The introduction to LUMUMBA in the beginning of the film in this fashion emanates a similar 'holiness' to that of Christ.



Figure III.III. On the left, a scene from LUMUMBA (2000) where LUMUMBA greets a celebratory crowd and on the right, a close-up of a painting depicting Christ's Entrance into Jerusalem by Bernhard Plockhorst (date unknown) (Source: Mary Fairchild).

Another significant example of this prophetic presentation is in a scene near the end of the film where LUMUMBA emerges from the plane after his irrevocable capture. LUMUMBA's blood-stained white shirt evokes the image of Christ in his pure, holy white image. After being tortured considerably beforehand, the audience notices a disappearance of the charismatic energy he carried throughout the film. LUMUMBA is also almost unrecognisable without his glasses and professional suit (*Figure III.IV*). Peck strives to put into images a feeling of admiration that words cannot describe, thus while it can be argued to constraint the historical narrative, it in fact strives to resonate with visual pathos and achieve similar admiration. This scene is a testament for this, for what is enraging about LUMUMBA's condition is that no one moves, showing how just as with the real Lumumba, no one opposed this atrocity.



Figure III.IV. Scene from LUMUMBA (2000): Close-up of a tortured LUMUMBA as he emerges from the plane and looks down at the reporters that have gathered.



Figure III.V. Scene from LUMUMBA (2000): LUMUMBA's point of view of the reporters who stand motionless.

The camera then proceeds to show LUMUMBA's point of view of the crowd gathered on the tarmac; a group of both black and white reporters overcome in silence (*Figure III.V.*). The violence inflicted on him is a tragic sight, yet Peck does not shy away from displaying it to the viewer. The crowd's silence represents the world's general acceptance of LUMUMBA's death, making them complicit in his 'crucifixion'. Moore further argues Peck's depiction of LUMUMBA as an individual hero "threatens to turn the film into the portrait of a saint rather than a complex political figure." Yet this pivotal moment in the film expresses both a rage at the injustices done to an individual and the possessive control of Africa by metropolises by humiliating in front of the press as they hound the truck. Just as Pontius Pilate presented a captured Christ to a crowd, here, LUMUMBA is presented by his captors as if to say *Ecce Homo* — 'behold the man'

(Figure III.VI.). As the reporters beg for LUMUMBA to speak, known for his persuasive speech, his silence speaks louder than words ever could.



Figure III.VI. On the left, a scene from LUMUMBA where LUMUMBA is presented to the press below. On the right, a close up of a painting by Tintoretto 'Ecce Homo or Pontius Pilate Presenting Christ to the Crowd' (1546-1547) (Source: São Paulo Museum of Art Website).

Conclusion

Aimé Césaire and Raoul Peck's manifestations of Patrice Lumumba reflect his legacy as a hero in Africa's fight for self-determination. These explorations of LUMUMBA as a national, mythical and mortal hero express a universal message of freedom as a timeless aspect of the human condition. Césaire and Peck give us unique depictions of a heroic African man who embraces the flaws of human nature while succeeding at the nearly inhuman task of bringing a modern nation to independence from its domination by colonial rulers. His success was perhaps short lived but this does not diminish the accomplishment. This accomplishment is celebrated in the artists' work through their powerful depiction of a mortal man who, in a sense, gave his life for what he believed in.

As a historical figure, the trajectory of Lumumba's life and especially his final months is known before his story is revisited by these artists. Therefore, the artists' power in retelling this story is a result of a similar yet distinctly different representation of him as a character. Due to the inevitable physical constraint on narratives, it is difficult to present the story of Lumumba's

life in its entirety. Despite Césaire's play being published just six years after Lumumba's assassination, it takes a figurative approach to the manifestation of him as a character. Due to the lack of immediate information available after his assassination, Césaire portrayed the human Lumumba as both mythical and mystical. Peck, on the other hand, strove to explore the entire historical narrative of Lumumba while interweaving fictional, cinematic elements. Peck reflected on his production process by saying, "Through the complexity of this story, my sincerest wish is that we will no longer be able to say 'I don't know.'"⁵⁵

Both Césaire and Peck portray Lumumba as a bearer of an African historical discourse. Césaire uses LUMUMBA's voice to communicate his ideas of *négritude* which celebrates the African's identity in a poetic fashion. Peck uses LUMUMBA's voice similarly to show through a single person the collective desire for independence. Peck reveals the ways in which colonisation of the land mirrors the treatment of the people who live on it. The corporeal existence of the character LUMUMBA therefore emphasises his visceral connection to the natural aspects of the land of his birth.

Césaire and Peck foster a kind of hero that recognises his own limitations and continues to persevere what he valued. Césaire's LUMUMBA character resists the identity of a prophet while Peck creates visual parallels between LUMUMBA's narrative journey and that of Christ. Peck displays LUMUMBA as saint-like but ensures to ground him in reality by including depictions of his character flaws and private moments of defeat. Peck does not mean to alter the past but rather enrich it with human emotion, reminding the viewer that this is the story of an

⁵⁵ Zeitgeist Films, Lumumba: Press Kit (2001) <<https://zeitgeistfilms.com/film/lumumba>> [accessed 16 May 2020].

actual living person. And, as Nietzsche suggests in *Birth of Tragedy*, audiences can experience this reality without directly having to live it.

Naturally, there are limits to exploring this culturally important story through the medium of translated texts where some nuance and meaning will inevitably be lost. However, there are important elements that transcend cultural or language boundaries. In addition to the difficulties inherent in dealing with works in translation, there are cultural, racial and gender issues that would further an understanding of Lumumba in the context of his life as an African man and hero.

To come to a more complete understanding of Lumumba as a contemporary African hero, one could explore the dynamics that gender plays *vis-a-vis* his character and leadership. Additionally, it would be worth a deeper exploration of the details of the relationships between LUMUMBA and external forces such as geopolitical realities of the time, economic forces and issues related to the Nkrumah Pan-African movement.

Contemplating his imminent execution, Lumumba concludes a letter to his wife Pauline by writing, *“Do not weep for me, my companion, I know that my country, now suffering so much, will be able to defend its independence and its freedom. Long live the Congo! Long live Africa!”*⁵⁶ Both Césaire and Peck have depicted Lumumba’s inner drive, strong personality and deeply held beliefs in their own unique and powerful ways. They chose to explore his life narrative because it resonated with their own personal stories. They incorporated words and images that

⁵⁶ de Witt, p. 185.

signified hope and Lumumba's belief that Africa is capable of emerging from decades of submission by colonisation as strong, ethical and free countries and individuals.

Appendix: Original French Texts

All French texts, except from the quote listed here from Page 15, are from Aimé Césaire, *Une saison au Congo* (Paris: Éditions Points, 1973).

French text from Page 15 is from *LUMUMBA*, dir. by Raoul Peck, trans. Lenny Borger & Cynthia Schoch (Zeitgeist Films, 2000).

Page 9:

*“Je serai du champ; je serai du pacage
Je serai avec le pecheur Wagenia
Je serai avec le bouvier du Kivu
Je serai sur le mont, je serai dans le ravin.”*⁵⁷

Page 12:

*“Nous reprendrons les unes après les autres, toutes les lois, pour Kongo!
Nous réviserons, les unes après les autres, toutes les lois, pour Kongo!
Traquant l’injustice, nous reprendrons, l’une après l’autre toutes les parties du
vieil édifice, et du pied à la tête, pour Kongo!”*⁵⁸

Page 15:

*“Vive l’indépendance et l’unité africaine! Vive le Congo indépendant et
souverain.”*⁵⁹

Page 17:

*“Je parlerai aux soldats, ce sont des Congolais, je briserai leur cœur!”*⁶⁰

Page 18:

*“Je respecte vos opinions, et je ne veux vous influencer en quoi que ce soit!”*⁶¹

Page 21:

*“... quand je me serai défait ... quand le Congo ne sera plus qu’une saison que
le sang assaisonne / Continue à être belle ...”*⁶²

Page 27:

*“Mais ce n’est pas seulement Dieu, que les Blancs ont confisqué à leur profit ...
Et ce n’est pas seulement Dieu que l’Afrique est frustrée, c’est d’elle,
d’elle-même, que l’Afrique est volée! ... C’est pourquoi je ne me veux ni messie ni
mahdi. Je n’ai pour arme que ma parole, je parle, et j’éveille, je ne suis pas un
redresseur de torts, pas un faiseur de miracles, je suis un redresseur de vie, je
parle, et je rends l’Afrique à elle-même! Je parle, et je rends l’Afrique au monde!”*

⁶³

⁵⁷Césaire (1973), p. 125.

⁵⁸ Césaire, (1973), p. 31 - 32.

⁵⁹ *LUMUMBA*, 0:40:16.

⁶⁰ Césaire (1973), p. 98

⁶¹ Césaire (1973), p. 101.

⁶² Césaire (1973), p. 76

⁶³ Césaire (1973), p. 106.

Bibliography

Aimé Césaire, *A Season in the Congo*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Pennsylvania, USA: Seagull Books, 2018).

Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. by Joan Pinkham (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

Aimé Césaire, *Une saison au Congo* (Paris: Éditions Points, 1973).

Ali A. Mazrui, 'The Re-Invention of Africa: Edward Said, V. Y. Mudimbe, and beyond', *Edward Said, Africa, and Cultural Criticism*, 36.3, (2005), 68-82, in *Research in African Literatures* <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3821364>> [accessed 18 May 2020].

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 2006).

Christopher Pavdek, 'The Black Holes of History: Raoul Peck's Two Lumumbas', *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 50.1/2, (2009), 82 - 94, in *JSTOR* <www.jstor.org/stable/41552540> [accessed 11 May 2020].

David Adams Leeming, *Mythology: The Voyage of the Hero*, 3rd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1998).

David Moore, 'Raoul Peck's Lumumba: History or Hagiography?', in *Black and White in Colour: African History on Screen*, ed. by Vivian Bickfort-Smith and Richard Mendel (University of Ohio Press,), p. 223 - 239.

Edmund White, *Rimbaud: The Double Life of a Rebel* (Great Britain: Atlantic Books, 2008).

Elleke Boehmer, 'Transfiguring: Colonial Body into Postcolonial Narrative', *African Literature Issue*, 26.3, (Spring, 1993), 268 - 277, in *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1345836>> [accessed 14 May 2020].

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy or Hellenism and Pessimism*, ed. by Oscar Levy, trans. by William August Haussmann (Marc D'Hooghe, 2016), in , <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/51356/51356-h/51356-h.htm>> [accessed 18 May 2020].

Garry Pierre-Pierre, *AT LUNCH WITH: Raoul Peck; Exporting Haitian Culture to the World* (1996) <<https://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/08/garden/at-lunch-with-raoul-peck-exporting-haitian-culture-to-the-world.html>> [accessed 19 May 2020].

Gregson Davis, *Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997).

Harold Scheub, 'African Oral and Written Traditions', *obo*, (2012), in *African Studies* <<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846733/obo-9780199846733-0037.xm>> [accessed 18 May 2020].

Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by T. E. Lawrence (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992).

Homi K. Bhabha, 'Introduction: narrating the nation', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990)

IMDb.com, Inc, *Raoul Peck* <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0669704/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1> [accessed 16 May 2020].

Jane Hiddleston, *Decolonising the Intellectual: Politics, Culture, and Humanism at the End of the French Empire* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

Jean-Paul Sartre and John MacCombie, 'Black Orpheus', *The Massachusetts Review*, 6.1, (1964), 13 - 52, in JSTOR <www.jstor.org/stable/25087216> [accessed 11 May 2020].

Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth with Bill Moyers*, ed. by Betty Sue Flowers (New York: Anchor Books, 1991).

Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Justine McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Ludo de Witt, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, trans. by Ann Wright and Renée Fenby (London: Verso, 2001).

LUMUMBA, dir. by Raoul Peck, trans. Lenny Borger & Cynthia Schoch (Zeitgeist Films, 2000).

Mary Fairchild, *What is Palm Sunday?* (2018)
<<https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-palm-sunday-700775>> [accessed 25 May 2020].

Mildred Mortimer, 'African literature in French: sub-Saharan Africa during the colonial period', in *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, ed. by Edited by F. Abiola Irele and Simon Gikandi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 530 - 551

Museu de arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, *Ecce Homo ou Pilatos apresenta Cristo à multidão - Jacopo Tintoretto*
<<https://masp.org.br/acervo/obra/ecce-homo-ou-pilatos-apresenta-cristo-a-multidao>> [accessed 25 May 2020].

Oliver Davies, Ernest Amano Boateng and Others, *Ghana* (2020)
<<https://www.britannica.com/place/Ghana/Independence>> [accessed 27 May 2020].

Paul Raimond Daniels, 'The Birth of Tragedy: Transfiguration through Art', in *The New Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Tom Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 147 - 172

Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995).

Saidiya Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts', *Small Axe*, 12.2, (2008), 1 - 14, in *Project MUSE*
<muse.jhu.edu/article/241115> [accessed 14 May 2020].

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Kongo* (2020)
<<https://www.britannica.com/place/Kongo-historical-kingdom-Africa>> [accessed 16 May 2020].

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Simon Kimbangu* (2019)
<<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Simon-Kimbangu>> [accessed 17 May 2020].

Zeitgeist Films, *Lumumba: Press Kit* (2001) <<https://zeitgeistfilms.com/film/lumumba>> [accessed 16 May 2020].