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„Postcolonial Hauntings and Cold War Continuities: The
Symbolic Representations of Patrice Lumumba“

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Sara Michielsen

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Abstrakt:

In dieser Studie werden drei verschiedene Darstellungen des ersten Premierministers der Republik Kongo, Patrice Lumumba, nach seiner Ermordung untersucht. Genauer gesagt, untersucht diese Studie die Figur des Lumumba in drei verschiedenen Theaterstücken - "Une Saison au Congo" von Aime Césaire, "War Drums on the Equator" von Li Huang et al.'s und "Funnyhouse of a Negro" von Adrienne Kennedy - und die jeweiligen "spatial formats", in die sie im Einklang oder im Gegensatz zu Projekten des Kalten Krieges eingebettet sind. Das Hauptziel dieser Studie besteht darin, die bipolare Sichtweise der Kongokrise und das daraus resultierende reduktionistische Verständnis der antiimperialistischen Bewegungen, die nach der Ermordung Lumumbas entstanden, als rein antiwestlich zu hinterfragen. Die Analyse dieser Studie hat also gezeigt, dass die globalen Reaktionen auf Lumumbas Märtyrertod und die entsprechenden Neuinszenierungen antiimperialistischer Weltanschauungen in den verschiedenen Stücken nie ein einheitliches und singuläres Phänomen waren. Indem die Studie untersucht, wie die Figur Lumumbas in den drei Stücken in unterschiedliche "spatial formats" eingebettet wurde, erfasst sie die multipolare Konstellation konkurrierender Visionen und Ansprüche auf bestimmte Weltanschauungen im Zuge der Dekolonisierung während des Kalten Krieges, von denen die eurozentrische nur ein Teil ist. Nur durch eine solche Konzeptualisierung der Dekolonisierungsbewegungen in der Ära des Kalten Krieges lassen sich die dekonstruktiven Versuche der vielfältigen Projekte des Kalten Krieges identifizieren und verorten, was eine Erklärung dafür bietet, warum und wie die Figur Lumumbas überhaupt von widersprüchlichen Bewegungen in verschiedenen Projekten aufgegriffen wurde.

Abstract:

This study examines three different representations of the first Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba, in the aftermath of his assassination. More specifically, this study located the figure of Lumumba in three different plays of Aime Césaire's "Une Saison au Congo", Li Huang et al.'s "War Drums on the Equator", and Adrienne Kennedy's "Funnyhouse of a Negro" and the respective "spatial formats" in which they are embedded in line or contrast with Cold War projects. The main aim of this study is to challenge the bipolar vision of the Congo crisis, and the consequent reductionist understanding of the anti-imperialist movements which emerged after the assassination of Lumumba as purely anti-Western. What the analysis of this study has demonstrated then, is that the global responses to Lumumba's martyrdom and the according restagings of anti-imperialist world views in the different plays were never a unified and singular phenomenon. By examining how the figure of Lumumba was embedded in different "spatial formats" in the three plays, this study captured the multipolar constellation of competing visions and claims to certain world views in the wake of decolonisation during the Cold War, of which the Eurocentric one is only a part of it. Only through such conceptualisation of the decolonisation movements in the Cold War era can one identify and locate the deconstructive attempts of the multiple Cold War projects, which offers an explanation to why and how the figure of Lumumba has been taken up by contradictory movements in different projects in the first place.

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1. Introduction: Patrice Lumumba from Congolese Nationalist to Martyr of Anti-Imperialist Revolutions (1960-1961).

“History will one day have its say, but it will not be the history that Brussels, Paris, Washington, or the United Nations will teach, but that which they will teach in countries emancipated from colonialism and its puppets. Africa will write its own history, and it will be, to the north and the south of the Sahara, a history of glory and dignity.”

Patrice Lumumba, January 1961.¹

“Our mistake, the mistake we Africans made, was to have forgotten that the enemy never withdraws sincerely. He never understands. He capitulates, but he does not become converted. Our mistake is to have believed that the enemy had lost his combativeness and his harmfulness. If Lumumba is in the way, Lumumba disappears. Hesitation in murder has never characterised imperialism... let us be sure never to forget it: the fate of all of us is at stake in the Congo.”

Frantz Fanon, 1961.²

On 30 June 1960, in the Palais de la Nation in Leopoldville, the newly elected Congolese politicians gathered alongside former colonial representatives to celebrate the handover of the political power of the Belgian Congo to the new government the Republic of the Congo.³ Three speeches were held that day, which with their respective contents would

¹ Cited in De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. Translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby Hrsg. New York: Verso. Ludo De Witte states that it was while detained at Camp Hardy that (December 3, 1960 until January 17, 1961) that Lumumba wrote the letter to his wife Pauline, from which this excerpt is taken (p. 184-5).

² Fanon, F., 1988. Lumumba's Death: Could We Have Done Otherwise? . In: *Toward the African Revolution*. New York : Grove Press, pp. 196-198. First Published in 1964.

³ “The Congo” has changed names from the start of its colonisation: the Congo Free State (1885-1908), the Belgian Congo (1908-1960), the Republic of the Congo (1960-1971), Zaire (1971-1997), and is now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since 1997. The term “the Congo” will sometimes be used in this study to refer to the geographical area of “the Congo” irrespective of the names it was attributed at the time.

come to reflect the conflicting intensions behind the independence of the Republic of the Congo which led to the tragic developments of the Congo crisis. King Baudouin of Belgium, representing the Congo's colonial power, had its first say. In his speech, he described the independence of the Republic of the Congo as "the crowning of the work conceived by the genius of King Leopold II undertaken by him with firm courage and continued by Belgium with perseverance"⁴. King Baudouin referred to his great uncle, King Leopold II, who had not only ruled but had also owned the Congo – then known as the Congo Free State – as his personal territory.⁵

King Leopold II is remembered today as the man behind the atrocities committed during the twenty-three-year existence of the Congo Free State⁶, in which, according to Adam Hochschild's "King Leopold's Ghost", approximately eight million Congolese perished through forced labour and murder. Equally chilling were the methods practiced to satisfy his greed, which included floggings and amputations of victim's arms when they failed to procure adequate quotas of ivory and rubber⁷. The Congo Free State under Leopold's rule, was a veritable "hell-on-earth" and an inspiration for Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness".⁸ To call the Congo's independence "the crowning work" of King Leopold II therefore amounts to a total neglect of the colonial misdeeds and crimes committed under the king's rule.

But King Baudouin's invocation of the idyllic image of the colonial period also reflected Brussels' intention to uphold its political and economic presence in Central Africa, which became ever clearer at the end of his speech, where the paternalistic tone is ever so present:

"Don't compromise the future with hasty reforms, and don't replace the structures that Belgium hands over to you until you are sure you and do better. ... Don't be afraid to come to us. We will remain by your side, give you advice, train with you the technical experts and administrators you will need."⁹

⁴ Cited in De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso, p. 1.

⁵ For a critical and complete colonial history of the Congo see David Van Reybrouck's work. Van Reybrouck, D., 2010. *Congo: een geschiedenis*. Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij.

⁶ In 1908, the Congo Free State was abolished and replaced by the Belgian Congo which was controlled by the Belgian parliament until its independence in 1960. The idea behind this annexation was to 'reconstruct' the Congo by ensuring health and well-being of the indigenous population in the name of civilisation. While slavery was officially abolished and the cruelty with which the locals were treated was not as severe as during Leopold's rule, the practice of scientific racism was still very much present.

⁷ Hochschild, A., 1998. *King Leopold's ghost: a story of greed, terror, and heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

⁸ Conrad, J., 2016. *Heart of Darkness*. s.l.:Jester House Publishing.

⁹ Cited in De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso, p. 12.

After the Belgian king, it is the turn of Joseph Kasa Vubu, the Congo's first president, to speak. He gives a perfectly innocuous speech, glorifying the Belgian colonial system for having led the Congo's development and economic flourishing on the continent.¹⁰ In a way, Kasa Vubu conforms exactly to what the former Belgian authorities seem to expect from the new African elite: the newly established middle class will now take up the political positions of the newly formed government, even adhering to a European style of living, but behind the scenes, will allow the Europeans to continue pulling all the strings without fear of being contradicted.¹¹ The idyllic image of the colonial period evoked by both the king and the newly elected president contrasts painfully with the memory of the colonial misdeeds and the crimes engraved in the collective consciousness of the Congolese.

Immediately after Kasa Vubu's words, the president of the House of Representatives, Joseph Kasongo, invites Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba to speak. Baudouin and the Belgian Prime minister Gaston Eyskens are disconcerted.¹² The prime minister does not address himself to his former authorities, but to "Congolese men and women, fighters for independence, who are today victorious".¹³ Talking directly to the people over the heads of the assembled diplomatic corps, he explains that the granting of independence "is not a generous gift offered by Brussels", as King Baudouin and Kasa Vubu maintained.¹⁴ Independence has been proclaimed in agreement with Belgium, but "no Congolese worthy of the name can ever forget that it is by struggle that we have won [our independence], a struggle waged each and every day, a passionate idealistic struggle, a struggle in which no effort, privation, suffering, or drop of our blood was spared".¹⁵

With no disguise, Lumumba describes the colonial system that Baudouin and Kasa Vubu have glorified and condemns it as "the humiliating slavery that was imposed on us by force".¹⁶ Almost in complete contrast with the previous two speeches, Lumumba goes on:

"We have known sarcasm and insults, endured blows morning, noon and night, because we were "niggers". Who will forget that a Black was addressed in the familiar *tu*, not as a friend,

¹⁰ Nzongola-Ntalaja, G., 2014. *Patrice Lumumba*. Athens OH: Ohio University Press.

¹¹ Tödt, D., 2021. *The Lumumba Generation: African Bourgeoisie and Colonial Distinction in the Belgian Congo*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

¹² In his research on "the assassination of Lumumba", Ludo De Witte was able to reveal that the programme made no mention of a third speech and the attendees were not provided with an advance copy of Lumumba's text, which explains the surprised reaction of the king and the president.

¹³ Ibid, p. 12.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 12.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 13.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 13.

but because the polite *vous* was reserved for Whites only? We have seen our lands despoiled under the terms of what was supposedly the law of the land but which only recognised the right of the strongest. We have seen that this law was quite different for a White than for a Black: accommodating for the former, cruel and inhuman for the latter. We have seen the terrible suffering of those banished to remote regions because of their political opinions or religious beliefs; exiled within their own country, their fate was truly worse than death itself.... And, finally, who can forget the volleys of gunfire in which so many of our brothers perished, the cells where the authorities threw those who would not submit to a rule where justice meant oppression and exploitation.”¹⁷

Lumumba’s speech was broadcasted over the radio in the Congo, and it made international headlines the next morning¹⁸. Until today, it is remembered as the first moment of Congolese independence, the first time that Lumumba as Prime Minister had the authority to address the nation to break Belgium’s colonial taboo. But if Lumumba’s breaking of the colonial taboo is understood as the symbolic moment of the Congo’s decolonisation, the three speeches altogether, that of the king Baudouin, the President Kasa Vubu, and the Prime Minister Lumumba, and their clashing understandings of the decolonisation of the Congo should be understood as the first moment which would have hinted towards the tragic development of the Congo crisis.¹⁹ Both the neo-colonial intensions of Brussels, which are to be deduced from Baudouin’s paternalistic speech, and the politically ambiguous position taken up by the new African elite, which Kasa Vubu clearly articulates in his own glorification of the Belgian colonial system, have found themselves to serve as strong forces countering the nationalist project Lumumba had for the newly independent Republic of the Congo. The next part of this introduction will therefore demonstrate that while Lumumba’s speech was effectively seen, and is still remembered as, the first moment of Congolese independence, it ultimately also became the nail in his own coffin.

1.1. The Congo Crisis and the Assassination of Lumumba (1960-1961).

Nineteen-sixty is commonly referred to as the “Year of Africa”, as sixteen African nations, gained their independence from their European

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 13.

¹⁸ Omasombo Tshonda, J. & Verhaegen, B., 1998. *Patrice Lumumba: jeunesse et apprentissage politique*. Paris: L’Harmattan.

¹⁹ Zeilig, L., 2015. *Lumumba: Africa’s lost leader*. London: Haus Publishing.

colonisers, including the Congo²⁰. In May 1960, Patrice Lumumba, as the leader of the Congolese National Movement (MNC), was democratically elected as prime minister alongside the veteran Congolese nationalist Joseph Kasu Vubu, who was appointed as president of the first government of the newly independent Republic of the Congo.²¹

According to Ludo De Witte, first Congolese government “represented the culmination of the work of the nationalist movement”²². Lumumba’s government intended to claim its rightful independence immediately with the intention to eradicate all former colonial institutionalisations. With this, Ludo De Witte argues that “he [Lumumba] hoped to persuade the Congolese peoples to build a unified nation in a democratic state within the rule of law under a coalition government”²³. Lumumba’s national-democratic programme, however, went against the Brussels interest of holding on to its advantageous position, now in a newly independent Congo.

In fact, the newly established coalition government only lasted a week. On July 11, 1960, the mineral-rich state of Katanga, led by Moïse Tschombe, announced its plans to secede, and the following month, on August 8, the diamond-rich state of Kasai, led by Albert Kalonji, followed Tschombe’s lead.²⁴ Being afraid to lose control over Katanga with Lumumba’s nationalistic project of the newly independent republic, the secessions were encouraged, and even supported by Western states.²⁵ More so, Washington, Brussels, and the UN used such political upheaval to make the claim that Lumumba was unable to hold together the Congo’s fragile coalition government.²⁶ Meanwhile, an “unfit” Lumumba left open the possibility that

²⁰ Zeilig, L., 2015. *Lumumba: Africa's lost leader*. London: Haus Publishing.

²¹ Ayeah, E. M., 2021. Democratic Patterns in Sub-Saharan African States Today. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 9(8), pp. 1068-1086.

²² De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso, p. 120.

²³ Ibid, p. 120.

²⁴ Through his archival research, De Witte (2001) was in fact able to demonstrate how Brussels not only supported the Katangese and later Kasai’s secession but made it legally possible for Tschombe to form its own provincial government by unitarily modifying the provisional Congolese constitution. Professor Van Bilsen called this a “legal coup d’état”.

²⁵ The mineral rich province of Katanga produced 60% of total Congolese revenue. The Congolese economy was reliant on Katanga’s resources under control of the Belgian company of the Union Minière du Haut Katanga. The province of Katanga was also the world’s leading producer of uranium at the time, upon which also the U.S. was dependent upon and used the resources for the bombs dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The mine’s history has been captured by Susan Williams’ book. Williams, S. A., 2016. *Spies in the Congo: the race for the ore that built the atomic bomb*. London: Hurst & Company.

²⁶ De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso.

Washington, Brussels, and the UN could propose a more favourable leader, one whose political and economic worldview more closely resembles the neo-colonial interest of the West.²⁷ But as his speech at the independence ceremony confirmed, Lumumba took its right to independence without any neo-colonial interference seriously. Lumumba was clearly aware that the end of colonisation in no way meant the end of the struggle: “We will make sure that our country’s land truly benefits its children. We will review all previous laws, and make new ones which will be just and noble.”²⁸ It was clear that this nationalist discourse was much more than simple electoral rhetoric; it would become the founding stone of his very policy.

Indeed, during the ten weeks that he remained in office as prime minister, Lumumba made every effort to restore any kind of order that Brussels argued was required of an independent state in the wake of the Katangese secession. In July 1960, Lumumba sought and received UN military assistance to restrain the secessionist Katangese forces, now also backed by Belgian military forces, but such assistance were only used to offer security in the areas under threat of the newly developed conflict.²⁹ Lumumba later requested direct military aid from the U.S.. Secretary of State Christian Herter made promises of

²⁷ William Mountz’s article “The Congo Crisis: A Reexamination” demonstrates how the Kennedy administration continued to plot against Lumumba in order to have Cyrille Adoula elected as prime minister in August 1961. See Ryan Irwin’s article on “Sovereignty in the Congo Crisis” for a global overview of the respective intentions of Brussels, Washington, and the UN behind the decolonisation of the Congo. For a more detailed analysis on the role of the UN specifically, see Alanna O’Malley’s book on “The Diplomacy of Decolonisation”, and chapter “Fighting over Katanga” more specifically. For a more detailed analysis on the economic interest of Brussels in the secession of Katanga, see Olivier Boehme’s work on “the Involvement of the Belgian Central Bank in the Katangan Secession”.

²⁸ De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso, p.16.

²⁹ At the arrival of U.N. troops, Lumumba and Secretary General Hammarskjöld were in disagreement about the nature of the U.N. intervention. Lumumba wanted to use the U.N. troops to suppress the new Katangese forces, but Secretary General Hammarskjöld refused by arguing that the secession of Katanga was an internal Congolese matter. Lumumba therefore accused the UN of siding with Tshombe and foreign mining companies. Until today, the role of Hammarskjöld is debated both within and outside of academia. While many have considered him as having set norms for his job, in his neutral and balanced approach to the crisis, other accused him of acting as an instrument of Western imperialism.

Rognoni, M. S., 2014. Dag Hammarskjöld and the Congo crisis, 1960–1961. In: *Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 193–215.

Lipse, R., 2013. *Hammarskjöld: a life*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

economic aid, but nothing that Lumumba could use in the short-term to restore order in Katanga.³⁰

United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld flew to the Congo to negotiate for peace but decided to meet first with Katanga secessionist leader Tschombe instead.³¹ By the end of July, Lumumba had become frustrated with both the UN and with U.S. policy, which he regarded as impeding with nationalist intensions for the newly independent Congo.³² On 31 July, after he concluded that neither the UN nor any Western country seemed willing to satisfy his requests, Lumumba turned to the Soviet Union for logistical and military help.³³

By then, Lumumba had clearly become an embodiment of a Cold War anxiety against which the West rationalised its intervention in the Congo crisis.³⁴ In August, Belgian, U.S., and UN officials began colluding to remove Lumumba from the office as prime minister, through what was known as “operation Barracuda”.³⁵ In mid-August, the CIA Station Officer in the Congo cabled Washington that Lumumba was involved in a “classic Communist effort takeover government”.³⁶ The threat was communicated: without intervention, Lumumba would become “another Castro” and was therefore to be considered a danger to U.S. foreign policy goals.³⁷ On 25th of August 1960, CIA director Allen Dulles met with President Eisenhower and his top national security advisors at a meeting of the Special Group, the National Security Council subcommittee³⁸. The CIA presented possible political solutions for removing Lumumba from office.³⁹ The meeting ended with an agreement by the Special Group that “planning for the Congo would not

³⁰ Iandolo, A., 2014. Imbalance of Power: The Soviet Union in the Congo Crisis, 1960-1961. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 16(2), p. 32-55.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Although Lumumba’s turn to the Soviet Union was an act of last resort, Alessandro Iandolo’s research demonstrates that Lumumba had already established positive relations with the USSR well before his appeal. In fact, the USSR strongly supported Congo’s central government and the Soviet government provided food supplies and vehicles through the UNOC in the month before Lumumba asked the Soviet Union for military assistance.

³⁴ Zeilig, L., 2015. *Lumumba: Africa's lost leader*. London: Haus Publishing.

³⁵ De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A.

Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso.

³⁶ Turner, T., 2007. *The Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth, and Reality*. New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, p. 32.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Senate, U. S., 1975. *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders: An Interim Report of the Select Committee to study Governmental Operations with respect to Intelligence Activities*, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office .

³⁹ Ibid.

necessarily rule out our 'consideration' of any particular kind of activity which might contribute to getting rid of Lumumba".⁴⁰

UN leaders, including UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld worked behind the scenes to facilitate Lumumba's coup.⁴¹ On September 14, 1960, Lumumba was removed through a coup orchestrated by Congo's President, Joseph Kasavubu, and Colonel Mobutu Sese Seko, with the aid of the United Nations forces, whose actions in physically preventing Lumumba from accessing the state radio station in Leopoldville effectively led to the coup's success.⁴² Lumumba was held under house arrest, guarded by UN troops, from September until December, at which time he escaped.⁴³ Shortly after his escape, he was captured and turned over to Moïse Tshombe. On the 17 January 1961, Lumumba and his two associates, Joseph Okito and Maurice Mpolo, were assassinated and later buried near Elisabethville by a Katangan firing squad, under supervision and in presence of Belgian officials.⁴⁴ A few days later, three Belgian officials dug up the corpses, cut them into pieces and dissolved them in a barrel of sulphuric acid so to erase any trace that connects the disappearance of the leaders back to the Katangese and Belgian officials, and more importantly to Kasavubu himself, who had now taken up the central position in the Congolese government.⁴⁵ But such cover-up was of no long duration. As soon as the truth about the disappearance of Lumumba and his associates came out, a global uproar emerged in sympathy with the "Congolese struggle" in which the assassination of Lumumba was now seen as the fatal testimony of Cold War imperialism and neo-colonialism.⁴⁶ Lumumba

⁴⁰ Hickner, E. J., 2011. *"History will one day have its say": Patrice Lumumba and the Black Freedom Movement*. West Lafayette, Indiana: PhD Thesis, Purdue University Graduate School, p. 9

⁴¹ De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Until recently, the role of Belgian officials in the assassination of Lumumba has been a point of contestation both within and outside academia. A great number of studies have now brought light to important clarifications on the role of Belgian officials and the various actors involved in the political and physical elimination of Patrice Lumumba. But while Belgium's King Philippe has in January 2020 expressed his 'deepest regrets' for the harm done during Belgian colonial rule in DR Congo, to this day, there is still no one that has legally been set accountable for the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and his associates. See following works for elaboration on assassination:

De Vos, L., Gérard-Libois, J. & Raxhon, P., 2005. *Les secrets de l'affaire Lumumba*. Bruxelles: Éditions Racine.

Gerard, E. & Kuklick, B., 2015. *Death in the Congo: murdering Patrice Lumumba*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

⁴⁵ Van Hoyweghen, T. T. S. & Smis, S., 2002. State Failure in the Congo: Perceptions & Realities. *Review of African Political Economy*, Issue 93, pp. 379-388.

⁴⁶ The "Congolese struggle" for independence, as Daniel Todt has demonstrated in his book "The Lumumba Generation", was never a homogeneous one as the Congo's path

became a shorthand reference to the perils of “white betrayal”, resonating with anti-colonial struggles around the world.⁴⁷ “A dead Lumumba [had] become significantly more powerful than a live Lumumba”, as Jawaharlal Nehru once stated in an article in the New York Times.⁴⁸

1.2. The “Lumumba Phenomenon”.

On February 13, almost a month after the assassination, Interior Minister Munongo made an announcement that Lumumba and his two associates escaped prison and had fallen into the hands of bush villagers who had immediately killed him.⁴⁹ Given the circumstances of their imprisonment, and the events that lead to Kasa Vubu’s coup d’état, Munongo’s announcement was almost immediately disproved; the announcement of the death of Lumumba and his associates resulted in explosions of popular anger around the world, which rightly predicted the support of Brussels and Washington in the political and physical elimination of the Prime Minister.⁵⁰ Demonstrations were organised in Belgrade, Cairo, London, Vienna, Warsaw, Moscow and New Delhi. In the Indian capital, protesters marched into the Belgian Embassy where they tore a photograph of King Baudouin from the wall⁵¹. In Belgrade, hundreds of demonstrators forced their way through police barricades to the Belgian Embassy.⁵² In Warsaw, demonstrators forced their way into the Belgian embassy where a secretary and a diplomat were manhandled.⁵³ Belgian national newspapers described the assault on the building by thousands of protesters who put Lumumba’s portrait in the place of Baudouin’s before setting fire to the edifice.⁵⁴ In Moscow, more than 5,000 demonstrators, mainly African and Asians, tried unsuccessfully to attack the Belgian Embassy.⁵⁵ The United States and the United Nations were also targeted.

to independence was viewed differently within the different social classes within the Congolese society. It is therefore important to note that the global uproar which emerged after the death of Lumumba associated itself mainly with “the Lumumba generation’s” struggle for independence, which was not shared among all Congolese.

⁴⁷ Peck, R., 2010. *Stolen Images: Four Films*. translated by Catherine Temerson ed. New York: Seven Stories, p. 16.

⁴⁸ Cited in De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso, p. 89.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Peck, R., 2010. *Stolen Images: Four Films*. translated by Catherine Temerson ed. New York: Seven Stories, p. 16.

⁵¹ De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 54.

Several heads of state and governments aligned themselves with this massive wave of indignation. According to Moscow, the assassination was “an international crime, incompatible with the United Nations Charter”⁵⁶. A spokesman for the French foreign minister called the murder “a violation of basic human rights”.⁵⁷ In China, Mao Zedong held a massive rally and demonstration in Tiananmen Square in support of the Congolese people against U.S.-Belgian imperialist armed aggression.⁵⁸ More so, the editor of the Egyptian daily *Al Abram*, demanded the resignation of UN Secretary, General Hammarskjold, who “has lost the confidence of all African countries”.⁵⁹ A telegram from the Moroccan king Mohammad V to “H” declared: “This crime against African nationalism is a terrible blow to the prestige of the United Nations and to the confidence recently demonstrated in it by independent states”.⁶⁰ And in a broadcast speech, Ghanaian president Nkrumah declared that

“Three of our brother freedom fighters have been done to death... because the United Nations, whom Patrice Lumumba himself as Prime Minister had invited to the Congo to preserve law and order, not only failed to maintain that law and order, but also denied to the lawful Government of the Congo all other means of self-protection. [...]”⁶¹

Clearly, the Congo crisis, which UN Secretary, General Hammarskjold, continuously reduced to an internal Congolese matter, had revealed itself to be a global one after the news about the assassination of Lumumba resonated with anti-colonial struggles around the world. Patrice Lumumba once praised for his anti-colonial and nationalistic ideas for the newly independent republic of the Congo had now become a martyr of anti-imperialist movements around the world. The global scale which defined such processes will be referred throughout this study as the “Lumumba phenomenon”.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 56

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

⁵⁸ Cook, A. C., 2012. Third World Maoism. Dans: T. Cheek, éd. *A Critical Introduction to Mao*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 288-312.

⁵⁹ Cited in De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso, p. 57.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 57.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 57.

2. Conceptual Framework: The “Lumumba Phenomenon” and the Deconstruction of Emerging Worlds

In her account of “locating the transnational in the Cold War”, Penny Von Eschen then aims to capture the very global resonance of the “Lumumba phenomenon” in its complexity, and sometimes contradictions. She goes on to argue that the responses of Lumumba’s martyrdom indicate a “transnational democratic and oppositional imagination” that had escaped ‘the superpower struggle’ of the era.⁶² Many scholars have in fact come to see Lumumba’s tragic death as symbolising the intervention of superpower rivalries in African decolonisation.⁶³

Accordingly, the nature of the “superpower struggle” that defined the Congo crisis was then clearly one over hard power.⁶⁴ The Cold War narrative in which Lumumba was casted as a “communist”, or at the very least “a potential target of the Soviet Union”, was in fact used by Western neo-colonial powers and the Congolese elite to resist the nationalist movement under Lumumba’s party.⁶⁵ Lumumba was

⁶² Von Eschen, P. M., 2013. Locating the Transnational in the Cold War. Dans: R. Immerman & P. Goedde, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P. 464.

⁶³ Irwin, R. M., 2015. Sovereignty in the Congo Crisis. Dans: J. Leslie & E. Leake, eds. *Decolonisation and the Cold War: negotiating independence*. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 203-218.
Mazov, S., 2010. *A Distant Front in the Cold War: the USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956-1964*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.

Namikas, L., 2013. *Battleground Africa: Cold War in the Congo, 1960-1965*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.

Schmidt, E., 2013. *Foreign Intervention in Africa: from the Cold War to the war on terror*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁶⁴ This study will follow Joseph S. Nye’s definition of hard and soft power. In general, Nye defines power as “the ability to affect others to get the outcomes one wants”(p.61). Hard power is then wielded through inducements or threats while soft power is based on attraction and emulation and “associated with intangible power resources such as culture ideology, and institutions”.(p. 63)

Nye, J. S., 2004. *Soft Power: the means of succes in world politics*. New York: PublicAffairs.

⁶⁵ This statement testifies to another important argument about the nature of the neo-colonial intensions of Brussels, and connection between the new Congolese elite and the colonial powers which played a major role both in the Congo crisis but also in the decolonisation of the Congo itself. Daniel Tödt’s work on the role of the Congolese

casted as a “communist” well before his appeal to the Soviet Union as Brussels justified its military presence in Katanga to save “the oasis of peace” from the “communist threat” in Leopoldville under Lumumba’s lead.⁶⁶ Later in September 1960, Mobutu also framed his military coup as a means to break the political impasse between President Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba’s “radical left-wing intensions”, which ultimately led him to expel the Soviet advisors in the republic and established a new government under his own control.⁶⁷ Washington also used such Cold War narrative in their advantage. In their attempt to politically remove Lumumba from the Congolese government, the CIA Station Officer in the Congo cabled Washington that Lumumba was involved in a “classic communist effort takeover government”, and established the “Baracuda mission” accordingly.⁶⁸ The Congo crisis ultimately became what Ludo De Witte has called a “war of words” in which Washington, Brussels and the Congolese elite accused Moscow of having a significant influence in central Africa.⁶⁹

But if Ludo De Witte’s “war of words” operated along and through struggles over hard power during the Congo crisis, the internationalism of the “Lumumba phenomenon” itself did not seem to be spared of such discourse, albeit operating along the lines of soft power. That is to say, the assassination of Lumumba and the political developments that led to this tragic event seem to have testified to the “imperialist” intensions behind the Western interventions in the Congo crisis which, in turn, served as means for Cold War rivalries to further entrench their own universalising projects. In his archival work, Ludo De Witte was in fact able to find proof that Khrushchev himself told the US ambassador in Moscow off the record that “he was sorry for him [Lumumba] as a person when he was in prison but that his imprisonment actually served Soviet interests”.⁷⁰ The Soviet Union, accordingly, glorified Lumumba’s martyrdom, making him the symbol of anti-imperialism under Khrushchev’s leadership and return to Marxist-Leninist values.⁷¹ Shortly after the assassination, the People’s

elite of the evolves is therefore crucial this study’s understanding of the nature of the neo-colonial power of Brussels.

⁶⁶ De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso, p.34.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.28.

⁶⁸ Turner, T., 2007. *The Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth, and Reality*. New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, p. 32.

⁶⁹ De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso, p. xvi.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. xvi.

⁷¹ Kanet, R. E., 2010. The Soviet Union and the Third World from Khrushchev to Gorbachev: the place of the Third World in evolving Soviet global strategy. Dans: R. E. Kanet, éd. *The Soviet Union, Easter Europe, and the Third World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-23

Friendship University in Moscow was renamed as “Patrice Lumumba People’s University”. And while the university was conceived as a powerful symbol of Moscow’s solidarity with the Third World, it was often criticised by the students themselves for its Third World concept, recruitment, and training policies.⁷² As Constantin Katsakioris has retrieved in his research on the “Lumumba University in Moscow”, the university was depicted as “a centre of Marxist-Leninist indoctrination”, and “as a breeding ground for revolutionaries and territories”, before after its renaming.⁷³

On the other side of the Iron Curtain, the figure of Lumumba as a martyr of anti-imperialism was also not spared from such universalising projects entrenched by and through Cold War rivalries. Jamie Thicker, by example, demonstrates in his thesis how Black Freedom Movements in the U.S. represented Lumumba as the embodiment certain Cold War universalising projects to further endorse the values of the respective movements. The Che-Lumumba Club, by example, was founded in 1968 by black activist, Angela Davis, as a militant of the Communist party in Los Angeles “committed to the task of rendering Marxist-Leninism relevant to black people”.⁷⁴ By including Lumumba’s name with Che Guevara’s in the Che-Lumumba’s Club, Davis argued that Lumumba embodied the club’s principles-militancy and a commitment to Marxism-Leninism.⁷⁵ The figure of Lumumba was then also associated with a commitment to a communist ideology in the Black Panther News Paper released earlier in 1966. Leigh Renee Raiford, writing on the use of photography in African American social movements, explains that, “[The Black Panther] banner utilised cut-and-paste iconic headshots of three martyred Third World liberators (Patrice Lumumba, Ho Chi Minh, and Che Guevara) next to the section’s title superimposed over the silhouette of a Kalashnikov rifle, the hardware of the Communist Bloc”.⁷⁶ Leigh Raiford goes on to assume that the image suggested that all three leaders were Communist in ideology, that they had taken up arms for their respective anti-colonial struggles, and that they represented their respective continents (Africa, Asia, Latin America).⁷⁷

⁷²Katsakioris, C., 2019. The Lumumba University in Moscow: higher education for a Soviet-Third World Alliance, 1960-91. *Journal of Global History*, 14(2), pp. 281-300.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 283.

⁷⁴ Hickner, E. J., 2011. *"History will one day have its say": Patrice Lumumba and the Black Freedom Movement*. West Lafayette, Indiana: PhD Thesis, Purdue University Graduate School, p. 299.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Cited in Ibid. p. 295.

⁷⁷ Raiford, L. R., 2003. *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare?: History, Memory, and the Photography of Twentieth-Century African American Social Movements*, Yale University: Ph.D.

Clearly, the different movements which took shape through the “Lumumba phenomenon” were not all spared from Cold War universalising projects. The different iconisations of Lumumba as a martyr of anti-imperialism, in other words, were not always imagined and constructed in clear opposition and therefore isolation from Cold War superpower struggles. In fact, the examples mentioned above demonstrate that some movements and their respective representations of Lumumba took shape alongside and through rhetorics of Cold War universalising projects which, ironically, were also used to justify the political and physical elimination of Lumumba in the first place. That is to say that De Witte’s “war of words” not only characterised the tragic developments of the Congo crisis, but also continued to influence, if not, define the development of the different movements which emerged as a response of the assassination of Lumumba. By stating that the responses of Lumumba’s martyrdom indicate “a transnational democratic and oppositional imagination that had escaped the superpower struggle of the era” would therefore lead to ignoring the significant role of Cold War discourses within the Congo crisis itself and its continuing influence on the “Lumumba phenomenon” which emerged as a reaction to the assassination of Lumumba.⁷⁸

But to disregard Von Eschen’s argument would also lead to another wrong account of defining the emergence of the “Lumumba phenomenon” solely along the lines of such Cold War discourse, however. Such understanding of the “Lumumba phenomenon” would blind one to the “oppositional” movements which are overshadowed by such meta narratives of the Cold War in the first place. In a way, one could read Von Eschen’s argument as a methodology in itself; to define the different iconisations of Lumumba in the aftermath of his assassination who claimed to retrieve his “original” values which he endorsed in his project of the independence of the republic of the Congo from the Cold War constructions of the figure of Lumumba himself, during, but also after his assassination. Clearly, to examine the constructions of the figure of Lumumba in the aftermath of his assassination through a Cold War “lens” leads to a conceptual trap, where any representation of Lumumba is to be understood as either constructed against or through Cold War universalising projects. To employ a Cold War “lens” to examine the development of the “Lumumba phenomenon” therefore generates what Pedro Monaville identifies as “a hierarchy of visibility and importance” that filters certain actors and movements according to the ideological nature of

⁷⁸ Von Eschen, P. M., 2013. Locating the Transnational in the Cold War. Dans: R. Immerman & P. Goedde, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P. 464.

their respective representations of Lumumba.⁷⁹ In addition, it does not offer the very tools to answer the fundamental question of why and how the figure of Lumumba has been taken up by contradicting movements in rivalising Cold War projects in the first place.

2.1. Capturing the Multiplicity of Cold War Logics through Spatial Semantics

It is here that this study will turn to Middell and Marung's take on the spatial turn in the study of globalisation in order to examine how and why the figure of Lumumba has been taken up by contradicting movements in rivalising Cold War projects, always in relation with Lumumba's nationalist intentions.⁸⁰ More specifically, Middell and Marung suggest an approach to the study of globalisation in which the current and historical expanding connectedness of the world is/was not free of conflict, but on the contrary, consist of competing visions of world orders, which all emphasise on certain "spatial formats".⁸¹ Such "spatial formats" are then understood as imaginings of and claims to societal organisations which can in turn be institutionalised into "spatial orders".⁸² Globalisation, as such, is characterised by the continuous process of respatialisation, in which spatial formats are continuously being challenged by networks and flows that make existing spatial configurations more porous. Accordingly, the very act of insisting or adapting such spatial formats allow individuals, organisations, or national entities to continue profiting from established modes of rule, authority or dominance.⁸³ By focusing on the overlapping struggles and resistance movements, Marung and Middell's conceptualisation of globalisation then enables us to discern "the relationality of spatial formats as well as the conflicting ways of their production in the context of spatial order in transition".⁸⁴

The Congo crisis, as such, can be read as a global moment along the lines of Middell and Marung's take on a spatial turn in the study of globalisation. More specifically, the beginning of the crisis can be examined as a struggle over the nature of the spatial configuration of the newly established nation-state of the Republic of the Congo. The radical nationalist intentions of the MNC under Lumumba's leadership

⁷⁹ Monaville, P., 2019. The political life of the dead Lumumba: Cold War histories and the Congolese student left. *Journal of the International African Institute*, Volume 89, p. 17.

⁸⁰ Middell, M. & Marung, S., 2019. The Respatialization of the World as one of the Driving Dialectics under the Global Condition. Dans: M. Middell & S. Marung, eds. *Spatial Formats under the Global Condition*. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, pp. 1-14.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

and its adherence to what Lumumba referred to as “positive neutralism” clearly clashed with Belgian projects of continuing influence in Central Africa, and equally important, the intensions of the newly formed Congolese social class of the “evolues” to continue to benefit from the former colonial system.⁸⁵ That is to say that the above mentioned actors not only had conflicting understandings of the decolonisation of the Congo, but more importantly, they had clashing understandings of the newly independent state of the Congo as a “spatial format”, according to Middell and Marung’s jargon. While Lumumba’s government promoted an independent nation-state detached from any former colonial influence, Belgian authorities envisioned the Congo as pseudo-colony, although under the name of a nation-state, in which the political and economic relations with Belgium were kept untouched. Both conceptualisations of the Congo as a spatial format, in turn, were shaped by the financial flows underwritten by the abundance of primary sources in the Congo, and in the Katangese province more specifically, and the political networks between the Congolese elite and Belgian authorities which took shape accordingly. The Congo crisis can therefore be understood as a prime example of Middell and Marung’s dialectical understanding of globalisation processes, always taking shape between networks and flows, and changing spatial formats.

If the beginning of the Congo crisis (1960-1961) can be understood as a global moment along Middell and Marung’s analytical concepts, the “Lumumba phenomenon” can only be understood as a continuation of such overlapping struggle over spatial formats, although one that goes beyond that of the Republic of the Congo as a newly independent nation state. That is to say that the changing remembrance and glorification of Lumumba first as a radical nationalist, and later as a martyr of anti-imperialism is to be understood along the lines of a changing struggle over spatial formats, in which other spatial formats are being (re)claimed through supporting Lumumba’s nationalist claim. The “Lumumba phenomenon”, accordingly, will be understood throughout this study as a moment of multiple, overlapping, and sometimes even conflicting claims of spatial formats in which Lumumba’s own claim of the independence of the Republic of the Congo becomes secondary in those respective claims. The

⁸⁵ in an interview to a France-Soir correspondent Lumumba declares:
 “We are neither Communists, Catholics nor socialists. We are African nationalists. We reserve the right to choose our friends in accordance with the principle of positive neutrality.” Lumumba, P., 1960. *Marxism and Anti-Imperialism in Africa*. [En ligne]
 Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/lumumba/index.htm>
 [Accès le 31 July 2022].

argument will follow that only understood as such, one can discern the relationality of the respective spatial formats, and therefore answer the fundamental question of how and why the figure of Lumumba has been taken up by contradicting movements in rivalising Cold War projects.

With this in mind, this study will focus on the cultural sense of such struggle in the field of theatre by examining how different spatial formats, and the imaginative projections they entail, were literally and figuratively restaged through the iconisation of Lumumba in three different plays: that of Martinican poet and politician Aimé Césaire's "Une Saison au Congo" (1973), the Chinese propaganda play "War Drums on the Equator" (1965) written by Li Huang and his collaborators, and African American playwright Adrienne Kennedy's "Funnyhouse of a Negro" (1964). The three plays portray Lumumba in different socio-political contexts and through different global imaginations, which can all be read as challenges to and reiterations of certain spatial formats which characterised the spatial condition of the time. The different spatial formats present in the respective plays are that of the French "nation-empire", Mao's Third Worldism, and African-American Third Worldism. The analysis of this study will then conclude that the world imaginings in the three different plays under the production of the before-mentioned spatial formats were indeed staged from an anti-imperialist and anti-western point of view. The differences, complexities, and often times contradictions between the production of those spatial formats staged in the three different plays are only an indication of the fact that the global responses to Lumumba's martyrdom were never a unified nor a singular phenomenon.

This argument can in turn be understood as an indication of Pieter Vanhove's broader argument of his work on "Rethinking Universality in the Long Cold War" in which he argues that "world-making is not a purely Western prerogative".⁸⁶ Clearly, for centuries, the story of Eurocentric and patriarchal "world-making" was the most powerful one, of which the Congo crisis is but only one consequence thereof. As the main argument of postcolonial critique goes, such Eurocentric "claims to universality" indeed laid the ideological framework for violent colonial exploitation as well as other forms of inequalities. But while such forms of critique rightfully unravel the discursive tools that were used to justify and perpetuate such forms of discrimination, one may start to wonder if the claim to universality is

⁸⁶ Vanhove, P., 2022. *World Literature after Empire: Rethinking Universality in the Long Cold War*. 1st Edition éd. Milton: Taylor&Francis Group, p. 5.

only a Eurocentric one when taking into account the different, and often times contradictory responses of Lumumba's martyrdom. According to Pieter Vanhove, the wake of decolonisation during the Cold War was in fact characterised by a multipolar constellation of competing visions and claims to universality, and consequently also 'spatial formats'. As far as the "Lumumba phenomenon" goes, one can clearly agree with Vanhove's statement that "it was precisely this overt exclusion [Eurocentric philosophical universality] that pushed historically marginalised subjectivities into writing their own [...] conceptions of universal culture".⁸⁷ The dominance of the Eurocentric "world-making", in other words, pushed historically marginalised subjectivities into imagining and claiming alternative worlds.

As such, the "imperialist" intensions behind the Western interventions in the Congo crisis which led to the assassination of Lumumba pushed subjects marginalised by such forms of expansionism to imagine and claim alternative worlds. Aime Cesaire's Negritude movement, Mao's Third Worldism, and Adrienne Kennedy's critique to the Black Arts Movement will in this regard all be understood as claiming alternative "spatial formats" that emerged as a response to what Pieter Vanhove identifies as the "Eurocentric philosophical universality" which characterised the development of the Congo crisis. Such philosophical conceptions were then clearly shaped alongside the ideological divide of the Cold War. Given the two sides different approaches to the colonial question, many marginalised subjectivities, communities, or newly claimed national entities aligned themselves with the leading forces of the socialist world in an effort to restage a universality from a non-Western, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist perspective. But as previously stated, if there is anything that the global responses to Lumumba's martyrdom testify to, is that the "restaging of universality" from an anti-imperialist point of view was never a unified and singular phenomenon. It is this very argument, which follows that of Pieter Vanhove's aim to complement our one-sided understanding of the universal (that is the Eurocentric one), which will serve as the very backbone of this study in its aim to capture complexity and sometimes contradictory nature of the transnational decolonial movements in the Cold War era and their respective representation of Lumumba.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.5.

3. Methodology on Identifying Cold War “Global Imaginings” through the Figure of Lumumba

As previously mentioned, in order to answer the overall question of how and why the figure of Lumumba has been taken up by contradicting movements in different and sometimes rivalising Cold War projects, this study will locate the different figures of Lumumba staged in the three different plays of Aime Césaire’s “Une Saison au Congo”(1966), Li Huang and its collaborators’ “War Drums on the Equator”(1965) and Adrienne Kennedy’s “Funnyhouse of a Negro” (1964), and in the respective spatial formats which are staged in the plays. All three plays foreground the figure of Lumumba, either directly or implicitly. Aimé Césaire then stages a historical chronicle of Lumumba’s politically active life, while Li Huang and his collaborators only portray the circumstances of Lumumba’s murder by focusing their play on a fictitious story of a Congolese working family working for the U.N. and American soldiers in the newly independent Congo. Adrienne Kennedy then uses the figure of Lumumba in her own creation, by making him represent the embodiment of the father of her protagonist, without making any reference to the historical figure of Lumumba himself, nor the conditions of his murder.

All three plays are written only years after the assassination, between 1964 and 1966. Given the similar timing of the release of the plays, the choice of the selection of the plays is not only a geographical one but also an epistemological one. The three plays are not just disparately located in the socio-political sense of the world – French (nation-)empire, Mao’s China, and Afro-America. They also, and perhaps most importantly, are embedded in the socio-cultural production of spatial formats, and the imaginative projections they entail during the Cold War. The idea here is that together, these more or less “peripheral” plays and the respective spatial formats they embed pinpoint the weak spots of our popular understanding of the global history of the Cold War. They all offer up alternative, historically situated visions of a different world order in an era that was overshadowed by the universalising projects of the two competing blocs. This study will therefore also make the implicit claim that historical fiction, and theatre more specifically, also offers an important

vehicle for recovering the complex, multiple global histories engendered or transformed by the cold war.

3.1. Methods for Collecting Material

It is then important to mention the procedure of the collection of the sources since it impacted the choice of methodology for the analysis of the plays itself. Since there are only limited recordings and visualisations of the first performances of the play, or at least not ones that are made publicly available, the analysis of the plays is only text-based and not performance-based. The only visuals available are that of black and white pictures made available of the first performance in the 1966 script of “War Drums on the Equator” published by Foreign Languages Press Peking. These pictures are of low quality, however, and do not offer any contextualisation or reference to the play itself, which makes it difficult to connect them to the available script. As for “Une Saison au Congo”, the only information found on its first performance in 1967 did not include any visuals but a testimony from Rudi Barnet who describes the difficult job he had as a production advisor of the play to find a stage to perform Aimé Césaire’s play in Brussels at the time, given the controversial topic of neo-colonialism it entailed.⁸⁸ In his testimony, Rudi Barnet only shortly mentions the name of the actors that played at the first performance, and their origins, and only briefly describes the simple and humble set-up of the stage.⁸⁹ Even visuals or recordings from the last performance of the play which took place in Théâtre National de la Coline in Paris were not found, at least not online.⁹⁰ As for Adrienne Kennedy’s first performance of “Funnyhouse of a Negro”, no visuals were made publicly available either, although the play is still being reinterpreted and performed today at various locations within the U.S.. The visuals available from the most recent performances can therefore only be used as an indication of the original one.

Given the limited visual sources of the plays, the analysis of this study will be text-based, which means that the scripts of the three different plays will be interpreted and analysed as archival texts in isolation from the visual interpretation of them. The use of documents in social research (which includes archival texts), according to Leigh Prior, then do not depend so much on features intrinsic to their existence, nor on the intensions of the author, but on “factors and processes that lay

⁸⁸Barnet, R. & Gyssels, K., 2016. Montage ubuesque d'“Une Saison au Congo” à Bruxelles en 1967. *Nouvelles Études Francophones*, 31(1), pp. 93-102.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

beyond their boundaries".⁹¹ The scripts of the three different plays, accordingly, will be understood and interpreted in terms of fields of action in which the respective authors, spectators, and settings of the play are engaged and involved in.⁹² The short time span between the death of Lumumba and the release of the three different plays is then important to take into consideration given that various and sometimes contradictory versions of the exact circumstances of Lumumba's death were still circulating at the time of the release of the scripts of the play.⁹³ More so, the limited knowledge circulating about the circumstances of Lumumba's death were mainly distributed in French, making it even more difficult for non-French speaking playwrights to recreate or interpret the historical figure of Lumumba in their respective plays.⁹⁴ These factors therefore already define the engagement between the different playwrights and their respective relation with the figure of Lumumba itself. Therefore, if the main research question of this study is that of how and why the figure of Lumumba has been caught up in different and sometimes rivalry Cold War projects, the sub-questions that will be raised accordingly will be that of (1) how do the authors of the plays portray the figure of Lumumba, (2) what is the main message behind the play, and lastly (3), how do the different portrayals of the figures of Lumumba align with the respective messages of the plays? By applying Leigh Prior's understanding of the use of archival texts in social research to the above-mentioned research questions, it becomes clear that archival texts cannot be studied on their own. The research questions posed which interrogate the relationship between the playwrights and the figure of Lumumba in relation to the main message of the plays therefore require the use of sources that lie beyond the boundaries of the three different scripts. The three plays will therefore be read and analysed in parallel with and alongside other primary and secondary sources which are trivial to answer the above-mentioned research questions.

⁹¹ Prior, L., 2003. Texts, Authors, Identities. Dans: *Using Documents in Social Research*. s.l.:SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 92.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ In his thesis, the former Belgian politician Jacques Brassinne (1990) argued that the Congo crisis was an internal issue between Congolese leaders in accordance with ancestral practices. This explanation has been discredited by many researchers and negated by the work of the Lumumba Commission. However, it was used as a quasi-official version for many years, probably in an attempt to absolve Belgium. Ludo De Witte even dedicates his book "Moord op Lumumba" to challenge the allegations made by Brassinne.

Tshitungu Kongolo, A., 2008. *Une Approche Critique des Variantes dans Une Saison au Congo*. Paris, Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie .

⁹⁴ Hickner, E. J., 2011. *"History will one day have its say": Patrice Lumumba and the Black Freedom Movement*. West Lafayette, Indiana: PhD Thesis, Purdue University Graduate School.

The following analysis of “Une Saison au Congo” will then be referred by page number to the paper version of the 1973 French edition from Éditions du Seuil, with the additional preface of Éric Vuillard from Éditions Points, released in 2021.⁹⁵ This third edition of the script is considered the definite one and is until today widely available in paper format or as an online version. All passages referenced in the analysis are then translated by the author of this study in English. It is important to point out, however, that this last edition was made under Mobutu’s request (who at that time had seized power of Zaïre), and obviously also accepted and edited by Aimé Césaire himself. As ironic as it may sound, Mobutu praised the dead Lumumba as a national hero of Zaïre during his first years of rule and proposed a tour of the play in Kinshasa (the capital of Zaïre and former Leopoldville under Lumumba and Belgian colonial rule) on the condition to adjust and edit the script.⁹⁶ As Antoine Tshitungu Kongolo states in his critical analysis of the different editions of the play, one of the main changes made in the new edition was the adding of an epilogue which covers briefly how Mobutu (Mokutu in the play) had taken over the Republic of the Congo in the name of Lumumba’s legacy.⁹⁷ More so, Tshitungu Kongolo adds that the figure of Mokutu is adapted in the new edition in that Césaire slightly toned down the odious character he had given to Mokutu in the first editions. By taking this into consideration this study will therefore analyse the last edition of Césaire’s play. Other primary and secondary sources will also be read in parallel with the script of the play as well, such as Césaire’s original letter of resignation of the French Communist Party to Maurice Thorez, which is made available online, and Alain Ruscio’s critical analysis of Aimé Césaire’s ambiguous relationship with communism.⁹⁸

As for “War Drums on the Equator”, the analysis will be based on the 1966 paper version published by Foreign Languages Press Peking, distributed by Fuozi Shudian (China Publications Centre) and translated in English by Gladys Yang. In addition to the script, this version contains 12 still black and white photographs of the prologue, the seven scenes, and the epilogue of the play. It also includes the official statement of Chairman Mao Tse-tung which he delivered during the

⁹⁵Vuillard, É., 2021. Préface. Dans: *Une Saison au Congo*. Paris: Éditions Points, pp. I-V.

⁹⁶Barnet, R. & Gyssels, K., 2016. Montage ubuesque d'“Une Saison au Congo” à Bruxelles en 1967. *Nouvelles Études Francophones*, 31(1), pp. 93-102.

⁹⁷Tshitungu Kongolo, A., 2008. *Une Approche Critique des Variantes dans Une Saison au Congo*. Paris, Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie.

⁹⁸Césaire, A., 2010. Letter to Maurice Thorez. *Social Text*, Translated by Chike Jeffers (28), pp. 145-152.

Ruscio, A., 2008. *Césaire et le communisme, les communistes et Césaire : une longue histoire*. Paris, Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie.

mass demonstration in Tiananmen Square as a call against post-war imperialism. Since the English version of the script of “War Drums on the Equator” is not available online, nor are there new paper version of the script being released, an original version of 1966 needed to be obtained. This paper version was purchased through the online marketplace “AbeBooks” from the second-hand book shop “Yesterday’s Books” based in Bournemouth, UK, which specialises in African travel and literature books. In addition, the analysis of the play will draw on Alexander Cook’s archival research on the play itself, in which he examined declassified archival documents from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs which China’s diplomatic efforts in Africa.⁹⁹ More importantly, Cook’s historical contextualisation of the play has become indispensable for this research as the archival documents are no longer available to foreign researchers since 2010. Additionally, the analysis will also be based on other secondary sources, and more specifically, Alanna O’Malley’s research on China’s aid to the 1964 Lumumbist insurgencies which were inspired by Mao’s Third Worldism.¹⁰⁰

Lastly, the analysis of Adrienne Kennedy’s “Funnyhouse will make reference to on a paper version of the 1969 edition of the script, published by Samuel Inc. in London and Toronto. The analysis will also be based on another primary source of Adrienne Kennedy’s autobiography of “People That Led to My Plays”, published in 1987. The rest of the analysis will make reference to the literary analyses of the play by bell hooks and Georgie Boucher.¹⁰¹ Both literary analyses will then be read against Pieter Vanhove’s own analysis of Lumumba’s notion of universality, and also in the context of the Black Arts Movement and African American Third Worldism, in reference to James Smethurst work on the topic.¹⁰²

⁹⁹Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 569-595.

¹⁰⁰ O’Malley, A., 2021. The Simba Rebellion, the Cold War, and the Stanleyville Hostages in the Congo. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 23(2), pp. 75-99.

¹⁰¹ hooks, b., 1992. Critical reflections: Adrienne Kennedy, the writer, the work. Dans: P. Bryant-Jackson & L. Overbeck, eds. *Intersecting Boundaries: The Theatre of Adrienne Kennedy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 179-187.

Boucher, G., 2006. fractured identity and agency and the plays of Adrienne Kennedy. *Feminist Review*, 84(84), pp. 84-103.

¹⁰² Vanhove, P., 2021. Locating Lumumba. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 58(2), pp. 264-285.

Vanhove, P., 2021. The Singular Universal in Sartre’s Lumumba Preface. Dans: *World Literature After Empire Rethinking Universality in the Long Cold War*. New York: Routledge, pp. 99-120.

Smethurst, J. E., 2005. Bandung World: The West Coast, the Black Arts Movement, and the Development of Revolutionary Nationalism, Cultural Nationalism, Third Worldism, and Multiculturalism. Dans: *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, pp. 247-318.

3.2. Methods for Analysing Material

As for the method to analyse the different “texts” in which Lumumba is (in)directly represented, this study will opt for combining both content and discourse analysis. Both methodologies are then commonly used to retrieve information about texts specifically, although other mediums can also be analysed according to the respective methodologies. While content analysis is commonly defined as a means to retrieve meaningful information from texts in line with the stated content of it, discourse analysis is commonly understood as the study of language used in the texts in its various dimension such as style, idioms, or gestures.¹⁰³ By drawing direct references from the content of the text itself, content analysis is often used to obtain documentary evidence about the author, the message, and the audience of the text, independently from the context and the setting of the text itself.¹⁰⁴ The very meaning of the data is then assumed to be fixed and directly reflects a certain reality.¹⁰⁵ Discourse analysis, on the other hand, is sometimes defined as the analysis of language “beyond the sentence”.¹⁰⁶ The idea here is that discourse analysis enables one to reveal the indirect motivation behind a text, contrary to the method used with content analysis. The data obtained through discourse analysis is then fluid and reflects a constructed reality.¹⁰⁷ In its most generic sense, the difference between content and discourse analysis lies in the very data that can be obtained by the respective methodologies; while content analysis gives us an answer to the objective questions of who says what, and to whom, discourse analysis enables us to delve deeper into the question of how a message is delivered. The very question of “how” which is built against a constructed reality can in turn be read in relation to the objective questions raised through content analysis of “what”, “who”, and “to whom”. With this in mind, if the methodologies of content and discourse analysis are often dissociated along the respective categories of quantitative and qualitative research, this study will use both methodologies in line with the qualitative nature of this research.

More specifically, given that the aim of this study is to understand how the figure of Lumumba is being caught up by different Cold War projects, the main aim of this research is to identify the global imaginings embedded in the three different plays through their

¹⁰³ Krippendorff, K., 2004. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. 2nd Edition éd. CA: Thousand Oaks.

¹⁰⁴ Neuendorf, K. A., 2009. *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. 8th edition éd. CA: Thousand Oaks.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Widdowson, H. G., 2007. *Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

respective representations of the figure of Lumumba. As discussed in the previous chapter of this study, such global imaginings will be understood as being reflective of the production of and claims to “spatial formats” in which Lumumba’s own claim of independence of the Republic of the Congo becomes secondary in the respective claims and challenges to such Cold War projects. And since the different interpretations of the political figure of Lumumba by the different playwrights will be read in alignment with the global imaginings embedded in the plays, the analysis of this study will aim to undelve the relationship between the historical reality of Lumumba’s short political career, and their dramatic representations of it. The combination of both content and discourse analysis are then needed to undelve such relationship as the different epistemologies of such methodologies covers the different natures of the plays.

“War Drums on the Equator” by example, makes direct references to the historical events of the Congo crisis and from the anti-imperialist demonstration held in Tiananmen Square in 1964. At a number of instances, the characters of the play recite the exact speeches held at the demonstrations in 1964. Such speeches explicitly outline Mao’s world view at that time, and his global imagining of China as the leader of the Third World, more specifically. In addition, the play intimates China’s real historical commitments in the Congo crisis, by making explicit references to the historical figure of Pierre Mulele, a Congolese maoist rebel and leader of the Simba rebellion of 1964. The method of content analysis is useful for the analysis of this play, since both pieces of information can easily be retrieved to be studied on its own as a reflection of the global imaginings of the play.

The representations of Lumumba in “Une Saison au Congo” and “Funnyhouse a Negro” are then more implicit and sometimes complex, given Césaire’s dramatic representation of the political events of the beginnings of the Congo crisis, and Kennedy’s decontextualisation of the political figure of Lumumba. Both methodologies of the plays then overshadow the historical events that led to the assassination of Lumumba. It is by understanding both methodologies of the play as distinctive discourses themselves constructed against the hostile Western discourse held towards Lumumba in “Une Saison au Congo”, and the symbolisation of the figure of Lumumba of black internationalism among Black Americans in “Funnyhouse of a Negro” that this study will discursively analyse both plays. More so, both discourses will be read in line with the global imaginings of Césaire’s Négritude movement, and Kennedy’s challenge to black essentialism in the Black Arts Movement.

All three analyses of the respective plays will therefore be organised as followed; the first part of the analyses will situate the plays

in time and place and offer a short description the work of the author and the summary of the play. The second part of the analyses will situate the play in a socio-political in relation to the developments of the Congo crisis by identifying the sources the author used to develop the play, and the respective targeted audiences of the plays. Accordingly, the global imagings in which the plays are embedded will be identified in relation to the locations of the plays in respect with the different Cold War projects. Lastly, the analyses will contently and discursively analyse the different representations of Lumumba in respect with the identified global imaginings.

4. Une Saison au Congo (1966/1973)

Five years after the announcement of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, Martinican poet and politician, Aimé Césaire, wrote his play “Une Saison au Congo”. The play was completed in 1966, shortly before Mobutu declared Lumumba to be a national hero. It was first performed in March 1967 in Brussels in the Theatre Vivant.¹⁰⁸ In September that same year, the play was produced at the Venice Biennale, then at the Theatre de l’Est Parisien by theatre director Jean-Marie Sereau.¹⁰⁹ Three versions were published: 1966, which was never staged; 1967; and 1973; considered the definite version, and also the one used in this analysis.

In essence, the play can be read as a historical chronicle of Lumumba starting from the eve of independence (1959), through the post-independence months to his assassination (1961). The characters of the play represent the historical figures which have played a role in the Congo crisis and the assassination of Lumumba. Perhaps as a means to offer some sort of distance with the realities of the events, Césaire changed the names of the characters only just slightly; Mokutu for Mubutu, Kala-Lubu for Kasa Vubu, Tzumbi for Tshombe, Massens for the general Janssens. With other characters of the play, Césaire kept their original name such as Lumumba himself, the U.N. secretary general M. Hammerskjold, or Lumumba’s associates M’Polo and Okito.

The play consists of three acts which are chronologically organised according to the historical events that lead to Lumumba’s death. The first act captures the moment of the eve of independence, reconstructing the events of Lumumba’s role in the Round Table Conference in Brussels, the Independence Day itself, the formation of the Congolese government with Kala-Lubu (Kasa Vubu) as president and Lumumba as Prime Minister, and ends with the Tzumbi’s (Tschombe) announcement of the secession of the Katanga province. The second act covers the Belgian military assistance to the Katangese army, the start of the United Nations operation in the Congo, the “treason” of U.N. secretary General M. Hammerskjold and ends with Mokutu’s (Mobutu) coup d’état. The

¹⁰⁸ Bouwer, K., 2010. Césaire’s Lumumba: A Symbol of Sexual and Political Prowess . Dans: *Gender and Decolonisation in the Congo: The Legacy of Patrice Lumumba*. New York: Pelgrave Macmillan, pp. 131-153.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

last act covers Lumumba's time in prison in Thysville with his two associates Okito and M'Pollo, and their transfer to the prison in Katanga and ultimate assassination. The play ends with the ceremony organised in tribute to Lumumba by Mokutu, now the leader of the Republic. Throughout the chronicle, Césaire exposes Lumumba as a charismatic figure and a dedicated nationalist who naively enough trusted of U.N. secretary General M. Hammerskjold's promises and the words of Kalalubu and Mokutu.¹¹⁰ In the eyes of Césaire, Lumumba's story is reduced to its honest political conviction, caught up in neo-colonial projects which ultimately led to the tragic events of his assassination.

Given the content of the play, always in parallel with the historical reality of the time, "Une Saison au Congo" has then often been described as Brechtian epic¹¹¹ that captures the descent of the Congo into a civil war and the eventual martyrdom of Lumumba.¹¹² In the preface of the 1973 edition of the play, Eric Vuillard praises Césaire's play for its accurately exposing the historical developments that led to the assassination of Lumumba:

"A Season in the Congo is not a tale but the history of a country. Césaire bears witness to a collective history, he follows a series of events that affected millions of people and, in so doing, he removes the theatre from the imaginary, phantasmagorical zone, where it is only indirectly exposed, to place it in the middle of the world, where everyone can judge it, brave it, contradict it."¹¹³

¹¹⁰Tolliver, J.-F., 2014. Césaire/Lumumba: a season of solidarity. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50(4), pp. 398-409.

¹¹¹The term "Brechtian" is used to describe literature that relates to the work of Bertolt Brecht, a German playwright and poet who explored theatre as a way of asserting and experimenting with political ideas and the creation of Marx and Engels coined "dialectical materialism". It emphasises the importance of real-world conditions and contradictions in relation to socio-economic interactions. "Une Saison au Congo" can be considered a "Brechtian" epic in that it explores the role of the neoconial intensions of the West in the Congo's descent into civil war after its independence through the figure of Lumumba.

¹¹²Schurmans, F., 2020. Entre Histoire et Fiction : La Fin du Congo Belge et l'Échec de l'Homme d'Exception. *Une Saison au Congo* (Aimé Césaire) et *Lumumba* (Raoul Peck). *Revue Nordique Des Études Francophones*, 3(1), pp. 1-12.

Kablan, A. V., 2015. Lumumba dans *Une Saison au Congo* d'Aime Cesaire: Tracabilite discursive d'un heros historique et d'un heros dramatique. *HAL*, 7(1), pp. 3-17.

¹¹³Vuillard, É., 2021. Préface. Dans: *Une Saison au Congo*. Paris: Éditions Points, p. II. Original text: « Une Saison au Congo n'est pas un conte mais l'histoire d'un pays. Césaire se fait le témoin d'une historie collective, il suit une série d'événements qui affectèrent des millions de personnes et, ce faisant, il retire le théâtre de la zone imaginaire, fantasmagorique, où l'on ne s'expose qu'indirectement, pour le placer au milieu de monde, là où chacun peut le juger, le braver, le contredire. » (p. II)

Given the hostile western discourse, which characterised Lumumba as overly ambitious, arrogant, a communist, and even satanic (as already discussed in the introduction), Césaire's historical chronology of Lumumba could also be read as a discursive defence of the western construction of the figure of Lumumba. Césaire himself outlines his intentions behind the play in an interview with David Dunn in 1980:

“- [Did you write it] to shock your audience?
- No! Not to shock. Not at all. But to make people understand. I was living in France at the time, and black people [les Noirs] were quite traumatised by this story because they didn't understand and the white people used to say: "You see this savagery, this cannibalism, the magic" etc. etc. This whole period, this whole decolonisation of the Congo, all the Congolese troubles really served racist propaganda. So, I wanted to show the truth, to make people understand that this Congolese drama was in reality a political drama, and a human drama. And what this drama involves in terms of pain, suffering or barbarism is not at all linked to Congolese barbarism. It is a political barbarity for which the Congolese are not responsible but of which they are generally the victims".¹¹⁴

More than just a historically accurate recollection of development of the Congo crisis which led to the tragic death of Lumumba, “Une Saison au Congo” is in fact also a fashioned story that could be read as an allegory. That is to say, Césaire recites Lumumba's famous speeches, re-imagines critical scenes of Lumumba's short political career, and generally picks certain “facts” of his life and death to recombine them in a poetical drama to re-create Lumumba's life.¹¹⁵ As Julie-Francoise Tolliver expresses it, “Césaire aligns himself with the character of Lumumba by making him a poet-politician in his own image”.¹¹⁶ The following analysis

¹¹⁴Dunn, D., 1980. Interview with Aimé Césaire on a New Approach to *La tragédie du roi Christophe* and *Une saison au Congo*. *Cahier césairiens*, 4(1), p. 3.

Original text :-« [L'avez-vous écrit] pour choquer votre public ?

- Non ! Pas pour choquer. Pas du tout. Mais pour que les gens comprennent. Je vivais en France à cette époque, et les Noirs étaient assez traumatisés par cette histoire parce qu'ils ne comprenaient pas et les Blancs ricanait : " Vous voyez cette sauvagerie, ce cannibalisme, la magie " etc. etc. Toute cette période, toute cette décolonisation du Congo, tous les troubles congolais ont vraiment servi la propagande raciste. Donc, j'ai voulu montrer la vérité, faire comprendre ce drame congolais qui était en réalité un drame politique, un drame humain. Et ce que ce drame comporte de douleur, de souffrance ou de barbarie n'est pas du tout lié à la barbarie congolaise. Il s'agit d'une barbarie politique dont les Congolais ne sont pas responsables mais dont ils sont en général les victimes. »

¹¹⁵ Tolliver, J.-F., 2014. Césaire/Lumumba: a season of solidarity. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50(4), pp. 398-409.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 399.

will then read Césaire's re-imagination of the political figure of Lumumba along his own decolonial struggle, both in his cultural commitment to the Negritude movement, and his political commitment to advocate for Martinique's autonomy within the French empire at the time of his writing.

4.1. Aimé Césaire's playwright: a call to decolonise the French Empire Bloc?

To this day, Aimé Césaire is generally known for his two conspicuous works, "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal", and his "Discours sur le colonialisme". Before examining Césaire's portrait of Lumumba in "Une Saison au Congo", it would be useful, however, to first locate the play in Césaire's lesser known, but significant phase of his literary career; that of the playwright. More specifically, "Une Saison au Congo", could be understood as part of Césaire's larger theatrical project which includes three other plays: "Et les Chiens se taisaient" (1965), "La Tragédie du Roi Christophe" (1970), and "Une Tempête" (1969). The continuing thread of all plays, which also includes "Une Saison au Congo", is the representation of a dramatic hero, whose characterisation is always linked to Césaire's own decolonial struggle, and his wider commitment to the Negritude movement.

Négritude is then both a literary and ideological movement created in the 1930s that was led by French-speaking black intellectuals with the means to forge a Black identity among Africans and its diasporas against the French colonial projects of cultural assimilation.¹¹⁷ Its leading figure was Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal, who, along with Aimé Césaire and Léon Damas from French Guinea, re-identified and asserted an "African cultural" within the French empire, which they argued to be erased by oppressive forms of colonialism.¹¹⁸ Members of the Negritude movement argued that the assimilation policy under French colonial rule was built upon an assumed superiority of French culture which was continuously justified through the discourse of universal equality.¹¹⁹ Césaire, specifically, (along with Senghor), rejected the idea that Africans and Antilleans existed outside radical traditions of "French" politics and thought, and argued instead that in and through their black identity were integral parts of the French empire bloc. Césaire, accordingly, undertook a decolonisation project under the Negritude movement by claiming France as theirs through the emancipation of their black identity, always treating

¹¹⁷ Edmondson, L., 2009. Aimé Césaire (1913-2008): Architect of Negritude. *NK4 Publications*, Issue 24, pp. 92-97.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

the imperial condition as the starting point for projects.¹²⁰ Theatre, as such, became a means for Césaire to deliver such decolonial message.

In his collection of four plays, Césaire seems to be able to recuperate the transnational identity among members of the French colonies, which characterises the essence of the Negritude movement. It is through the representations of four different Black heroes, the character of “Rebelle” in “Et les Chiens se taisaient”, Christophe, in “La Tragédie du Roi Christophe”, the Caliban in “Une Tempête”, and finally Lumumba in “Une Saison au Congo”, that Césaire is able to delineate the transnational solidarity which forges a common black experience in Haiti, St-Domingue, and in the Congo. More specifically, it is by exposing the four characters as tragic heroes in their rebellious acts against both the condition of their nation and their race, but always victims of their own weaknesses, that Césaire was able to rewrite a black experience which he argued to be erased by a French assimilation. As far as “Une Saison au Congo” goes, Césaire exposes Lumumba as a courageous and valiant nationalist who became a victim of the “treacherous” behaviour of U.N. secretary General M. Hammerskjold, Kala-Lubu and Mokutu. In the eyes of Césaire, Lumumba’s story is reduced to its honest political conviction, caught up in neo-colonial projects which ultimately led to the tragic events of his assassination. Moreover, by writing “Une Saison au Congo”, Césaire was able to align himself with Lumumba’s vision of true independence, which seems to run in parallel with his own trajectory of promoting, although unsuccessfully, Martinique autonomy. The rest of the analysis will therefore read Césaire’s cultural intensions behind the play, and his wider Negritude movement generally, in parallel with his own imaginations of Martinique’s political autonomy in the French empire.

4.2. Césaire’s imagination of the Cold War in the Congo

By portraying Lumumba as both a hero and a victim to his vision of true-independence, Césaire contented with the bipolar imaginary of the Cold War.¹²¹ The construction of his character around a Cold War conception, in turn, allowed Césaire to both rescue Lumumba from hostile discourse, while also emphasising the traits he admires in him. As Julie-Francoise Tolliver explains in her analysis of the play, Césaire based his play entirely on published materials, having never been to the Congo or met Lumumba.¹²² His source texts, according to Tolliver, are mostly

¹²⁰ Wilder, G., 2015. Situating Césaire: Antillean Awakening and Global Redemption. Dans: *Freedom Time Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*. New York: Duke University Press, pp. 17-49.

¹²¹ Tolliver, J.-F., 2014. Césaire/Lumumba: a season of solidarity. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50(4), pp. 398-409.

¹²² Ibid.

European and include monographs and newspaper articles. As Raoul Peck's research already indicated, such documents presented him as "crazy, uneducated, ambitious and corrupt leader".¹²³ Césaire, in contrast, presents Lumumba's ambitious, if not stubborn character as an inevitable reaction to the neocolonial interests in the Congo which seem to be defined by the Cold War dynamics of the time, all while reflecting his strong commitment to the true independence of the Congo.

In the first act of the play, Césaire dramatizes such Cold War dynamic as a contingency that divided the newly elected Congolese government from its very founding.¹²⁴ Césaire then represents the different members of the Congolese government along a Cold War binary outled, conditioned by their respective affinities with Belgian authorities. This becomes clear in scene 4, where Lumumba, Kasa-Lubu, and Tzumbi argue about their understandings of the decolonisation of the Congo. The respective interests of the different members of the newly formed government, and the very nature of their respective affinities with Belgian authorities become clear when Tzumbi plots the secession of Katanga after hearing Lumumba's independence speech. Césaire dramatizes this turning point in the second act of the play, scene 7, in which he re-enacts the Cold War stakes of the Congo crisis. In that scene, Lumumba and Kasa-Lubu are set on a plane and are refused to land in Elisabethville, the capital of secessionist Katanga. Lumumba then screams: "To Moscow! To Moscow!" (p. 46).¹²⁵ As Tulliver explains in her analysis, in reality, Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu's plane was in fact refused permission to land in Elisabethville in July 1960. Tulliver adds that it was also Kasa-Vubu, and not Lumumba, who insisted on requesting aid from the Soviet Union.¹²⁶

It is interesting that Césaire depicted Lumumba as making such impulsive request in contrast with the historical events that Tulliver points out to. In reality, Soviet aid did in fact come in the form of air transport to support Lumumba's troops.¹²⁷ But by dramatizing such setting, making Lumumba shouting such words as a last resort to the Katangese authorities' noncompliance, Césaire is able to expose the very nature of Soviet support during the Congo crisis.¹²⁸ Rather than revealing Lumumba's "hidden commitment" to communism, as Western press

¹²³Peck, R., 2010. *Stolen Images: Four Films*. translated by Catherine Temerson ed. New York: Seven Stories, p. 16.

¹²⁴ Tulliver, J.-F., 2014. Césaire/Lumumba: a season of solidarity. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50(4), pp. 398-409.

¹²⁵Césaire, A., 1973. Une Saison au Congo. *Seuil*, p. 46.

¹²⁶ Tulliver, J.-F., 2014. Césaire/Lumumba: a season of solidarity. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50(4), pp. 398-409.

¹²⁷ Iandolo, A., 2014. Imbalance of Power: The Soviet Union in the Congo Crisis, 1960-1961. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 16(2), p. 32-55.

¹²⁸ Tulliver, J.-F., 2014. Césaire/Lumumba: a season of solidarity. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50(4), pp. 398-409.

had formulated it, Césaire articulates Soviet support in the Congo crisis as a potential alternative ally when Lumumba finds himself at a political impasse.

The Soviet authorities themselves do not play a part in “Une Saison au Congo”, however. Césaire mainly plays with caricaturising Western actors in the play to further justify Lumumba’s appeal to the Soviet Union and rectify the hostile discourse to which he was historically a victim of. At the end of the first act, Césaire articulates the nature of the intervention of Western powers in the Congo crisis, implied by the “Great Western Ambassador”:

“I know that as a Nation we have a bad reputation. We are accused of shooting fast, but can one keep to rocking-chair politics when the world grows restless, for a trifle, and peoples reach the boiling point! When peoples do not behave like decent people, it is necessary that someone make them decent. It is to us that Providence has given that task! Thank you Lord! [...] and so, you’ve heard how he shouted on the plane: “To Moscow! To Moscow!” Ah well, people should know that we are not just policemen, we are also the firemen of the world! Firemen designated to circumscribe the fire lit everywhere by Communist pyromania! I say “everywhere!” In the Congo, as elsewhere!”¹²⁹

This caricatural Western ambassador, here, clearly represent the opposition of the “threat” posed by the Soviet Union; the positive and neutral intensions of the Soviet Union are contrasted by the imperial nature of the Western powers’ intervention personified by the “Great Western ambassador”.

Such imperial nature of the West’s intervention in the Congo crisis becomes even more blatant when Césaire portrays the neo-colonial intensions of the multiple actors behind the Katangese secession. Further in the play, Lumumba then calls on the U.N. for assistance as the historical events of the Congo crisis followed. Césaire, here, depicts the character of Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN secretary-general, as an easily perverted instrument of the US. While Hammarskjöld pleads for a “neutral” position, Césaire makes the U.S. authorities use that same argument to

¹²⁹ Césaire, A., 1973. *Une Saison au Congo*. *Senil*, p. 52.

Original text : « Je sais bien qu’en tant que Nation, nous avons mauvaise réputation. On nous accuse d’avoir le cold facile, mais peut-on faire la politique du rocking-chair quand le monde, pour un rien, s’agite, et que les peuples entrent en ébullition ! Quand les peuples ne se conduisent pas en peuple décent, il faut que quelqu’un les ramène à la décence. C’est à nous que la Providence a confié cette tâche. Seigneur merci !... Et puis, vous avez entendu, comme dans l’avion, il a crié : « A Moscou ! A Moscou ! » Eh bien, qu’on le sache, on n’est pas seulement les gendarmes, on est aussi les pompiers du monde ! Les pompiers préposés à circonscrire partout le feu allumé par la pyromanie communiste ! Je dis « partout » ! Au Congo, comme ailleurs ! A bon entendeur, salut ! »

prevent Lumumba's army from defending his position. Hammarskjöld later comes to realise in the play "In essence, we [the UN] were keeping [Lumumba's] arms tied while the others were hitting him!"¹³⁰ In the end, the Cold War is certainly at the heart of "Une Saison au Congo". Césaire, here, clearly redresses the demonisation of the Soviet Union by the Western press in their means to justify their interventions in the Congo.¹³¹

4.3. The anti-colonial struggle in Césaire's Cold War narrative

The decision to make the Cold War at the centre of his historical chronicle of Lumumba is of no coincidence then, when reading such Cold War narrative of "Une Saison au Congo" in parallel with Césaire's own anti-colonial struggle. By "redressing" Lumumba's presumed ideological association with the Soviet Union, Césaire was in fact able to align his intentions to redefine the political figure of Lumumba in contrast with that of the western press with his discontent with the French Communist Party (PCF) at that time. As Tulliver explains in her analysis, "Césaire and Lumumba faced in the late 1950s a similar ideological divide, each trying to define its nation's place in world politics".¹³² In 1956, Césaire himself resigned from the PCF. In his resignation letter, he critiques the universalism embedded in the USSR's turn to Stalinism, and the French Communist Party's unwillingness to distance itself from it.¹³³ According to Césaire, by adhering to the USSR's turn to Stalinism, "the PCF is incapable of offering anything like a perspective that would be anything other than utopian"¹³⁴, since it overlooks the struggle that is specific to that of "coloured" people;

"Our struggle- the struggle of colonial peoples against colonialism, the struggle of peoples of colour against racism- is more complex, or better yet, of an entire different nature than the fight

¹³⁰ Césaire, A., 1973. *Une Saison au Congo*. *Seuil*, p. 120.

¹³¹ Tulliver, J.-F., 2014. Césaire/Lumumba: a season of solidarity. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50(4), pp. 398-409.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 399.

¹³³ In his letter of resignation, Césaire critiques the Stalinist orientation of the Soviet Union and the imperialist relationship it sustains with brother states and parties. As an example, Césaire cites the Russian Communist Party and the Soviet State's "unwillingness to grant independence to other communist parties or socialist states", and Yugoslavia more specifically. By seizing to offer and declare their independence, he accuses the French Communist Party to be no different.

Césaire, A., 2010. Letter to Maurice Thorez. *Social Text*, Translated by Chike Jeffers (28), pp. 147.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

of the French worker against French capitalism, and it cannot in any way be considered a part, a fragment of that struggle".¹³⁵

Later in his letter, Césaire explains that by critiquing the way the PCF overlooks the specificity of the colonial struggle in the French empire in their turn to Stalinism, he challenges the nature of the alliance between the parties rather than the ideology itself. More so, by "blindly" abiding to the USSR's turn to Stalinism, PCF proves to be no better than the bourgeois class ruling the French Empire at the time. It is then "their inveterate assimilationism, their unconscious chauvinism, and their fairly simplistic faith" which they share with bourgeois Europeans.¹³⁶ Césaire, here, critiques the Eurocentrism present in the USSR's turn to Stalinism itself and their belief in the "omnilateral superiority of the West that evolution as it took place in Europe is the only evolution possible".¹³⁷ It is then along such critique that Césaire justifies his decision to resign from the PCF in accordance with his political commitment to Martinique autonomy, embedded in a wider pan-African conviction in general:

"Thinking about Martinique, I note that communism has managed to slip the noose of assimilation around its neck; that communism has managed to isolate it in the Caribbean basin; ...; that it has managed to cut it off from other Caribbean countries whose experience could be both instructive and fruitful (for they have the same problem as us and their democratic revolution is rapid); and finally, that communism has managed to cut us off from Black Africa, whose evolution is currently taking shape in the opposite of ours. And yet it is from this Black Africa, the mother of our Caribbean culture and civilisation, that I await the regeneration of the Caribbean – not from Europe, who can only perfect our alienation, but from Africa who alone can revitalise, that is, repersonalise the Caribbean."¹³⁸

In this statement, it becomes ever clearer that Césaire's arguments behind his resignation from the PCF were always already aligned with his political engagement in the Negritude movement. Since the PCF's alignment with Russian Communist Party testifies to the same cultural assimilations of "coloured people" done under French colonial projects, Césaire justifies his resignation in the name of the recuperation of Black identities in the French Caribbean. Given the spatiality of the assimilation projects the PCF, such recuperation of identities aligns with a pan-African vision

¹³⁵Ibid. 147.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 150.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 150.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 151.

of the movement itself; to redress Martinique from such forms of assimilation would always already take place for and along the regeneration of African (to be) nations under (former) colonial rule, therefore actively challenging the alienation taking place within the French empire, outside its metropole.

Meanwhile, Césaire's decolonising vision for Martinique's autonomy within the French empire was drastically different from that of Lumumba's and his nationalist agenda for the newly independent republic of the Congo. Contrary to Lumumba, Césaire never called himself a nationalist, as his hope was to overcome colonialism without falling into the trap of national autocracy.¹³⁹ Rather than allowing France and its former colonies to be reified as independent entities, Césaire advocated for an autonomy of Martinique through an institutionalisation of a long-standing internal relationship with France.¹⁴⁰ Lumumba, on the other hand, advocated for a complete legal detachment from its former coloniser, Belgium, in which both national entities would only be reified in an external relationship with each other. Given their disparate decolonisation projects, one could therefore read Césaire's glorification of Lumumba's nationalist project, and the dramatization of its very failures in "Une Saison au Congo" as a signifier of the rupture of the presumptive unity of culture, nationality, and citizenship it entailed, which Césaire advocated in his own vision for Martinique's autonomy and in his wider Negritude movement.

In 1958, Césaire then formed his "Parti progressiste martiniquais", which was still inspired by socialist ideals but focused mainly on the political autonomy of Martinique within the French empire.¹⁴¹ Therefore, in the same way that Lumumba had to define his MNC in isolation from the West and the East, so did Césaire himself by founding his political party as being distinct from the PCF and the West, although both political figures had entirely different visions in their respective decolonisation projects. As such, by "redressing" Lumumba's presumed ideological association with the Soviet Union in "Une Saison au Congo", Césaire was able to align his intensions to represent the "true" figure of Lumumba with his discontent with the PCF, and therefore also with his political vision for Martinique, which also falls in line with his wider commitment to his Negritude movement.

4.4. Césaire's Lumumba: A Man of Africa

¹³⁹ Wilder, G., 2015. Situating Césaire: Antillean Awakening and Global Redemption. Dans: *Freedom Time Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*. New York: Duke University Press, pp. 17-49.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Tolliver, J.-F., 2014. Césaire/Lumumba: a season of solidarity. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50(4), pp. 398-409.

Taking Césaire's anti-colonial struggle into consideration, by writing "Une Saison au Congo" Césaire was not only able to redefine the figure of Lumumba, but more so, it allowed him to express his kinship to the African continent, which reflects the pan-African imaginings embedded in his commitment to the Negritude movement. "Une Saison au Congo" allowed Césaire to translate Lumumba's nationalist project into a pan-African one, generalising Lumumba's own decolonial struggle with that of the wider continent, and that of the struggle of coloured people in general. Césaire does so by representing Lumumba throughout the play as a "Man of Africa". Césaire, in this regard, reiterates the decolonial struggle he shares with Lumumba, and their common dedication to strive for true independence, both in the Congo and in Martinique.¹⁴² Accordingly, Césaire stages Lumumba as an embodiment of the whole continent and the struggles it has to endure, as becomes clear in a conversation he has with Mokutu;

"Do you ever think about Africa? Here, look at this! No need for a map pinned to the wall. It is engraved on the palm of my hands."¹⁴³

Clearly, Lumumba embodies the continent and the struggles it has endured. In the last scene of the play, Lumumba dies a violent death, beaten and shot to death by Katangese authorities. Before he dies, however, Lumumba articulates for the last time his true commitment to the independence of the Congo. In this passage, Césaire makes his character of Lumumba aware of his own martyrdom, that his dream of an independent Congo will live on after his death. Even while dying, Lumumba remains the "Man of Africa":

"I will be in the field
I will be in the pasture
I will be with the Wagneia fisherman
I will be with the Kivu herdsman
I will be on the mountain, I will be in the ravine"¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Tolliver, J.-F., 2014. Césaire/Lumumba: a season of solidarity. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50(4), pp. 398-409.

¹⁴³ Césaire, A., 1973. Une Saison au Congo. *Seuil*, p. 90.

Original text: « Quant au mot neutralisation, j'en sais mieux que toi, en tout cas, j'en mesure mieux que toi le sens et la portée. Tu y penses à l'Afrique quelquefois ? Tiens, regarde là ! Pas besoin de carte épinglée au mur. Elle est gravée sur la paume de mes mains. »

¹⁴⁴ Césaire, A., 1973. Une Saison au Congo. *Seuil*, p. 125.

Original text: « Je serai du champ. Je serai du pacage. Je serai avec le pêcheur Wagneia. Je serai avec le bouvier du Kivu. Je serai sur le mont, je serai dans le ravin (Césaire, 1973, p. 125).

Here, Césaire constructs a grandiose portrait of Lumumba as the “Man of Africa” by representing his legacy as the embodiment of different populations within the Congo. By referring to the commonality between the herdsmen in Kivu and the Wagneia fisherman in Stanleyville (now Kisangani), Césaire seems to remind the reader of the common colonial struggle of the Congolese people, which seems to have been lost through the division within the Congolese population as a consequence of the neo-colonial presence in the Congo in the wake of and after its independence. Reading such portrait of Lumumba along Césaire’s own identification with the continent in other of his works, one can clearly see how Césaire identifies with Lumumba through their respective decolonial struggles. Robert P. Smith is then right to say that by making us part of this intense story, we seem to “be forced to dream along with him as well as with the hero *Une Saison au Congo*, Césaire and Lumumba are made one in voice and spirit in the play”.¹⁴⁵ Fifteen years earlier, Césaire already made it clear that the African continent and the Antilles endure one and the same colonial struggle. In his “*Cahier d’un Retour au pays natal*”, a piece of work which today is considered as a landmark of the very start of the Negritude movement, Césaire identifies with the Congo itself;

“By virtue of thinking about the Congo
I became a Congo rustling with
Forests and rivers
Where the whip snaps like a great
Ensign
The sign of the prophet”¹⁴⁶

In the end, Césaire glorified Lumumba in “*Une Saison au Congo*” to raise his cry for liberty in his nationalist convictions for the Congo which have continuously been transformed through and overshadowed by the hostile discourse the western press held against Lumumba. The analysis of this play has read Césaire’s “redressing” of such discourse along two different but interrelated axes. On one level, one may read “*Une Saison au Congo*” along Césaire’s wider commitment to his Negritude movement. By redressing the figure of Lumumba, and the nature of Soviet aid in the Congo crisis more specifically, Césaire rewrites Lumumba’s own experience as a coloured and colonised individual that has been dictated by Cold War projects. In the eyes of Césaire, Lumumba’s story is reduced to its honest political conviction, caught up in neo-colonial projects

¹⁴⁵ Smith, R. P., 1971. Aimé Césaire playwright portrays Patrice Lumumba Man of Africa. *CLA Journal*, 14(4), pp. 377.

¹⁴⁶ Césaire, A., 1956. *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. Paris: Présence Africaine, p. 54-6. Original poem: « A force de penser au Congo, Je suis devenu un Congo bruissant de, Forêts et de fleuves, Ou le fouet claqué comme un grand, Étendard, L’étendard du prophète. »

which ultimately led to the tragic events of his assassination. On another level, Césaire's redressing of the hostile Cold War discourses can also be read alongside Césaire's own decolonial struggle to obtain Martinique's autonomy in the French empire through the formation of his "Parti progressiste Martiniquais". This way, "Une Saison au Congo" allows Césaire to personally identify with Lumumba's own political path; just as Lumumba had to distinguish his "Mouvement National Congolais" from the former colonial Belgian political system, and the possible ties with the socialist world, so did Césaire in the formation of his political party which he distinguished from European communism, while also distancing it from the American superpower in the north.

But while Césaire's glorification of the figure of Lumumba in "Une Saison au Congo" clearly serves Césaire to advance his own cultural and political ends, this analysis has also pointed out to the important distinction between Césaire and Lumumba's decolonising projects of that of the autonomy of Martinique and the independence of the Congo. Therefore, while this analysis has outlined the alignment of their decolonial struggles, Césaire and Lumumba's decolonial projects differed significantly in their respective ideologies. As such, Césaire's glorification of Lumumba's nationalist project, and the dramatization of its very failures in "Une Saison au Congo" can only be read as a signifier of the rupture of the presumptive unity of culture, nationality, and citizenship it entailed, which Césaire advocated in his own vision for Martinique's autonomy and in his wider Negritude movement. Therefore, if Césaire's "Une Saison au Congo" can be understood to be embedded in a wider spatial format under his Negritude movement, Lumumba's own claim of the independence of the Republic of the Congo clearly becomes secondary in such claim.

5. War Drums on the Equator (1965)

On the other side of the continent, the Drama Troupe of the Chinese Political Department of the Navy in the People's Liberation Army staged another play titled "War Drums on the Equator" which figures the circumstances of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. The premiere took place in February 1965 and was written collectively by Li Huang, Chang Feng-Yi, Lin Yin-Wu and Chu Tsu-Yi. It is composed of seven scenes a prologue and epilogue, and an essay titled "The Brave Sons and Daughters of the Congo". The Chinese play portrays the circumstances of Lumumba's murder and tells a fictitious story of Congolese resistance against Belgian, American, and UN forces shortly after independence. Its main message is that the US-led UN intervention in the Congo was actually a neo-colonial invasion that needed to be curtailed by the Congolese people.

The plot is then centred on a poor family and a number of other Congolese characters who accept offers of employment from UN and U.S. forces. They are initially told that the UN and the United States support their hero Lumumba and his efforts to free the Congo of neo-colonial influences. Some of the characters are described as working for the Americans and the UN on the expansion of the old colonial airport in Leopoldville, others, like character Molobo, are directly engaged as servants by the American UN troops residing in the old Belgian governor's mansion. Many characters initially welcome the arrival of the American troops as a good thing. When one of the family's sons, Mwanka, is asked by the American General Wayne to kill Lumumba, he refuses, and a coalition of Belgian, American, and UN officials order him to be shot in a remote location. Mwanka's life is then saved by the African American soldier Warren who shares his story as a black man descend from slaves and expresses his solidarity with the Congolese struggle for independence. Mwanka manages to make his way back to his family. When they hear his story and receive word that Lumumba has been murdered in the meantime, the other characters eventually see through the Westerner's intentions and realise that the UN and the Americans are nothing but the new colonisers that have taken over from the old. Before the curtain falls, they refuse General Wayne and the former Belgian governor's

offers to take up positions in a Mobutu-Tshombe government, and engage in a violent, fatal struggle against the coalition of “Western conspirators”.

“War Drums on the Equator” was then featured in the Labour Day (May 1) and National Day (October 1) celebrations of 1965 in both Beijing and Shanghai and was staged that year in several other major cities, including Qingdao and Tianjin.¹⁴⁷ Although it was never performed abroad, the play was also shared with foreign audiences. Chinese officials therefore invited all foreign diplomatic personnel, experts, and students then living in Beijing to see the show, as Alexander C. Cook has been able to find in his archival research on the play. Even the widow of Lumumba attended a performance and was quoted in the official press for praising the production for its vigour and authenticity.¹⁴⁸ Unfortunately, as Cook has established in his own research, evidence for the authentic reception of the play by this international audience is difficult to find.

Given the ideological nature of the play then, many scholars have come to define it as a piece of propaganda, rather than a political play.¹⁴⁹ In essence, “War Drums on the Equator” advocates for an alternative Chinese world order through a dramatization of the national liberation movement of the Congolese people. Although the play cannot be read as a historical chronology of Lumumba’s political career, as is the case with Césaire’s “Une Saison au Congo”, the Chinese play also works around and through the depiction of the historical reality of the time to tell a fictitious story of Congolese resistance against Belgian, American, and UN forces shortly after independence. As Lan Yang argues in his book chapter on the “Socialist Heroes in CR Novels”, “War Drums on the Equator” embodies the dominant Chinese aesthetic ideal of the mid 1960s; that of “the combination of revolutionary romanticism and revolutionary realism”.¹⁵⁰ On the one hand, the socialist realism demanded “a truthful historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development”.¹⁵¹ This meant the play’s production values were highly realistic, exemplified in this case by the use of full-body greasepaint make-

¹⁴⁷ Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 569-595.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Tang, C., 2021. Staging World Revolution: Crafting Internationalism in the Chinese Dramatic Arts, 1962-1968.

Vanhove, P., 2021. Locating Lumumba. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 58(2), pp. 264-285.

Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 569-595.

¹⁵⁰ Yang, L., 2002. The Ideal Socialist Hero: Literary Conventions in CR Novels. Dans: W. Chong, éd. *China’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 186.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 186.

up, including blackface and whiteface.¹⁵² In addition, Cook found in his archival research that intensive study inspired the playwrights to create a realistic depiction of the Congo crisis by recuperating ‘local’ knowledge from the place where the play enfold:

“Social life is the source of artistic creation. Being unfamiliar with life [in the Congo], we would have been unable to complete our creative work. Having never been to Africa, the primary task was to become familiar with life there. What could we do? The only way was to follow the instructions of Chairman Mao: become willing pupils and conscientiously conduct an investigation... First we interviewed African friends from Congo (Leopoldville), Congo (Brazzaville) [the former French colony now known as the Republic of the Congo], Tanzania, Sudan, Somalia, Cameroon, Chad, and so on... In addition, we had extensive access to Chinese comrades who had travelled to Africa. They spoke in detail about their observations and impressions, and some comrades offered suggestions and advice, providing us much valuable help and guidance. At the same time, we also went to the relevant departments and collected materials on the Congo and on Africa, such as books and documents, film, and photographs, so we could become familiar with the Congo.”¹⁵³

Such study inspired the playwrights to revise certain scenes, helped the designers to create authentic-looking sets and costumes, and enabled the actors to perform in African drumming and dance techniques.¹⁵⁴

On the other hand, the romanticism which Lan Yang refers to, also called for a heightened representation of reality according to Mao’s stance on the relationship between politics and art in the context of the cusp of the cultural revolution: “Life, as reflected in works of literature and art can and ought to be on a higher plane, more intense, more concentrated, more typical, nearer to the ideal, and therefore more universal than actual everyday life”.¹⁵⁵ This dual demand for realism and romanticism, as Cook explains in his analysis of the play, produced a tension between the accurate depiction of past and present reality (at the time of writing) and the hopeful depiction of its present and future development.

¹⁵²Larson, C. R., 1968. War Drums in the Congo: The Chinese Version. *Africa Today*, 15(1), pp. 31-34.

¹⁵³Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 575.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Mao, T. T., 1966. *Mao Tse Tung Internet Archive*. [En ligne]. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/ch32.htm> [Accès le 23 July 2022].

As the playwrights explained, “Congo’s today is China’s yesterday; shared experiences of suffering and enmity bind our hearts together”.¹⁵⁶ China’s own historical fight for liberation and its modern development path was then imagined in the play as the forefront of a broader world revolution against colonial and imperial reactionaries.¹⁵⁷

Taken this tension between reality and romanticism into consideration, the following analysis will situate the play’s expression of Chinese solidarity with the Congo in line with Mao’s anti-imperialist project and its larger transcultural global imaginary of the 1960s. The argument of the analysis will follow that by expressing Chinese solidarity with the Congo, the play advocates for a new, alternative Chinese world order able to compete with the Euro-American imperialist model, and in the wake of the Sino-Soviet Split, also the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁸

5.1. Mao’s Anti-Imperialism and the Congo Crisis

“War Drums on the Equator”, as previously stated, represents a Chinese internationalist drama which is based on the Sinocentric master narrative which assumes China as the centre of a worldwide revolution against colonial and imperial tendencies ever more present in the 1960s. Such international narrative, however, was at once global and local in its orientation. While the content of the play was principally focused on the courageous struggle of the “Congolese people”, it also retained important implications about China’s own revolution at the time and its global ramifications. More specifically, the global imaginings present in the play can be read in parallel with the CCP’s own crisis at the time.¹⁵⁹

At the beginning of the 1960s, China’s socialist revolution was failing; the Great Leap forward had derailed into staggering famine, exacerbating deep fissures with the Party leadership in the process.¹⁶⁰ Internationally, China’s now open rift with the Soviet Union isolated it from most of the socialist world.¹⁶¹ As Jeremy Friedman explains in his chapter on “Development and Struggle” in his book “The Sino-Soviet Competition in the Third World”, the Sino-Indian wars of 1959 and 1962 were significant moments in China’s isolation at the time, since it undermined the Sino-Indian relationship once championed as a model

¹⁵⁶ Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 574.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Vanhove, P., 2021. Locating Lumumba. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 58(2), pp. 264-285.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Friedman, J., 2015. The Cultural Revolution and its Discontents, 1966-1969. Dans: O. A. Westad, éd. *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, pp. 148-179.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

for Asian-African solidarity.¹⁶² At home and abroad Chinese socialism was therefore in crisis, with the consequence of the waning of the CCP's legitimacy. In reaction to this evolution, Mao called again for a mass political mobilisation.¹⁶³ Years before the Cultural Revolution, a Chinese internationalism was called into action.¹⁶⁴ Such internationalism did not simply speak of socialist solidarity, but of the Asian-African-Latin American world and the justice of the non-white global majority, categorised by the CCP as the Third World.¹⁶⁵

As Robeson Frazier explains in his book chapter on "the 1960s, The East is Red and Black", Mao framed China's doctrine of internationalism through his theory of intermediate zones.¹⁶⁶ Mao conceived the intermediate zones geographically and politically, defining it as a cluster of countries that are all oppressed by the "imperial" tendencies of either the United States or the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁷ This oppression, moreover, is a result of the competition between the two "imperial" actors, in their respective attempt to weaken and therefore dominate the other.¹⁶⁸ Accordingly, Mao's vision of the intermediate zone was profoundly political, in that he advocated for a unification of the countries of such zone so to aid one another in their common anti-imperialist struggle.¹⁶⁹

The Congo crisis (as one of many Cold War proxy wars) therefore presented itself as a unique political opportunity for the CCP to represent China as the leader of such global struggle. The secession of Katanga encouraged and funded by Belgian-controlled interests, looked like a typical example of lingering European colonial control, and thus required active international solidarity among the oppressed. The assassination of Lumumba followed the same political opportunity, now with U.N. and Washington presumed involvement too. The CCP, accordingly, organised a mass rally in early 1961 in Beijing's Workers Stadium to protest Lumumba's murder.¹⁷⁰ Three years later, on November 28, 1964, the CCP staged another mass demonstration in Tiananmen Square

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 569-595.

¹⁶⁴ Chen, X., 2002. Performing Tiananmen: From Street Theatre to Theatre of the Street. Dans: *Acting the Right Part: Political Theatre and Popular Drama in Contemporary China*.

¹⁶⁵ Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 569-595.

¹⁶⁶ Frazier, R. T., 2015. The 1960s: The East is Red and Black. Dans: *The East Is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 109-192.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso.

as a call against post-war imperialism.¹⁷¹ “War Drums on the Equator” itself, is then to be understood as a response to both rallies.¹⁷² In fact, an excerpt of Mao’s statement at the 1964 rally opens the first scene of “War Drums on the Equator”, heading “Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win”:

“People of the world, unite and defeat the US aggressors and all their running dogs! People of the world, be courageous, and dare to fight, defy difficulties, and advance wave upon wave. Then the whole world will belong to the people. Monsters of all kind shall be destroyed!”¹⁷³

Mao’s invocation to eliminate inhumane forces from the human realm seems to capture what Cook identifies as “the Manichean impulses of the Maoist worldview” in the context of his anti-imperialism project.¹⁷⁴ This worldview is simplistically represented along a duality, by alluding to an imperative to distinguish between friends and foes and to continue the fight between the good and evil.¹⁷⁵ This very excerpt is then to be understood as the very backbone of the overall narrative of “War Drums on the Equator”. Therefore, as the Congolese people learn who their true friends are in the course of the play, they also identify their enemies from the imperialist West, therefore directly exposing Mao’s worldview, and its vision of China as the leader of the Third World.¹⁷⁶

5.2. True Freedom, True Friendship: China’s Solidarity with Black America

In essence, and according to Mao’s anti-imperialism project, “War Drums on the Equator” proposes that true Congolese freedom cannot be found without first understanding true friendship. The character of Mwanka is then at the centre of the play, as he is the one encountering true forms of friendships while experiencing betrayal from false ones. The development of the character in the play then reflects the official Chinese resistance against U.S. imperialism, and its call for a Third World internationalism by expressing the country’s solidarity with African American civil rights activists more specifically.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 569-595.

¹⁷³ Huang, L., Feng-Yi, C., Yin-Wu, L. & Tsu-Yi, C., 1966. *War Drums on the Equator: A Play of Seven Scenes*. translated by Gladys Yang éd. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, preface, p. I.

¹⁷⁴ Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 569.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

The second scene of the play, titled “Unrest in Oasis”, then covers Mwanka’s “false friendship” with U.N. and American soldiers. The scene opens six months after independence, as rumours circulate that the national hero of Lumumba has been captured and put into jail. American soldiers force Congolese workers to build a U.N. airfield near the capital. The scene, at this point, centres around Mwanka who easily accepts his new friendship with U.S. soldiers by taking a job as a chauffeur for them. It is then only at the end of the third scene that Mwanka seems to realise the “true” nature of his friendship with the Americans, when the “imperialists” force him to carry out the execution of Lumumba. Mwanka refuses the order and is condemned to death.

But if false friends are exposed in the second and third scene, new friends are found in the fourth scene “An Act of Justice”. Following his condemnation, Mwanka is marched out to the jungle, but at the last minute black American soldier named Warren frees him into the hands of a returned political exile named Molobo, who declares, “We are united by common sufferings and a common hatred, Warren, you are a true brother”.¹⁷⁷ In the following scene, Warren an impassioned speech:

“As soon as I was big enough to understand, my mother told me that all over Africa there were people who were being as cruelly treated as us American negroes. Lash by the same whips, shedding the same tears, with the same pulse beats, the same heart-throbs. If my mother knew that I’d shed blood today for my Congolese brothers, she’d turn towards Africa and cry: Well done, son!”¹⁷⁸

Warren’s speech, here, raises the question of the role of race in the anti-imperialist struggle, which Cook also points out to in his analysis. It is clear in this passage that Warren discovers that common struggle is the basis of “true” friendship, but the question whether the kinship between this black soldier and his African “brothers” means the struggle against imperialism is exclusively a racial one remains open at this point. Historically, the Soviet Union indeed accused the CCP of using race as a means to gain support in the Third World.¹⁷⁹ In connection with the American civil rights movement, Mao stated that “the evil system of colonialism and imperialism arose and thrived in the enslavement of the Negroes and the trade in Negroes, and it will surely come to its end with the complete

¹⁷⁷ Huang, L., Feng-Yi, C., Yin-Wu, L. & Tsu-Yi, C., 1966. *War Drums on the Equator: A Play of Seven Scenes*. translated by Gladys Yang éd. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, p. 43.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁷⁹ Friedman, J., 2015. The Cultural Revolution and its Discontents, 1966-1969. Dans: O. A. Westad, éd. *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, pp. 148-179.

emancipation of the black people”.¹⁸⁰ But while Mao’s comment linked the historical struggle of the African with that of Black Americans, later in the play it becomes clear that their common suffering is in fact a question of class rather than that of race only.¹⁸¹ In the last scene of the play, a Congolese guerrilla asks a white prisoner: “Do you think our struggle today is black men against white men? You’re wrong. All the oppressed people in the world, regardless of race and colour, are brothers”.¹⁸² Contrary to Aimé Césaire who explicitly drew a line between the struggle of people of colour against racism and the struggle of the French worker against French capitalism, Mao himself defines true friendship as a form of mutual affection that arises from an awareness of a shared condition which seems to overcome the question of race.

On a higher level then, Warren seems to perfectly represent the official CCP push to express the country’s solidarity with African American civil rights activists. In China’s eyes, Afro-America was an integral part of the Afro-Asian world order that they sought to promote in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split.¹⁸³ “War Drums on the Equator”, therefore aimed to show domestic and international audiences that China was not just offering its support to anticolonial movements in Asia and Africa, but that it was also standing side by side with pro-Beijing African American activists such as W.E.B Du Bois and Shirley Du Bois, or Marxist feminist Vicky Garvin and freedom fighters Mabel and Robert Williams.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, in the eyes of many African Americans on the left, this Third-Worldist China offered a more viable alternative than the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁵

African American activist W.E.B. Du Bois, by example widened his famous dictum about the importance of the colour line in the 20th century to include Asians.¹⁸⁶ Mao welcomed Du Bois and his wife for an 8-week tour of China where Du Bois to tell black America “The truth

¹⁸⁰ Mao, T. T., 1966. *Mao Tse Tung Internet Archive*. [En ligne]. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/ch32.htm> [Accès le 23 July 2022].

¹⁸¹ Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 569-595.

¹⁸² Huang, L., Feng-Yi, C., Yin-Wu, L. & Tsu-Yi, C., 1966. *War Drums on the Equator: A Play of Seven Scenes*. translated by Gladys Yang éd. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, p. 77.

¹⁸³ Frazier, R. T., 2015. The 1960s: The East is Red and Black. Dans: *The East Is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 109-192.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Vanhove, P., 2021. Locating Lumumba. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 58(2), pp. 264-285.

¹⁸⁶ Frazier, R. T., 2015. The 1960s: The East is Red and Black. Dans: *The East Is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 109-192.

about communism”.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, Marxist feminist Vicki Garvin settled in China in 1964 where she was a representative of black radicalism in China until 1970 as a response to Mao’s support for black liberation struggles.¹⁸⁸ Freedom fighters Mabel and Robert Williams too visited and lived in China to contribute to Mao’s “world revolution” that would emerge from a coalition of Chinese peasants, African Americans, and the decolonising world.¹⁸⁹ Interestingly enough, Aimé Césaire himself also demonstrated a positive opinion on Mao’s communism which he briefly mentioned in resignation letter to Maurice Thorez, previously analysed in the previous chapter on “Une Saison au Congo”. Césaire states that “without being very familiar to it [Chinese communism], I have a very strong prejudice in its favour. And I expect it not to slip into the monstrous errors that have disfigured European communism”.¹⁹⁰ Previously in his letter, Césaire refers to the errors of European communism as lying in “a certain habit of doing for us, thinking for us, of challenging our possessions of a right to initiative”.¹⁹¹ Césaire therefore praises Mao’s communism for countering the Eurocentrism in the USSR’s “communism by offering a variant of USSR’s turn to Stalinism”.¹⁹² Taken it all into consideration, the Third World solidarity between African-America and Communist China (and French Caribbean), was to some extent answered and responded to on both ends. As such, giving the timing of the play, and the Third World solidarity taking place, “War Drums on the Equator” was staged at a time not only to foster Sino-African American relations, but also to sustain them.

5.3. True Friendship, True Freedom; Chinese support of Lumumbist insurgencies (1964)

If “War Drums on the Equator” is centred on the CCP’s official push to express the country’s solidarity with African American civil rights activists, it also, although subtly, makes references to the PRC’s real commitments in the Congo crisis after Lumumba’s assassination. More specifically, the play makes reference to the Chinese support of the Lumumbist insurgencies in early 1964. As a continuation of its anti-colonial and anti-imperialist foreign policy in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split, the CCP

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Césaire, A., 2010. Letter to Maurice Thorez. *Social Text*, Translated by Chike Jeffers (28), pp. 148.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 145.

¹⁹² Later in the letter, however, Césaire declares that he is more interested “in seeing the budding and blossoming of the African variety of communism” as it would “offer us useful, valuable, and original variants” (p. 148). Despite Césaire’s appreciation of Mao’s version of communism, his intension was therefore never to adhere to Mao’s communism in the first place.

supported such insurgencies in their rally to what they referred to as Congo's Second Independence¹⁹³. The renewed insurgency fought in two different areas: in the western part of the Congo, a local uprising erupted in the region of Kwilu, meanwhile a more generalised Eastern Rebellion united multiple groups who identified themselves as "Simbas" (lions in Swahili).¹⁹⁴ Guerrilla fighters also moved freely across international borders with Burundi to the east of Congo-Brazzaville to the north.¹⁹⁵ In July 1964, Moïse Tshombe vowed to end the insurgencies.¹⁹⁶ By September, the rebel forces had the control over more than one third of the Congo, including Stanleyville.¹⁹⁷ Following this conquest, the rebels proclaimed a "People's Republic of the Congo" (République Populaire du Congo) while portraying the existing Congolese government as being controlled by the west.¹⁹⁸ Thousands of "westernised" Congolese were executed in systematic purges by the "Simbas"; in late October 1964 nearly 1,000 European and U.S. citizens were taken hostage by the rebel forces in Stanleyville.¹⁹⁹ In response to this, government forces laid siege to the city with the help of South African and Rhodesian mercenaries, Belgian paratroopers, and US airlift support in November 1964.²⁰⁰ It is then against this alliance of domestic reactionaries and international "neo-imperialists" that Mao exhorted the people in the Congo, and indeed the people of the world, to "dare to fight, defy difficulties, and advance wave upon wave" during his speech at his mass demonstration in Tiananmen Square as a call against post-war imperialism²⁰¹ (Sun, 2022).

Scene 6, "The Road to Freedom", then dramatizes the rebels' fight for "Second Independence". Molobo and others are held prisoners near the River Congo. When the "neo-imperialists" try to buy off his

¹⁹³Sun, J. Y., 2022. Supplied cash and arms but losing anyway: Chinese support of the Lumumbist insurgencies in the Congo Crisis (1959-65). *Cold War History*, pp. 1-20.
¹⁹⁴"The Second Independence", translated from "La Deuxième Indépendance" was a revolutionary attempt to stand up for the abuses and injustices and forms of oppressions committed after the "first" true independence of the country.

¹⁹⁴Nothomb, P., 2014. Stanleyville 1964. *Mémoires du Congo*, 1(32), pp. 3-13.

¹⁹⁵O'Malley, A., 2021. The Simba Rebellion, the Cold War, and the Stanleyville Hostages in the Congo. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 23(2), pp. 75-99.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

¹⁹⁷De Witte, L., 2017. The suppression of the Congo rebellions and the rise of Mobutu, 1963-5. *The International History Review*, 39(1), pp. 107-125.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹⁹Ibid.

²⁰⁰Ibid.

²⁰¹Cook (2019) mentions in his research that in the winter of 1963-64, at the very beginnings of the rebel expansion, Premier Zhou Enlai and Foreign Affairs Chen Yi of China already conducted a ten-nation tour in Africa, during which they proclaimed the revolutionary situation on the continent to be "excellent" (p. 584). Cook argues that at this point, after the assassination of Lumumba, the neo-imperialist intensions of western actors were clearly exposed and "the revelation of true friendship made possible an awakening of true freedom" (p. 584).

support with bribes and an official position, he angrily refuses. Alluding to the Chinese revolution as a model for the Congo, he declares, “The sun has already risen in the east. The people in Africa know how to greet the future”.²⁰² Scene 7, “The Fire Spreads”, then makes explicit reference to the ways the Congolese rebels have, in line with the historical events, found inspiration in Mao’s well-known military writings to overcome “the western enemy”. At the end of the play, the rebels (including Mwanka) initiate their armed struggle. The scene ends dramatically with the cries of “Mai Mulele!”²⁰³

This battle cry is then the drama’s only intimation of China’s real commitments in the Congo Crisis.²⁰⁴ But while the play does not insist on the significance of the name “Mulele” however, it is crucial in this part of the analysis. Pierre Mulele was in fact the leader of the Kwilu rebellion who was a Chinese-trained and Chinese-backed partisan who endorsed Maoism in his rebellion in the Congo crisis.²⁰⁵ On the eve of the independence, Mulele was the secretary general of the newly formed Parti solidaire africain (PSA), a left-leaning multi-ethnic federalist party which joined the coalition government led by Lumumba’s Mouvement National Congolais (MNC).²⁰⁶ Following the assassination of Lumumba, Mulele joined Gizenga’s shadow government in Stanleyville and served as an ambassador in Egypt, where he travelled extensively in search for support for the Stanleyville regime.²⁰⁷ In late 1961, a year after the assassination of Lumumba, Mulele visited Guinea, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union, and in early 1962, he continued on to China, where he stayed for at least six months.²⁰⁸ While in China, Mulele received an education in Maoist political thought and organisation as well as training in the tactics and techniques of guerrilla warfare.²⁰⁹ In the summer of 1963, Mulele returned to the Congo where he raised a guerrilla army of several thousand soldiers in Kwilu.²¹⁰ In January 1964, Mulele and his followers launched a Maoist-style “people’s-war” targeting foreigners (Europeans

²⁰² Huang, L., Feng-Yi, C., Yin-Wu, L. & Tsu-Yi, C., 1966. *War Drums on the Equator: A Play of Seven Scenes*. translated by Gladys Yang éd. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, p. 73.

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 81.

²⁰⁴ Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 569-595.

²⁰⁵ Sun, J. Y., 2022. Supplied cash and arms but losing anyway: Chinese support of the Lumumbist insurgencies in the Congo Crisis (1959-65). *Cold War History*, pp. 1-20.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 569-595.

and mainly Belgian citizens) and reactionaries (government functionaries, missionaries, and state security forces).²¹¹

But while Mao's China provided inspiration to the insurgencies in the Congo after the assassination of Lumumba, Jodie Yzhou Sun's research on "Chinese support of the Lumumbist insurgencies in the Congo crisis (1959-65)" shows that China's material support was only limited. Apart from irregular training opportunities, modest supply of small arms, ammunition, and explosives, and occasional sums of cash, China's engagement in the Congo crisis was mainly symbolic.²¹² By including Mulele in "War Drums on the Equator", the play ultimately reiterates this symbolism, and China's designation of Mulele as what Sun referred to as "a genuine revolutionary leader" in Central Africa.²¹³ In practice, China's standard for such "genuine revolutionary leaderships" appeared "anti-imperialistic" rather than "anti-capitalistic" and was therefore more compatible with radical African socialism than its Soviet equivalent. The figure of Mulele as a martyr of anti-imperialism therefore became ever more important as Lumumba himself.

In November 1965, in another coup d'état, Mobutu managed to crush the Eastern Rebellion and destroy Mulele's military base in Kwilu.²¹⁴ Mobutu now declared himself the "Second National Hero" (after Lumumba) and claimed Lumumba's legacy, extending amnesty to any remaining Lumumbist rebels.²¹⁵ But when Mulele returned to Leopoldville in 1968, he was publicly denounced and violently assassinated. It seems then that the political stance of "War Drums on the Equator" lost its momentum now that Mulele was assassinated, and the Congolese rebellions defeated; the performances of the play ended around that same time.²¹⁶

In the end, this analysis of "War Drums on the Equator" has read the divergence between the drama's romantic projection of the 'freedom' of the Congo and its actual historical epilogue in parallel with China's domestic and international political situation at the time. The continuing thread of the drama seems to follow Mao's anti-imperialist project and its larger transcultural global imaginary of the 1960s in which false friends need to be exposed and destroyed, and true friendships must be forged in so doing. The argument of the analysis follows that by expressing Chinese solidarity with the Congo, the play advocates for a new, alternative Chinese world order able to compete with the Euro-American

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Sun, J. Y., 2022. Supplied cash and arms but losing anyway: Chinese support of the Lumumbist insurgencies in the Congo Crisis (1959-65). *Cold War History*, pp. 1-20.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 14

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Cook, A. C., 2019. Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis. *Positions: East Asia culture critique*, 27(4), pp. 569-595.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

imperialist model. As far as ‘true’ friendships go, the drama is mainly centred around China’s official push for the country’s solidarity with African American civil rights activists through the development of the character of Mwanka. Giving the timing of the release of the play, and the actual Third World connections taking place at the time, “War Drums on the Equator” was staged at a time not only to foster Sino-African American relations, but also to sustain them. Although less explicitly, the play also makes an important reference to the PRC’s real commitments during the Congo crisis after Lumumba’s assassination. More specifically, the play ends with an important battle cry, directly referencing Pierre Mulele, a Chinese-trained and Chinese-backed partisan who endorsed Maoism in his rebellion in the Congo crisis and the leader of the Kwilu rebellion. By including Mulele in “War Drums on the Equator”, the play ultimately reiterates the symbolism of China’s limited support to the Congo crisis, and China’s designation of Mulele as a “genuine revolutionary leadership” in Central Africa. All together, the Congo crisis presented itself as a unique political opportunity for the CCP’s global struggle. The secession of Katanga encouraged and funded by Belgian-controlled interests, looked like a typical example of lingering European colonial control, and thus required active international solidarity among the oppressed.

6. Funnyhouse of a Negro (1964)

Only 6 months after the assassination of Lumumba, in July 1961, American playwright, Adrienne Kennedy, wrote one of her most important works, the one-act play of “Funnyhouse of a Negro”. The script itself was published in 1962, and the play opened for the first time on January 14, 1964, at New York City’s East End Theatre.²¹⁷ That same year, the play received an Obie award for “most distinguished play”.²¹⁸ Adrienne Kennedy is known to explore issues of race, kinship, and violence in American society, and many of her plays, including “Funnyhouse of a Negro”, are autobiographically inspired. Kennedy was then born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in a middle-class black family with white/English ancestors but moved to an integrated neighbourhood in Cleveland at the age of four.²¹⁹ Kennedy did not particularly experience racism until she went to attend Ohio State University where the intolerant atmosphere so closely mirrored the socio-cultural situation in the deep South.²²⁰ It is this experience that prompted Kennedy to write about biographically inspired issues related to race in her plays.²²¹ As for “Funnyhouse of a Negro”, Kennedy wrote it in Ghana when accompanying her husband who was then a professor at Hunter college on a research trip sponsored by the African Research Foundation.²²² Kennedy was then in Ghana at the time of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961 which clearly affected her writings deeply, as it led her to make Lumumba one of the characters of “Funnyhouse of a Negro”.²²³

Kennedy’s play “Funnyhouse of a Negro” (1964) then tells the story of Negro-Sarah, a daughter of a white mother and a black father

²¹⁷Boucher, G., 2006. fractured identity and agency and the plays of Adrienne Kennedy. *Feminist Review*, 84(84), pp. 84-103.

²¹⁸Hickner, E. J., 2011. *"History will one day have its say": Patrice Lumumba and the Black Freedom Movement*. West Lafayette, Indiana: PhD Thesis, Purdue University Graduate School, p. 285.

²¹⁹ Overbeck, L., 1989. Adrienne Kennedy. *Contemporary Authors Bibliographical Series American Dramatists*, Volume 3, pp. 109-122.

²²⁰Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²²Vanhome, P., 2021. Locating Lumumba. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 58(2), pp. 264-285.

²²³Overbeck, L., 1989. Adrienne Kennedy. *Contemporary Authors Bibliographical Series American Dramatists*, Volume 3, pp. 109-122.

who experiences a schizophrenic struggle as a consequence of her mixed-raced identity. The Duchess of Hapsburg, Queen Victoria, Jesus, and Patrice Lumumba are fragments of Negro-Sarah's psyche, each forming one of her "selves". Her different "selves" are then all haunted by their adoration of a White European "nobility" in contrast with the "vulgarity" of the Black American life in the rural South. Negro-Sarah is ashamed of her Black heritage which seems to be embodied in the ghost of her father throughout the play.²²⁴ On the other hand, she aspires to Whiteness by studying English at university and worshipping a gigantic statue of Queen Victoria in her room. The Duchess of Hapsburg then represents Sarah's racist subconscious as her character represents European colonialism at large. Queen Victoria represents Negro-Sarah's obsession with Whiteness, while Jesus is depicted as an emblem for Christianity.²²⁵ Finally, Patrice Lumumba represents Sarah's self-hatred and is also a manifestation of her father.²²⁶ Lumumba is described in the stage directions as "a black man whose head appears to be split in two and who is carrying an ebony mask".²²⁷ He only speaks once, when he delivers a lengthy monologue towards the middle of the play. Eventually, Negro-Sarah's self-hatred towards her own roots drives her to commit suicide at the end of the play.

Today, the play is often identified within the literary world as postmodern for outlining the complexity of Negro-Sarah's bi-racial identity as being intrinsically part of a black consciousness.²²⁸ Yet, as Georgie Boucher explains in her analysis, "Funnyhouse of a Negro" was not well received among both the African American arts community at the time due to a seemingly negative portrayal of the African-American figure of Negro-Sarah in the play²²⁹. The Black Arts Movement (BAM), part of the overall Black Power Movement, accused Kennedy of self-denigration

²²⁴ Boucher, G., 2006. fractured identity and agency and the plays of Adrienne Kennedy. *Feminist Review*, 84(84), pp. 84-103.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Kennedy, A., 1969. *Funnyhouse of a Negro: A Play in One Act*. London, Toronto: Samuel French Inc, stage directions.

²²⁸ hooks, b., 1992. Critical reflections: Adrienne Kennedy, the writer, the work. Dans: P. Bryant-Jackson & L. Overbeck, éds. *Intersecting Boundaries: The Theatre of Adrienne Kennedy*.

Gilbert, H. & Tompkins, J., 1996. Post-Colonial Histories. Dans: *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 106-163.

Diamond, E., 1997. *Unmaking mimesis : essays on feminism and theatre*. London: Routledge.

²²⁹ According to Christy Gavin (1999, p. 165), "Kenney was so 'devastated' by the hostile reactions of the critics to the first commercial Off-Broadway production [of *Funnyhouse of a Negro*] that she avoided the theatre and went to England to recover".

Gavin, C., 1999. Adrienne Kennedy. Dans: *African American Women Playwrights: A Research Guide*. New York: Garland Publishers, pp. 145-186.

for writing “non-polemical” plays.²³⁰ The choice of Patrice Lumumba as one of Negro-Sarah’s “selves”, in particular, was a provocative one. By making the figure of Lumumba the embodiment of Negro-Sarah’s shame towards her black roots, Kennedy seemed to have countered the popular perception of Lumumba among African Americans at the time, as a symbol of black solidarity within the African diaspora. That is not to say that Kennedy held a hostile position towards Lumumba himself. Instead, the figure of Lumumba within Kennedy’s play is indeed similar to Césaire’s in “Une Saison au Congo”. As Boucher explains, “it evokes the history of a failed nationalist leader, whose goals were not only opposed and oppressed by imperialist power, but also by fellow African leaders”.²³¹ It is then by reading Adrienne’s own identity struggle in parallel with Lumumba’s own double-bind as both witness to and victim of Cold War political rivalry in the wake of decolonisation, that the rest of this analysis will argue that Kennedy used the figure of Lumumba as a means to de-essentialise the Black Power movement, with the means to supportively deconstruct it.

6.1. Black Power Movement, Black Nationalism, and the Civil Rights Movement

Unlike critical studies that identify Kennedy’s work in “Funnyhouse of a Negro” as postmodern, the immediate reception of the play in the mid 1960s rarely categorised it within a “Black Power consciousness” promoted by the Black Power movement of the 1960s.²³² Similar to the Negritude Movement, The Black Power movement also promoted a well-defined “Black Unity” on the base that African Americans were oppressed and rejected by U.S. culture and society.²³³ As Mance Williams explains in his historical analysis of the movement, the leader of the movement Malcolm X “laid the groundwork for a new Black value system based on the rejection of all American values ... [and] related to African Americans as ‘colonised’ within the United States”.²³⁴ The Black Power Movement at the time of Kennedy’s writing of “Funnyhouse of a Negro” was then influenced by anticolonial struggles, including that of Patrice Lumumba himself and his nationalist project for the newly independent Congo.²³⁵ As Boucher explains, “Black Power hoped to

²³⁰ Boucher, G., 2006. fractured identity and agency and the plays of Adrienne Kennedy. *Feminist Review*, 84(84), pp. 84-103.

²³¹ Boucher, G., 2006. fractured identity and agency and the plays of Adrienne Kennedy. *Feminist Review*, 84(84), pp. 87.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Williams, M., 1985. *Black Theatre in the 1960s and the 1970s*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, p. 18.

²³⁵ Boucher, G., 2006. fractured identity and agency and the plays of Adrienne Kennedy. *Feminist Review*, 84(84), pp. 84-103.

establish a relationship between Africans from the continent and those living in the diaspora by promoting a separatist African-American identity".²³⁶

BAM's purpose, as Mance Williams explains, was to "build a stronger and more militant psychology to offset a defeatist psychology conditioned by a history of forced servitude, discrimination, and racial denigration".²³⁷ The aim of BAM's theatre was then to develop a Black collective identity that only produced positive images of African Americans.²³⁸ Negro-Sarah's aspiration to Whiteness and her shame towards her Black roots clearly did not align with the BAM's normalised definition of a Black Power consciousness. Instead, Kennedy seems to have countered the principles behind the BAM by not essentialising the identities of the characters of her plays, as "she did not see the promotion of "Black consciousness" as her responsibility, as Boucher explains, "perceiving her role as primarily that of an artist and not an activist".²³⁹

bell hooks, in retrospect, acknowledges the provocative nature of Kennedy's work, but insists on arguing that it "offered a critique of racial assimilation in America well ahead of its time".²⁴⁰ More specifically, the controversy around "Negro-Sarah's" rejection of her own Black identity made Kennedy's play ever more confrontational, considering that the question of assimilation caused a ideological drift between the Black Power movement and the Civil Rights movement in the early 1960s in the first place. Contrary to the cultural assimilation based on universal equality which Césaire critiqued through his Negritude movement, assimilation in America has historically been forged on the basis of racial difference. Rather than taking the question of race out of the picture, American assimilation policies were based on the essential binary identities which determined the segregation policies that were in place in the South at the time of Kennedy's writing.²⁴¹ As Boucher explains in her analysis of the play, historically, the term "assimilation" in the American context, was ascribed to "the process by which the 'Free Blacks' of the emancipation era were rewarded for escaping their inherent 'negative' African characteristics by embracing 'upward mobility' of a White American value system".²⁴² While opposing in

²³⁶ Boucher, G., 2006. fractured identity and agency and the plays of Adrienne Kennedy. *Feminist Review*, 84(84), pp. 88.

²³⁷ Williams, M., 1985. *Black Theatre in the 1960s and the 1970s*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, p. 6.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 88.

²⁴⁰ hooks, b., 1992. Critical reflections: Adrienne Kennedy, the writer, the work. Dans: P. Bryant-Jackson & L. Overbeck, eds. *Intersecting Boundaries: The Theatre of Adrienne Kennedy*, p. 32.

²⁴¹ Boucher, G., 2006. fractured identity and agency and the plays of Adrienne Kennedy. *Feminist Review*, 84(84), pp. 84-103.

²⁴² Ibid., p. 88.

essence, both French and American forms of assimilation have then come to be regarded as racist as they argued to acculturate minority cultures into a single monoculture.

Kennedy's bi-racial character, Negro-Sarah, then experiences a crisis of identity as a result of a sense of falling out on both stereotypes of Blackness and Whiteness.²⁴³ The Civil Rights movement, in this regard, aimed to eradicate such subjective and legal forms of segregation through the promotion of integration. As the head of the Black Power movement, Malcolm X countered such goal, however, as he believed desegregation could not be achieved through integration, as he understood integration as "the assimilation of African Americans into corrupt white society".²⁴⁴ In line with Césaire's ideals of the Negritude movement, Malcolm X advocated for a unity in which the African American community would reconnect to its original African roots. Accordingly, and under the label of Black Nationalism, Malcolm X advocated for the African American community to sustain economic self-sufficiency, therefore rejecting the premise of multi-racial unity as he believed that black separatism would be a better outcome in the long term.²⁴⁵

By portraying the complexity of protagonist Negro-Sarah's psyche, Kennedy seems to challenge the question of assimilation which lies at the source of the rupture between the Black Power movement and that of the Civil Rights movement. More specifically, Kennedy portrays "Negro-Sarah" in a place where she desires such form of assimilation, yet the overall aim of the play is not to promote nor to celebrate any form of integration. On the contrary, "Funnyhouse of a Negro" represents the desire on the part of "Negro-Sarah" to assimilate to a White culture, but more importantly, it expresses the traumatic outcomes of such desires. Negro-Sarah's schizophrenia, as such, can be interpreted as a punishment for exactly denying assimilation and thus denying her black heritage.²⁴⁶ To this end, "Funnyhouse of a Negro" may be interpreted as

²⁴³ Boucher, G., 2006. fractured identity and agency and the plays of Adrienne Kennedy. *Feminist Review*, 84(84), pp. 84-103.

²⁴⁴ Gavin, C., 1999. Adrienne Kennedy. Dans: *African American Women Playwrights: A Research Guide*. New York: Garland Publishers, pp. 145.

Interestingly, Kennedy's parents, were members of the NAACP, a Civil Rights Group that Malcolm X described as "a white man's conception of a black man's organisation". This could perhaps also be read in line with Kennedy's critique of the Black Power movement itself.

²⁴⁵ Smethurst, J. E., 2005. Bandung World: The West Coast, the Black Arts Movement, and the Development of Revolutionary Nationalism, Cultural Nationalism, Third Worldism, and Multiculturalism. Dans: *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, pp. 247-318.

²⁴⁶ Boucher, G., 2006. fractured identity and agency and the plays of Adrienne Kennedy. *Feminist Review*, 84(84), pp. 84-103.

a critique to assimilation in alignment with the Black Power movement at the time, contrary to the movement's interpretation of the play itself.

Boucher, however, goes a step further in her analysis by arguing that Kennedy reveals a more complex political stance through her portrayal of the complex psyche of "Negro-Sarah". As well as critiquing assimilation, Boucher argues that "Kennedy's character [Negro-Sarah] portrays an inability to find empowerment identity by the way of an 'African essence', and thus, neither integration nor Black power remains an easy solution".²⁴⁷ To put this differently, it is then in between black essentialism, and white assimilation that Kennedy configures the complex character of Negro-Sarah. Taking this argument into consideration, one can argue that Kennedy deconstructs the different Black nationalist identities with her work on "Funnyhouse of a Negro", endorsed by both the Civil Rights movement and the Black Power movement. To this end, by portraying the complex psyche of Negro-Sarah Kennedy asserts the possibilities of alternative positions of African American identities that fall in between a form of white assimilation or black essentialism.

6.2. Kennedy's Lumumba and her Challenge to Black Essentialism

Considering Kennedy's challenge to the African American identities in both Black Power movement and Civil Rights movement, her choice of Patrice Lumumba as one of the protagonist's "selves" was carefully thought through. At the time of her writing, Lumumba had in fact become a symbol of black internationalism and solidarity and gained much attention among African Americans, especially in the Black Power movement.²⁴⁸ As James Smethurst explains in his book chapter on African American Third Worldism, Lumumba had become shorthand for the solidarity of left-wing African Americans, as the history of colonialism and its Cold War afterlives echoed a form of racialised oppression that was similar to their own situation at the time.²⁴⁹ During a speech given at a rally of the Organisation of Afro-American Unity held in June 1964, Malcolm X praised Lumumba for being the "the greatest black man who

²⁴⁷ Boucher, G., 2006. fractured identity and agency and the plays of Adrienne Kennedy. *Feminist Review*, 84(84), pp. 89.

²⁴⁸ Vanhove, P., 2021. Locating Lumumba. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 58(2), pp. 264-285.

²⁴⁹ Smethurst, J. E., 2005. Bandung World: The West Coast, the Black Arts Movement, and the Development of Revolutionary Nationalism, Cultural Nationalism, Third Worldism, and Multiculturalism. Dans: *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, pp. 247-318.

ever walked on the African continent”.²⁵⁰ He went on to justify his glorification of Lumumba as a martyr of anti-imperialist struggles: “He didn’t fear anybody. He had those people so scared they had to kill him. They couldn’t buy him, they couldn’t frighten him, they couldn’t reach him.”.²⁵¹ Kennedy’s “Funnyhouse of a Negro” is then informed by this vision of black internationalism and its glorification of Lumumba, yet at the same time she positions herself as a critic in the margins of the movements that picked up Lumumba’s martyrdom. By making Lumumba the embodiment of the shame “Negro-Sarah” beholds towards her black father, Kennedy clearly provokes the popular image of Lumumba. But rather than countering the symbolism attached to the figure, Kennedy’s choice of character can also be understood as a way for her to foreground her (and therefore also Negro-Sarah’s) classed subject position in the activist world in America in the 1960s. More specifically, by portraying Lumumba in “Funnyhouse of a Negro” as a failed national leader, Kennedy seems to be able to draw a parallel with Negro-Sarah’s own African American identity which departs from the essentialist paradigms of the 1960s, as examined in the previous paragraph.

The character of Lumumba in “Funnyhouse of a Negro” is then described in the stage directions as a black man whose head is split in two, and who is carrying an ebony mask.²⁵² The figure of Lumumba only speaks once when he delivers a lengthy monologue in the middle of the play. Most importantly, the monologue is the same as Negro-Sarah’s own monologue earlier in the play:

“MAN. (*Patrice Lumumba*.) ... At present I reside in New York City in a brownstone in the West Nineties. I am an English major at a city college.... I am a student and have occasionally worked in libraries. But mostly I spend my vile days preoccupied with the placement and geometric position of words on paper. I write poetry filling white page after white page with imitations of Sitwell. It is my vile dream to live in rooms with European antiques and my statue of Queen Victoria, photographs of Roman ruins, walls of books, a piano and oriental carpets and to eat my meals on a white glass table.... I need them as an embankment to keep me from reflecting too much upon the fact that I am Patrice Lumumba who haunted my

²⁵⁰ Malcolm X, 1964. *Hartford Archives*. [En ligne]
Available at: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/459.html>
[Accès le 31 July 2022].

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Kennedy, A., 1969. *Funnyhouse of a Negro: A Play in One Act*. London, Toronto: Samuel French Inc, Stage Directions.

mother's conception. They are necessary for me to maintain recognition against myself."²⁵³

In her analysis of the play, bell hooks reflects on this duplicated monologue in the context of Kennedy's wider "postmodern" body of work. In line with Boucher's argument, hooks outlines that in this passage, Kennedy foregrounds her de-essentialised African American identity in a seemingly white world. More so, this autobiographical moment is intertwined with Kennedy's critique of colonial racism. By having Negro-Sarah and Lumumba speak nearly the same words, Kennedy is able to draw a parallel between Negro-Sarah's African American identity and Lumumba's, in that neither seems to fall within forms of white assimilation nor a black essentialism, but rather falls in between. Pieter Vanhove then makes an interesting parallel between Kennedy's African American identity, her alter-ego Negro Sarah and Lumumba in his own analysis, by stating that Lumumba himself was an "evolué" who used the inherently racist and white-dominant institutions of Congolese society under colonialism to critique and eventually overcome the ideological foundations of that very system.²⁵⁴ Vanhove, here, reminds us of Sartre's reading of Lumumba in which he argues that "Lumumba embodied a confluence of two opposing political positions to colonialism, first praising and then criticising the Belgians, first espousing Western capitalist universalism and then adopting non-Western conceptions of the world".²⁵⁵ Accordingly, Vanhove argues that Kennedy's narrative which positions both Lumumba and Negro-Sarah in ambivalence with living a "white" and "bourgeois" lifestyle is to be understood as being informed by an anti-imperialist politics of class and race.²⁵⁶ Therefore, Vanhove states that "before being an icon of anti-imperialist resistance and black internationalism, for Kennedy, Lumumba is a colonial subject who worked his way up through the colonial administration into intellectuality".²⁵⁷ It is then by drawing a parallel between the Negro-Sarah and the figure of Lumumba, that Kennedy foregrounds her de-essentialised African American identity in a seemingly white world, as hooks argues in her own analysis.

Kennedy's autobiography "People That Led To My Plays" is therefore useful in understanding why Lumumba was such an important personal reference for the play.²⁵⁸ Most importantly, it offers an explanation to why and how Kennedy perceives Lumumba as failed

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁵⁴ Vanhove, P., 2021. Locating Lumumba. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 58(2), pp. 264-285.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 279.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 270.

²⁵⁸ Kennedy, A., 1987. *People That Led To My Plays*. New York: Samuel French.

hero, and subsequently a de-essentialising figure which resonates with her own African American identity. Kennedy then recounts how she was accompanying her husband, who had received a grant from the African Research Foundation to Ghana when Lumumba was assassinated. She describes how people in Accra were affected by the dramatic events, which resonated with her own reaction. “Even though I had known of him so briefly”, she writes, “I felt I had been struck a blow. He became a character in my play ... a man with a shattered head” (p. 14).²⁵⁹ Perhaps, the most important revelation comes when Kennedy writes that Lumumba was “merged in my mind with my father” (p. 120).²⁶⁰ This admission can explain why Negro-Sarah’s father is described in “Funnyhouse of a Negro” as a black African missionary teacher who is first cast by one character as someone who “hung himself in a Harlem hotel when Patrice Lumumba died” and is transformed in the last line of the play into a doctor married to a white woman who “lives in the city in rooms with European antiques, photographs of Roman ruins, walls of books and oriental carpets”.²⁶¹ The character of Negro-Sarah’s father, whose living situation mirrors the spaces described in the duplicated monologue, can in other words be read as another instance of her “selves,” as a person of colour who struggles to reconcile his life as a bourgeois intellectual with his race.²⁶² The conflation of the figures of Lumumba and Negro-Sarah with the character of the father in “Funnyhouse of a Negro” can then be read as a story of tragic heroes whose ideals are crushed by their ambiguous and therefore impossible position between their desire to adhere to a white and bourgeois lifestyle, and their black heritage.

6.3. Parallels Between Lumumba and Kennedy

Considering hooks and Boucher’s argument, Lumumba’s ideals can indeed be placed in contrast with both that of an ideal of white assimilating identity, and a black essentialist one. More specifically, Lumumba being both a witness to and victim of Cold War political rivalry in the wake of decolonisation can be interpreted as the reason why he is considered a failed hero, as his double bind makes him outside of both categories of identities. In many of his early speeches, before his embrace of Pan-Africanism, Lumumba indeed shared a Western vision for

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

²⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 120.

²⁶¹ Kennedy, A., 1969. *Funnyhouse of a Negro: A Play in One Act*. London, Toronto: Samuel French Inc, Stage Directions, p. 24.

²⁶² Vanhove, P., 2021. Locating Lumumba. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 58(2), pp. 264-285.

Congolese independence.²⁶³ Such Western conceptions proposed a neo-colonial system of governance under the project known under the Plan Van Bilsen released in 1955, which would have translated into the perpetuation of the apartheid regime of the Belgian Congo during its process of becoming independent.²⁶⁴

The plan proposed by prof. Jef Van Bilsen himself, included a colonial policy in the Congo in which “évolués” would be bolstered with the idea to prepare the Congo for autonomy within a period of thirty years.²⁶⁵ This meant that by 1985, the Congo would have been ready to join the Belgian state in a federation of independent states, for mutual commercial benefit. In the meantime, however, the impact of post-war constitutional reforms introduced in the neighbouring territories, created a climate of social unrest which arguably led to a rising nationalist sentiment within the Congo.²⁶⁶ As a reaction to the Plan Van Bilsen, Kasa-Vubu’s political party of the Alliance des Bakongo (ABAKO), published a political manifesto in 1956, calling for an immediate independence instead.²⁶⁷ After four years of nationalist agitation, the Belgian government invited a broad spectrum of nationalist organisations to a Round Table Conference in Brussels to officially work out the conditions of a transfer of power.²⁶⁸ Six months later, the Congo formally acceded to independence, with the Congolese Nationalist Movement (MNC) as the head of the new government.²⁶⁹

Before launching the MNC, however, Lumumba supported the pathway proposed by Van Bilsen and pleaded with his fellow Africans to become “citoyens de l’humanité” (“citizens of humanity”) rather than resort to nationalism.²⁷⁰ According to Quinonez and Murillo, it is at the Pan African Conference in 1958 in Accra that pushed Lumumba shifted to a radical view on independence.²⁷¹ This conference was attended by delegates from independent movements in areas still under European colonial rule, as well as by delegates from the newly

²⁶³ Van Lierde, J. & Sartre, J.-P., 1965. *La Pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba*. Paris: Presence africaine.

²⁶⁴ De Witte, L., 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. translated by A. Wright and R. Fenby éd. New York: Verso.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Beke, D., 2000. Jef van Bilsen, de onafhankelijkheid van Congo en de visie op Lumumba. *Afrika Focus*, 16(1-2), pp. 35-60.

²⁶⁷ De Villers, G., 2009. Formes de conscience et de pensée politiques dans le Congo de la décolonisation. Dans: N. Thousignant, éd. *Le manifeste Conscience africaine (1956)*. Bruxelles: Presses de l’Université de Saint-Louis, pp. 183-205.

²⁶⁸ Beke, D., 2000. Jef van Bilsen, de onafhankelijkheid van Congo en de visie op Lumumba. *Afrika Focus*, 16(1-2), pp. 35-60.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Vanhove, P., 2021. Locating Lumumba. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 58(2), pp. 271.

²⁷¹ Quinonez, J. & Murillo, B., 2021. Revisiting Lumumba’s Political Identity Through a Colonial Lens in De-Colonial Congo (1956-1965). *The Toro Historical Review*, 10(1), pp. 24-54.

independent African nations to discuss different paths to independence and to resist neo-colonial forces. At this conference, the political reality became clearer in Lumumba's mind and the neo-colonial intensions of the Western actors behind their support in the Congolese independence more specifically.²⁷² Lumumba, accordingly, shifted his ideals completely and subscribed to a Pan-African way of thinking.

According to Vanhove, it is then precisely this trajectory as a non-identarian thinker that struck Kennedy as similar to her own and convinced her to include Lumumba as one of her "selves" in "Funny-house of a Negro". "Like Lumumba", Kennedy "had to fend for herself and survive in a world dominated by whites".²⁷³ Like Lumumba, she had climbed the social ladder against all odds and assumed the identity of a meritocratic educated woman and member of the bourgeoisie.²⁷⁴ Finally, like Lumumba, her personal story forced her to adopt a strategically ambiguous stance toward the essentialism of her fellow activists, especially that of the values endorsed by the Black Power movement, and the BAM. Lumumba, in parallel, had to completely shift his ideals in contrast with his initial values he adhered in reflection to his social class of the "évolués". Taken it all together, by staging Lumumba, Kennedy is able to tell her audience how she herself was forced to use the structures of white society to further her activist cause and at the same time de-essentialize her solidarity with the Black Power movement. Kennedy clearly envisioned a new world able to stand in the face of racism and imperialism, but her work on "Funny-house of a Negro", and especially her staging of Lumumba in it, allowed her to point to the boundaries of any universal construction, may that be embedded in a form a black essentialism in the Black Power movement or Congolese nationalist movements.

Therefore, if Lumumba had become a symbol of black solidarity within the African diaspora, and a martyr of anti-imperialist revolutions around the world, which "Une Saison au Congo" and "War Drums on the Equator" certainly contributed to, it is against such popular discourse that Kennedy staged the figure of Lumumba in "Funny-house of a Negro". By making Lumumba the embodiment of Negro-Sarah's shame of her black roots, Kennedy foregrounded Negro-Sarah's de-essentialised African American identity in a seemingly white world, and in doing so challenged the essentialist tendency of the Black Arts Movement at the time. Rather than being a straightforward critique to the popular discourse around Lumumba, however, this analysis understood Kennedy's staging of Lumumba as a constructivist criticism of activist movements including the Black Arts Movement. Lumumba

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Vanhove, P., 2021. Locating Lumumba. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 58(2), pp. 271.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 271.

being both a witness to and victim of Cold War political rivalry in the wake of decolonisation can be interpreted as a parallel which Kennedy's makes with her own experience of her mixed-race identity which led her to fall out of activist movements endorsing either black assimilation or black essentialism. By foregrounding Lumumba's own trajectory from an *évolué* to a radical nationalist, Kennedy constructively criticises such movements, always in admiration of the figure of Lumumba himself. Such form of admiration differs drastically from the two other plays previously analysed. Contrary to "Une Saison au Congo" and "War Drums on the Equator" where Lumumba is glorified for his efforts to resist neo-colonial forces, Kennedy finds admiration in the "hidden" figure of Lumumba before his short political career as a prime minister, in which he found himself in an ambiguous position between his affiliations with Belgian colonial powers and that of his nationalistic efforts and visions for an independent Congo. It is therefore in her effort to highlight the ambiguous political stance Lumumba had before adopting a radical nationalist point of view that critical literary writers such as bell hooks and Georgie Boucher have called out on Kennedy's work for offering a critique of racial assimilation in America well ahead of its time.

7. Connections and Conclusions

In the end, this study has examined three different representations of the first Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba, in the aftermath of his assassination. More specifically, this study located the figure of Lumumba in three different plays of Aime Césaire's "Une Saison au Congo", Li Huang et al.'s "War Drums on the Equator", and Adrienne Kennedy's "Funnyhouse of a Negro" and the respective "spatial formats" in which they are embedded in line or contrast with Cold War projects. The main aim of this study was therefore to challenge the bipolar vision of the Congo crisis, and the consequent reductionist understanding of the anti-imperialist movements which emerged after the assassination of Lumumba as purely anti-Western. What the analysis of this study has demonstrated then, is that the global responses to Lumumba's martyrdom and the according restagings of anti-imperialist world views in the different plays were never a unified and singular phenomenon. By examining how the figure of Lumumba was embedded in different "spatial formats" in the three plays, this study captured the multipolar constellation of competing visions and claims to certain world views in the wake of decolonisation during the Cold War, of which the Eurocentric one is only a part of it. Only through such conceptualisation of the decolonisation movements in the Cold War era can one identify and locate the deconstructive attempts of the multiple Cold War projects, which offers an explanation to why and how the figure of Lumumba has been taken up by contradictory movements in different projects in the first place.

7.1. A Conceptualisation of the Nature of the Congo Crisis and the Global Response to Lumumba's Assassination

The first part of the study was therefore dedicated to an understanding of the specific place of the assassination of Lumumba holds in the context of the Cold War, and the Congo Crisis more generally. For that, the introduction of this study turned to the Ceremony of the Proclamation of the Republic of the Congo's independence to argue that the three different speeches that were held that day already hinted towards the tragic

events that would lead to the Congo crisis, the different actors which played a significant role in it, and the very nature of the conflict itself. Both the neo-colonial intensions of Brussels, which are to be deduced from Baudouin's paternalistic speech, and the politically ambiguous position taken up by the new African elite, which Kasa Vubu clearly articulates in his own glorification of the Belgian colonial system, have found themselves to serve as strong forces countering the nationalist project Lumumba had for the newly independent Republic of the Congo. Accordingly, the Congo crisis, and the consequent assassination of Lumumba is understood in this study as primarily a North-South conflict, defined by the neo-colonial intensions of Brussels to still hold a foot down in its now former colony.

The second half of the introduction then offered a detailed description of the first developments of the Congo crisis which led to the assassination of Lumumba so to delineate the developments that led to the changing perception and remembrance of Lumumba from a Congolese nationalist to a martyr of anti-imperialist revolutions. To summarise, Lumumba's government intended to claim its rightful independence immediately and set itself out to eradicate all former colonial institutionalisations, while preventing any new form of neo-colonial interventions to take place. This national-democratic programme, however, went against the interests of Brussels expected to hold on to its privileged position in an independent Congo. The government soon lost its integrity after Moïse Tshombe declared the secession of the mineral-rich province of Katanga with the support of Belgian authorities. In July 1960, Lumumba sought and received UN military assistance to restrain the secessionist Katangese forces, but such assistance was only used to offer security in the areas under threat of the newly developed conflict. Lumumba later requested direct military aid from the U.S. and the UN. United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld flew to the Congo to negotiate for peace but decided to meet first with Katanga secessionist leader Tshombe instead. On 31 July, Lumumba turned to the Soviet Union for logistical and military help.

By then, Lumumba had become an embodiment of a Cold War anxiety against which the West rationalised its intervention in the Congo crisis. On September 14, 1960, Lumumba was removed through a coup orchestrated by Congo's President, Joseph Kasa Vubu, and Colonel Mobutu Sese Seko, with the aid of the United Nations forces, whose actions in physically preventing Lumumba from accessing the state radio station in Leopoldville effectively led to the coup's success. On the 17 January 1961, Lumumba and his two associates, Joseph Okito and Maurice Mpolo, were assassinated and later buried near Elisabethville by a Katanga firing squad, under supervision and in presence of Belgian officials. As soon as the truth about the disappearance of Lumumba and his

associates came out, a global uproar emerged in sympathy with the “Congolese struggle” in which the assassination of Lumumba was now seen as the fatal testimony of Cold War imperialism and neo-colonialism. Lumumba became a shorthand reference to the perils of “white betrayal”, resonating with anti-colonial struggles around the world. Patrice Lumumba once praised for his anti-colonial and nationalistic ideas for the newly independent republic of the Congo had now become a martyr of anti-imperialist movements around the world.

But if the developments of the Congo crisis took shape along and through Cold War universalising projects, the anti-imperial revolutions which emerged as a response to Lumumba’s assassination were not spared from them. The figure of Lumumba, in fact, has been taken up by different and sometimes contradictory movements in rival Cold War projects of which the three plays of “Une Saison au Congo”, “War Drums on the Equator” and “Funnyhouse of a Negro” are only an example of. In order to answer the fundamental question of how and why the figure of Lumumba has been taken up by different movements, this study went on to understand the “Lumumba phenomenon” as a global moment of multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting claims of what Middell and Marung have identified as “spatial formats”. The three plays portray Lumumba in different socio-political contexts and through different global imaginations, which can all be read as challenges to and reiterations of certain spatial formats which characterised the Cold War condition of the time. The different spatial formats present in the respective plays are that of the French nation-empire, Mao’s Third Worldism, and African-American Third Worldism. The idea here is that together, these more or less “peripheral” plays and the respective spatial formats they embed or challenge pinpoint the weak spots of our popular understanding of the global history of the Cold War. They all offer up alternative, historically situated visions of a different world order in an era that was overshadowed by the universalising projects of the two competing blocs.

7.2. Locating the Spatial Formats

The three different plays therefore locate themselves within or against spatial formats. This study has then located “Une Saison au Congo” within Césaire’s broader engagement with his Négritude movement which challenges the “spatial format” of the French nation-empire. More specifically, the movement is forged in a Black identity among Africans and its diasporas and was created as a reaction to the French colonial projects of cultural assimilation. Césaire himself critiqued the assimilation policy under French colonial rule as he believed it was built upon an assumed superiority of French culture which was continuously

justified through the discourse of universal equality. Accordingly, Césaire argued that Africans and Antilleans under French colonial rule were integral parts of the French empire bloc, through their black identity, that is. The Negritude movement, as such, can be understood as a “spatial format” itself in that it aims to reclaim the space of French territory through the emancipation of black identity.

As for “War Drums on the Equator”, its “spatial format” is more straightforward to locate given the propagandic nature of the play. In essence, “War Drums on the Equator” advocates for an alternative Chinese world order in which China is the leader of the Third World in the name of a global resistance against imperialist tendencies of the First World, which included both the West and the Soviet Union. Mao framed China’s doctrine of internationalism through his theory of intermediate zones. Mao conceived the intermediate zones geographically and politically, defining it as a cluster of countries that are all oppressed by the “imperial” tendencies of either the United States or the Soviet Union. This oppression, moreover, is a result of the competition between the two “imperial” actors, in their respective attempt to weaken and therefore dominate the other. Accordingly, Mao’s vision of the intermediate zone was profoundly political, in that he advocated for a unification of the countries of such zone so to aid one another in their common anti-imperialist struggle. It is therefore along his theory of the intermediate zones that Mao’s Third Worldism can be understood as a “spatial format” in itself.

Lastly, “Funnyhouse of a Negro” seems to stand out from the other two plays regarding its location within a “spatial format” since it seems to only challenge them, rather than explicitly proliferate one. More specifically, Kennedy critiques both ideologies embedded in the Black Power Movement and the Civil Rights Movement. The Black Power Movement then advocated for a sense of “Black Unity” by rejecting American culture as it was built on the basis of racial oppression. The Black Power movement, in its advocacy, then aimed to foster relationships outside of the American continent, specifically with African diasporas, to promote a separatist Black Unity. Black Power, as such, redefined the space of African-America outside its already existing structure. Contrary to the Black Power movement’s promotion of disassociation, however, the Civil Rights movement aimed to eradicate legal forms of segregation through the promotion of integration. Therefore, while both movements challenged the imperial tendencies present in America, they differ radically in their respective ideologies, and the respective spatial imagination in their respective projects; while the Civil Rights movement aimed to reclaim the American space, the Black Power movement aim was to create an African American nation in their own right and in isolation from America itself. It is therefore in

between both spatial formats, in between black essentialism and assimilation that Kennedy situated her protagonist Negro-Sarah.

7.3. Connecting the 'Three Lumumba's

By locating the spatial formats which the three plays either challenge or are embedded in, this study has been able to discern the relationality of the respective formats and therefore answer the question of how the figure of Lumumba has been taken up by contradicting movements in Cold War projects. All three plays are therefore situated in a global moment of multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting claims of spatial formats in which Lumumba's own claim of the independence of the Republic of the Congo only became secondary in those respective claims. The three plays therefore seem to take up on different aspects of the historical figure of Lumumba in their alignment with their respective claims or challenges to spatial formats.

In "Une Saison au Congo" Césaire glorified Lumumba as a failed hero so to raise his cry for liberty in his nationalist convictions for the Congo which have continuously been transformed through and overshadowed by the hostile discourse the western press held against Lumumba. The analysis of this play has read Césaire's "redressing" of such discourse along two different but interrelated axes. On one level, by redressing the figure of Lumumba, and the nature of Soviet aid in the Congo crisis more specifically, Césaire rewrites Lumumba's own experience as a coloured and colonised individual that has been dictated by Cold War projects. In the eyes of Césaire, Lumumba's story is reduced to its honest political conviction, caught up in neo-colonial projects which ultimately led to the tragic events of his assassination. On another level, Césaire's redressing of the hostile Cold War discourses can also be read alongside Césaire's own decolonial struggle to obtain Martinique's autonomy in the French empire through the formation of his "Parti progressiste Martiniquais". This way, "Une Saison au Congo" allows Césaire to personally identify with Lumumba's own political path; just as Lumumba had to distinguish his "Mouvement National Congolais" from the former colonial Belgian political system, and the possible ties with the socialist world, so did Césaire in the formation of his political party which he distinguished from European communism, while also distancing it from the American superpower in the north.

But while Césaire's glorification of the figure of Lumumba in "Une Saison au Congo" clearly serves Césaire to advance his own cultural and political ends, this analysis has also pointed out to the important distinction between Césaire and Lumumba's decolonising projects of that of the autonomy of Martinique and the independence of the Congo. Therefore, while this analysis has outlined the alignment of their

decolonial struggles, Césaire and Lumumba's decolonial projects differed significantly in their respective ideologies. As such, Césaire's glorification of Lumumba's nationalist project, and the dramatization of its very failures in "Une Saison au Congo" can only be read as a signifier of the rupture of the presumptive unity of culture, nationality, and citizenship it entailed, which Césaire advocated in his own vision for Martinique's autonomy and in his wider Negritude movement. Therefore, if Césaire's "Une Saison au Congo" can be understood to be embedded in a wider spatial format under his Negritude movement, Lumumba's own claim of the independence of the Republic of the Congo clearly becomes secondary in such claim.

Contrary to "Une Saison au Congo", "War Drums on the Equator" only portrays the circumstances of Lumumba's murder, rather than offering a historical chronicle of him. The play then focuses on the secession of Katanga funded by Belgian-controlled interest to demonstrate and challenge the imperial intensions of the West which included Brussels, Washington and the U.N. By expressing Chinese solidarity with the Congo, the play advocates for a new, alternative Chinese world order able to compete with the Euro-American imperialist model. As far as 'true' friendships go, the drama is mainly centred around China's official push for the country's solidarity with African American civil rights activists through the development of the character of Mwanka. Giving the timing of the release of the play, and the actual Third World connections taking place at the time, "War Drums on the Equator" was staged at a time not only to foster Sino-African American relations, but also to sustain them. Although less explicitly, the play also makes an important reference to the PRC's real commitments during the Congo crisis after Lumumba's assassination. More specifically, the play ends with an important battle cry, directly referencing Pierre Mulele, a Chinese-trained and Chinese-backed partisan who endorsed Maoism in his rebellion in the Congo crisis and the leader of the Kwilu rebellion. By including Mulele in "War Drums on the Equator", the play ultimately reiterates the symbolism of China's limited support to the Congo crisis, and China's designation of Mulele as a "genuine revolutionary leadership" in Central Africa. All together, the Congo crisis presented itself as a unique political opportunity for the CCP's global struggle, in which Lumumba's own claim of the independence of the Republic of the Congo only became secondary in Maos' Third Worldism.

Lastly, and contrary the previous analysed plays, Kennedy stages Lumumba in "Funnyhouse of a Negro" against the popular discourse around Lumumba as a symbol of black solidarity within the African diaspora, and a martyr of anti-imperialist revolutions around the world. By making Lumumba the embodiment of protagonist Negro-Sarah's shame of her black roots, Kennedy foregrounded Negro-Sarah's de-

essentialised African American identity in a seemingly white world, and in doing so challenged the essentialist tendency of the Black Arts Movement and the Civil Rights Movement at the time. Given that “Funnyhouse of a Negro” was biographically inspired, this analysis has also aimed to demonstrate how Kennedy identifies with the figure of Lumumba on a personal level. Lumumba being both a witness to and victim of Cold War political rivalry in the wake of decolonisation can be interpreted as a parallel with Kennedy’s own experience of her mixed-race identity which led her to fall out of activist movements endorsing either black assimilation or black essentialism. By foregrounding Lumumba’s own trajectory from an *évolué* to a radical nationalist, Kennedy constructively criticises such movements, always in admiration of the figure of Lumumba himself. Such form of admiration differs drastically from the two other plays previously analysed. Contrary to “Une Saison au Congo” and “War Drums on the Equator” where Lumumba is glorified for his efforts to resist neo-colonial forces, Kennedy founds admiration in the “hidden” figure of Lumumba before his short political career as a prime minister, in which he found himself in an ambiguous position between his affiliations with Belgian colonial powers and that of his nationalistic efforts and visions for an independent Congo. It is therefore in her effort to highlight the ambiguous political stance Lumumba had before adopting a radical nationalist point of view that critical literary writers have called out on Kennedy’s work for offering a critique of racial assimilation in America well ahead of its time.

In the end, by locating the different spatial formats in which the plays are embedded, and by defining the respective interpretations of the political figure of Lumumba, this study has aimed to capture complexity and sometimes contradictory nature of the transnational decolonial movements in the Cold War era in the aftermath of the assassination of Lumumba. As such, the “imperialist” intensions behind the Western interventions in the Congo crisis which led to the assassination of Lumumba pushed subjects marginalised by such forms of expansionism to imagine and claim alternative worlds. Aime Césaire’s Negritude movement, Mao’s Third Worldism, and Adrienne Kennedy’s critique to the Black Arts Movement have in this regard been understood as claiming alternative “spatial formats” that emerged as a response to what Vanhove identifies as the “Eurocentric philosophical universality” which characterised the development of the Congo crisis. It would be reductive to understand such anti-imperialist movements which emerged after the assassination of Lumumba as purely anti-Western, however. Césaire’s recuperation of Lumumba’s from its hostile discourse was in fact read as a way for Césaire’s to critique the seemingly imperial intensions of the French Communist Party, and the USSR’s turn to Stalinism more specifically. By expressing Chinese solidarity with the Congo, “War Drums on

the Equator” advocated for a new, alternative Chinese world order able to compete with the Euro-American imperialist model, but in the wake of the Sino-Soviet Split, also the Soviet Union. As far as Kennedy’s play goes, it offered a constructive critique to the anti-imperialist Black Power Movement and Civil Rights Movement, which in all its irony, were endorsed and sustained in Li Huang and collaborators’ “War Drums on the Equator”. In its more general sense, the differences, complexities, and often times contradictions between the production of those spatial formats staged in the three different plays are only an indication of the fact that the global responses to Lumumba’s martyrdom were never a unified nor a singular phenomenon. But more importantly, this argument can be understood as an indication Pieter Vanhove’s broader argument of his work on “Rethinking Universality in the Long Cold War” in which he argues that “world-making is not a purely Western prerogative”.²⁷⁵ Clearly, for centuries, the story of Eurocentric and patriarchal “world-making” was the most powerful one, of which the Congo crisis is but only one consequence thereof. But while such forms of critique rightfully unravel the discursive tools that were used to justify and perpetuate such forms of discrimination, the different and often contradictory responses of Lumumba’s martyrdom clearly demonstrates that the claim to universality is not only a Eurocentric one. By conceptualising and locating the different plays along “spatial formats”, this study not only outlined non-Eurocentric claims to universality, but more importantly, it delineated how such claims were already being challenged at the time of their proliferation, in advance of the academic and postcolonial efforts made today.

²⁷⁵ Vanhove, P., 2022. *World Literature after Empire: Rethinking Universality in the Long Cold War*. 1st Edition éd. Milton: Taylor&Francis Group, p. 5.

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